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OMEP has achieved Special Consultative Status at ECOSOC of United Nations and it has partnerships with all World and International Organizations focusing on children’s education and well-being. It is currently established in over 70 countries and it is one of the two International Focal Points of the Collective Consultation of NGOs on Education for All (CCNGO/EFA) of UNESCO.

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Research shows that quality teaching practice in preschool and early childhood settings across the world continues to be a critical factor in supporting children to lead full and purposeful lives into the future. And, yet, quality in early childhood continues to be debated and contested, not just by educators but by economists and world leaders. The whole world has become, and continues to become increasingly complex, unbalanced and fraught with serious issues – economic, environmental, social and spiritual. These issues are both global and local; they are issues that affect us all, irrespective of where the issues are made visible. Pedagogies/teaching practices shared now with young children, our youngest citizens and future leaders, must be extra thoughtful, wise, ethical, full of hope and underpinned by sound theories. This second volume of Theory in Practice continues to challenge the notion of what quality means for everyday teaching in preschool and early childhood settings.

Above all, the early childhood pedagogies of the 21st century must honour children and include children in their own learning, making space for their voices to be heard and their rights to be respected. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development (17 sustainable development goals) form a solid basis for valuing every human being. But how are educational theories and key human rights documents understood in the context of everyday early childhood teaching practice? Glynne Mackey’s New Zealand-based article is an invitation for early childhood teachers to connect with the contentious issue of sustainability. She offers ideas for teachers to share the notion of sustainability (cultural, social, economic and environmental) with children in everyday programmes.

More than ever, language is a global issue and a critical factor in communicating within and outside of our ‘home’ countries. In most early childhood settings teachers struggle with retaining the mother tongue while also introducing young children to other languages and other cultures. This is particularly so for English which, by default, has become an important global language of communication. The complexity of the decision-making around how, why and what to include in teaching children English is addressed in a sensitive manner by Elena Roussinova-Bahoudaila et al in their article on teaching English to young children in a Bulgarian early childhood setting. They write ‘the deliberate integration of educational and cultural value systems has proven its worth in the children’s learning of a foreign language which, in turn, prepares them for growing up as citizens of the world.’

The 21st century has brought children into the world of adults more than ever before. Early childhood teachers must therefore engage with the wider world, beyond psychology and education, and make explicit the relationship between early childhood and the big issues—social, political, cultural and economic— that confront societies around the world. Young children are themselves citizens and have a right to teachers who read widely and engage with a wide range of people. Welcoming diverse points of view and developing a tolerance for plurality, ambiguity and a lack of certainty are all part of being an informed
early childhood teacher in today’s world. Emmanuel Anyidoho from Ghana suggests that children’s notions of the adult world begin in early childhood. He writes that children are an integral part of society and that parents and educators are ‘significant co-constructors in the whole process of children’s professional career considerations’.

All practice is underpinned by theory, whether it is consciously known and articulated or whether it is embedded within the environment (e.g. identified ‘areas of play’ that reflect Piaget’s theory of ‘structuring the environment’ so that children can ‘construct their own learning’ by being provided with ‘relevant resources’). Educational theories are ideas about what is ‘good’ for children and their teachers. These ideas may come from the grand theorists, from a group of teachers or from children. But once theory is in a relationship with practice it changes— for better or for worse. It is the teacher’s role to constantly stand back and look at the way in which ideas about practice interface with the practice itself, in such a way that a deep respect for children, our current citizens, remains central to teaching. Listening to and learning from children’s own theories in response to the teaching, makes the whole process of theorising practice and practising theory a reciprocal one, where both the teachers/adults and the children are learners constantly searching for the best ways to live life. Thinking and writing about such practice holds the possibility of redefining theory and searching for new ideas with which to underpin everyday practice. The ‘Black Cats’ article is an example of this: the teachers, having discovered that Italy has a special day for remembering much-maligned black cats, made this humanitarian idea the basis for an interactive community project with children in a Russian kindergarten.

Unfortunately much teaching practice in early childhood/preschool settings around the world is still dominated by didactic, instructional, adult-dominated pedagogies that do not offer space for children’s points of view but, to the contrary, offer children answers rather than questions, certainties rather than doubts, standards and goals rather than decisions based on a reflective response to children’s visible learning. A deep concern for children’s learning and well-being requires teachers to be open-minded, reflective and child-focused in their teaching. It means constantly exchanging ideas, talking to colleagues and refining and reshaping the ways in which theory (in all its shapes and forms) impacts on practice and vice versa. This deep concern for children is reflected in the humble and respectful way that Matteo Corbucci from Italy talks about using puppets as a ‘relating tool’ and argues why puppets are such a flexible and versatile resource for young children. He writes about the ways in which teachers introduce puppets to children and then facilitate and open up empowering opportunities for children’s own interactions with and responses to the puppets. The theories underpinning this article are in the wording.

Dialogue with fellow teachers about theories, in particular new ideas and new theories, gives way to the idea of the teacher as re-searcher, someone who makes constant connections and sees new
possibilities for better understanding children’s learning. When teachers read and share new ideas they deepen concepts about their teaching practice and about their relationships with children. The ability to make connections extends to interdisciplinarity which is about making links between what are often presented to children as discrete disciplines. However, research and experience show that young children do not live their lives in curriculum fragments, so why do teachers classify the world for them? One example of interdisciplinarity is crossing the boundary/ies between art and science. Evelyn Egan’s art-based article is about much more than the technical aspects of art. It is suggested that art offers children opportunities ‘to draw connections and relationships between areas of knowledge that transcend disciplinary boundaries’.

The past 3 decades have seen huge shifts towards the provision of quality early childhood education across the world. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) was, in part, a global catalyst for governments to increase funding and support for ECCE. However, many teachers and adults working with children will identify with the ways in which the issues of compliance and regulation required by governments, clash with teachers’ own pedagogical knowledge of developing the whole child within early childhood/preschool settings. Teaching is about much more than management, ‘care’ the delivery of a preplanned curriculum to a group of children and ‘tired’ teachers. The sort of teaching that brings joy to those working with children is complex, alive, energising and always open to new ideas. In the article by Zvjezdana Cagalj and Mersija Kolcakovic, compliance and delivery of a standard programme to children in a mandatory summer programme in Croatia, give way to new and meaningful ways of relating to children. The parents and the community are also involved in the reflective reconstruction of the entire programme.

The articles in this volume of Theory in Practice reflect a wide diversity of cultural viewpoints, each expressed in its own unique way. Each author has juxtaposed theory with practice in a different manner and, yet, all the articles cross cultural and language boundaries in ways that will resonate with readers. The contributing articles challenge teachers to think differently and to approach the issues that have been raised from a ‘both/and’ perspective, rather than an ‘either/or’ perspective. Above all, through engaging with the articles in this volume of the OMEP Journal of Theory into Practice, teachers are encouraged to think critically about their own everyday teaching practice and the theory that underpins that practice.

Diti Hill-Denee
(National President, Aotearoa New Zealand)
As peoples have moved around the world and as colonisation in its various forms has displaced people from their land and their resources, people have become more aware of how a sense of belonging to a place is important to them and to others who identify with different places. Raising awareness of place begins in early childhood. It is from this foundation that we begin to feel physically, emotionally and spiritually connected to a place; to develop an ethic of care for this place; and to understand more of ourselves within the ecological realm. Like Ratty in the ‘Wind in the Willows’, we all need local places with which we identify before we can build empathy with the places of others’. (Eckersley, cited in Hayward, 2012).

The quote from ‘Wind in the Willows’ illustrates the issue of where the learning about place should begin. Early childhood education seems the obvious starting point. However, this drive and desire children have to make a difference, needs to also be inspired and encouraged by the teachers of these children. Initial teacher education programmes have the responsibility to prepare graduating teachers who are knowledgeable about sustainability and competent in advocating for a better future for the children they teach. Memories of places come from where we grew up; where we spent family holidays; or where we saw the seasons change. These memories are part of the shared experience of us all, therefore, pre-service teachers can engage in discussion and reflection about how they are able to show a love for place in everyday teaching in early childhood settings. David Sobel (1990), a renowned writer on place-based education, recognises that personal reflection on place is likely to raise awareness of the importance of place in all our lives. From reflecting on what we personally value in our environment, we move on to what this means for us as teachers of young children.

In the article I intend to convey an important message that if we want children to develop a love for the environment and understand our interconnectedness with the natural world, then teacher educators must ensure our teachers hold values that reflect their commitment to a more sustainable future. Reorienting teacher education towards sustainability became one of the initiatives to focus on during the UN Decade for Sustainable Development, 2005-2014 focused on. At the end of the decade the Global Action Programme UNESCO (2014-2019) included “building the capacity of educators and trainers” so as to strengthen further education for sustainability across all sectors and all teacher education programmes: pre-service, in-service, undergraduate and post-graduate. It is the responsibility of teachers to commit to being role models and leaders for sustainable practices and social justice in our educational communities.

The Theory of Place
Comenius, an early 17th Century Czech philosopher and pedagogue, understood that learning in the early years was most effective when the focus was on local contexts and places. Focus on the local area allows for local projects, and local stories and knowledge that can be integrated into the everyday curriculum supporting early childhood programmes to better reflect the uniqueness of the local environment. Children can see their impact as agents of change as they wander their local place; reaffirming their role as citizens, able to contribute to society and to community. Sobel (2005) points out to educators that place-based learning gives opportunity for local, practical experience across the curriculum. Children in place are connected to the social reality of their lives that sets them to respect and value the place where they belong (Smith, 2002). Learning to make a difference in the present, gives children confidence
to value their agency and practice citizenship as they journey through life.

Ways of living and learning in our place are embedded in cultural values, practice and expectations. Each place will have unique geographical features; a particular ecosystem; intergenerational stories; and areas of cultural and spiritual significance. In New Zealand, the early childhood curriculum, *Te Whāriki*, embraces caring for place, the environment and the people. The notion of kaitiakitanga (stewardship) is often threaded through conversations and experiences, where caring for place ensures future generations are able to live a healthy, fulfilling life. When children see their identity is represented in their place, they influence parents and families who adopt practices that care for place and encourage sustainability (Vaealiki & Mackey (2008). “If we love (value) ourselves, we will love (value) that which we believe supports us” (Bonnett, 2006. p. 14).

**Initial teacher education programmes**

Young people now entering the teaching profession, often say that they want to make a difference. Their knowledge of environmental issues is likely to be advanced and they are often unsure of the future and how to act to lessen the impact of climate change. Many want to understand more about the issues in the environment and are very interested in the social justice aspects of sustainability. Teacher educators working with preservice teacher can ask their students to reflect on their own experiences of place and what is has meant in their own lives. Place-based approaches are helpful in reducing the overwhelming concern we are often faced with in the media. If we take action when we see and experience local issues, we can feel the sense of agency and can see the difference we are making. Collaboration with other concerned groups is effective when working towards the same goals.

**Practices to engage children**

There are many ways to work with infants, toddlers and young children that encourages a love of place, a feeling of belonging and of security. Teachers who are closely engaged with families and community, will have a good understanding of local issues and local places that are significant for families. Planning and extending experiences that based on the interests of children are likely to be the start of a developing ecological identity that motivates a desire in children to explore and care for their local environment.

Below is a list including some suggestions for practice that might be adapted to other contexts and cultures. Teachers will use their knowledge and experience to seek out new ways that fit with centre policy, the children’s interests and the culture. Children will contribute their ideas; families can be consulted; community elders will have valuable history, stories, and local knowledge to share.

- Conversations with children. Listening to their stories about places they like to visit and play. Teachers also sharing their experiences and places they enjoy.
- Sharing photographs or movie clips of places that are significant. These resources can be displayed or filed and later revisited as a reminder of what the
experience was like and how they felt.
- Regular walks to familiar places will allow children to observe changes in the seasons and in the environment. At different times they will notice colours change, trees might fall over or branches break, animals and insects are busy, different sounds.
- Rethinking the outdoor environment in the early childhood setting. Is this outdoor play space able to reflect some of the cultural and geographical features of place and giving these features local names? Eg. A small hill, a stream, a ‘forest’, a butterfly garden.
- Spaces outside where children have a place they can build their own hut or cubby. Children value time away from adults and can benefit by having their own space where they have some autonomy. They practice independence, decision-making and agreeing on rules about use of their space. In their own space they have ownership and responsibility to organise their place, deciding on the character.

- Enjoying meals together. Create a ‘camp-fire’ atmosphere with sitting spaces on logs of wood. Stories can be shared. The food eaten and prepared can also be a focus for learning. Where did it grow? Who prepared it?
- Set up a weather station or some instruments to show wind direction, temperature or sun UV. Children can monitor these readings and know when to wear sunhats, protective clothing or sunscreen.
- What will we learn from being together in a special place? Being together will be part of our memory, our identity as a person with a love of place. We will be different because we will have been together in this place.

- Create maps with the children to identify where special places are. Areas where the families live; local businesses; spiritual and cultural places in the area.
- Indigenous people have an oral tradition that tells of a genealogy within the flora and fauna of their environment which gives them a spiritual basis for living. What are the treasures of your culture that link to your place?
- Discuss ways to join with local interest groups who have established projects in the local area. Eg. Tree planting; conservation projects; monitoring wildlife and seasonal activity.
- Children, with teacher support, can take a lead in gathering others to begin a local project that cares for place.

Conclusion
There may be risks and challenges when exploring and learning about places. However, if children are well prepared and supervised, they will learn to trust their friends and their own capabilities while they find new ways of thinking and seeing the world. Teachers will also learn to trust the children to share stories that give insights into their understanding of their ecological identity and their dreams for living and learning in a special place.

Resources for Teachers
World OMEP has established a site that includes many very practical ideas for all teachers and members to access. The Resource Bank for Early Childhood and ESD has ideas and projects for teacher education, as well as for working with children in early childhood settings. On this site, previous ESD projects have been uploaded for your use and inspiration. https://en.unesco.org/news/omep-launches-resource-bank-early-childhood-education-and-esd

UNESCO has several sites for resources to use within education programmes with students. These can be adapted to fit more appropriately with the local culture and context.
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Foreign Language Learning at the Pre-school Age: Cultural and Educational Parallels

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Introduction
When a child is involved from an early age in an interaction supporting his / her individual potential, an active position in self-development is ensured. Therefore, the integration of educational goals with vital needs (communication, learning, play, etc.) is the key mechanism for building the self as an individual-personal quality in learning.

- Communication between the adult and the child, as well as between the children themselves, leads to valuable motivational processes of speech communication: self-expression, information exchange, dialogue, social contact, joint activities.

Concept
The child’s competence in speaking is reflective of the ongoing life cycle in which the socio-cultural exchange takes place. The child’s speech contributes towards a sense of identity and a perception of otherness / difference. Essential to an understanding of foreign language competence, viz a viz the native language/mother tongue, is the value this offers to the individual’s self-concept.

- The overall speech development of children characterizes the educational strategy of learning a foreign language.
- The advantages of foreign language learning are:
  - enriching children’s socialization skills
  - developing a sense of language
  - motivation for learning another language

The model
The Pedagogical Interaction Model for Studying English for 5-7 Years of Children (Roussinova.E., Simeonova.A.) keeps the child at the center of the educational program and includes:
A. The realization of specific language objectives
B. Cultural and educational parameters for achieving specific and personal goals
We will illustrate the model by sharing an example of working with 5-7 year olds, with the starting point being foreign language competence in English.

**Subject**
Description of wildlife in Africa; naming parts of body / size

**Specific educational goals**
- Gaining new vocabulary on “wildlife in Africa”
- Naming parts of the body of humans and animals
- Describing and comparing parts of different animals
- Describing specific features of animals
- Reference of sensor standards
- Training of a simple, responsible-size form

**Cognitive parameters**
- Introduction to the wildlife of Africa
- Learning the characteristic features of wildlife
- Understanding the relationship between the behaviors and lifestyles of animals

**Social parameters**
- Showing an interest in African wildlife (specifically in the reserves)
- Building a positive attitude towards animals and nature
- Building an interest in the care of wildlife, especially in the reserves

**Emotional-artistic parameters**
- Differentiation of animals by size, color, mode of movement
- Considering a conscious relationship between the behaviors and lifestyles of animals
- Reflecting the learning in drawings and models of favorite animals

**Motor-practical parameters**
- Games that search for the links between body parts
- Playing creative games, for example: ‘Zoo’ and ‘Travelling in Africa’
- Designing models, masks, musical instruments, etc. for/with the children
- Competitive running games

The skills for introducing the socio-cultural context of the foreign language are at the same level as those required for the native language, namely:

- social-communicative skills
- cognitive-evaluative skills
- practical-testing skills
- transforming skills

Individual socio-cultural competence is based on the criteria of respect and the willingness to communicate in a bi-lingual environment.

**Pedagogical situations**

**Instructional situations**
- Introduction to nature
- Learning a new vocabulary
- Comparing similarities and differences
- Providing and searching for information
- Describing illustrations

**Practical situations**
- Learning a poem
- Discussing a popular film
- Drawing from animal films
- Making ‘jungle’ patterns

**Game situations**
- Thematic story games
- Games from children’s own ideas
- “Jungle” games
- Games based around images and sounds
- Theater-music show

The quality of foreign language learning by children has increased through our joint work with English language teachers from Canada, Egypt and Tunisia via the Youth International Program for the Exchange of Educational Experience.
Final words
The deliberate integration of educational and cultural value systems has proven its worth in the children’s learning of a foreign language which, in turn, prepares them for growing up as citizens of the world.

And now children hold hands together as an expression of wanting to live together in a peaceful and worthy world.

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Introduction
The concept of early childhood education represents a multifaceted construct that refers to both the developing child and the multi-layered context that influences holistic child development from the prenatal stage through to the transition to primary school (0-8 years) (UNICEF, 2011). Early childhood years are a very important period during which children develop self-identity, who they believe themselves to be. They also develop social identity, who children feel they are or would like to be, typically through identification with family and/or peer culture. As children consider their identity and perceptions about themselves, these selves are shaped by the local environment, values and by unique development, thereby gaining relevant positive resources to cope with the difficult times they will go through in life, such as hope, self-esteem, optimism, future orientation, resilience, occupational knowledge, and career adaptability (Raburu, 2015).

Parents and early childhood centre educators are significant factors in determining children’s concept formation since children are brought up in both home and early childhood centre environments where social interaction takes place. At the early childhood centres, for example, educators’ good curriculum knowledge, effective pedagogies and highly qualified staff can help provide the most direct care and teachings as well as the kind of interaction that guides children’s thinking; less qualified staff can perform well when supervised and supported by qualified educators (Maree, 2017). This article is based on Vygotsky’s (1978) social learning theory which emphasises the social context of learning and the construction of knowledge through social interaction, with emphasis on collaboration, social interaction and socio-cultural activity.

Despite the important roles parents and early childhood education centres play in guiding children’s early professional career consideration, it has been observed from the literature review that research on how children construct their early professional career consideration is sparse in Ghana as compare to developed countries such as the United Kingdom, Italy and the United States of America. Developmental and contextual theorists have accentuated childhood as important in a child’s career consideration, including awareness and understanding of self, development of self-efficacy, knowledge of the world of work, and engagement in both present and future problem solving and choice-making. Nonetheless, in practice, career consideration in early childhood is often downplayed and under-researched, even neglected. Early childhood career development helps children to achieve independence, adapt to physical changes, learn to relate to family, friends, peers, and others, develop self-worth and self-efficacy, and master cognitive, social, and psychological tasks.

The aim of this study is to examine how children construct their early career consideration and the perceptions of parents and early the childhood centre educators in process early childhood career consideration. Through the interview process both parents and educators indicated their understanding of the content and process of young children’s early career consideration and their roles in supporting
the developmental process.

**Literature review**

Studies conducted by researchers such as Maree (2017), Vondracek, and Porfeli, (2008), Santilli, Ginevra, Sgaramella, Nota, Ferrari, and Soresi, (2015) underscored the role of early childhood centres in personal and professional career consideration in childhood and the importance of involving children in early vocational guidance as it provides the child with relevant resources such as hope, optimism, future orientation, resilience, occupational knowledge, and career adaptability.

In the United Kingdom, studies conducted by Siraj-Blatchford’s (2009) and Holmes and BrownHill (2010) also show that the early childhood centre is a significant factor in determining concept formation of young children. In support, Masten and Tellegen, (2012) also argue that resilience developed in early childhood is related to positive developmental outcomes and avoidance of maladaptive outcomes and life satisfaction, and it is also related to coping and problem-solving skills, the ability of asking for support, and better social relationships. Vondracek et al., (2010) stated that the goal of educators should be to enhance the strengths in any given child with the resources for positive development present in the individual’s contexts.

Studies on professional career identity in early childhood are: Nota, Soresi, Ferrari, and Ginevra (2014); Savickas (2013); Hirschi (2009); Ferrari, Ginevra, Santilli, Nota, Sgaramella, and Soresi (2015); Rohlfing, Nota, Ferrari, Soresi, and Tracey, (2012) Schmitt-Wilson and Welsh, (2012); Hartung (2015); Savickas (2013) and Hirschi (2010) These researchers found that antecedents of career adaptability such as autonomy, self-esteem, and future time orientation begin during early childhood and developed during pre-adolescence and adolescence, contributing to a more meaningful professional construction across the child’s lifespan. They also found that career adaptability predicted a sense of growth, power and life satisfaction. Career adaptability was the best predictor of realism and stability of aspirations. The above researchers argue that professional career skills and attitudes should be developed as early as possible, from early childhood, which is a crucial period for career development, in order to prepare adults to cope with a complex reality.

From the literature review, the researchers emphasized the importance of promoting professional career identity and occupational knowledge in early childhood because it is associated with greater personal identity, career adaptability, and connectedness to the social and interpersonal world.

**Research Questions**

The following research questions formed the basis for the present study:

(i) How do children construct their professional career identity in Ghana?

(ii) In what ways do early childhood educators and parents guide children’s professional career considerations in Ghana?

**Methodology**

In the design of the research, the study employed a descriptive qualitative case study method through interviews, collection of documentary evidence and observations. The research settings were three private early childhood centres in Accra Metropolis and one public primary school in Ga West Municipality in Ghana. A sample of 20 pupils, 15 parents and 15 educators was drawn from the four schools for the study.

**Results**

Data analysis was based on the themes that emerged from the interview data and photographs collected from the selected early childhood education centres.

**Theme 1: Children’s identification with adult professions**

When children were asked to draw, colour or mention the person they would like to be when
they grow up, some of the professional identities drawn by the children and the reason for the choice of professions are presented below:

In figure 1, Aku explained that she wanted to be a teacher because mummy said teachers teach people something” and in figure 2, Kwame said “I want to be a doctor so that I can take care of people when they are sick”.

In figure 3, Naomi drew a nurse and when asked about her choice of nursing profession, she said “I want to be a nurse to help the doctor to take care of sick people”. In figure 4, Ami, who coloured in a midwife, said “I want to help take care of women when they come to hospital”.

Figure 5 was drawn by Emmanuel who, when asked what he wants to be when he grows up, said he wanted to be a president so that he can provide accommodation for all the people. Figure 6 was coloured in by Kofi who said he wanted to be a police officer to help maintain law and order.

Figure 7 was drawn by Dela who explained that he wanted to be a soldier because he has an adult friend who is a soldier. Adjei’s picture 8 suggests that he wanted to be a footballer. When asked why, he said: “because I am a very good player and also to train more footballers”.

Documentary evidence from one of the early childhood centres revealed that as part of the centres’ strategy in helping children to consider a professional identity, a day has been set aside in the year when professionals such as nurses, engineers, lawyers, soldiers, amongst others, are invited to the early childhood education centres to interact
The findings of this aspect of the research revealed that professional career consideration in children encompasses a host of important factors, including friends, family, teaching and learning materials, children’s play, achievements and social interaction both at home and early childhood centres. Identity is not fixed or pre-determined and can change over time and space as children move in and out of social contexts, such as home and early childhood education centres. As a result, there is a need to establish a parent-educator partnership.

The study also found that one-day cultural identity celebrations form an integral part of the early childhood education curriculum in Ghana. During this event, children, parents and early childhood educators and community leaders are required to dress in Ghanaian traditional attires depicting all the ten political regions. The event is not only used to bring early childhood stakeholders together but also to strengthen children’s cultural identity.

**Theme Two: The role of early childhood education stakeholders in promoting children’s professional identity**

When parents were asked how they guide their children in choosing who they want to become in future, most parents said they themselves act as a role model and also they support their children to make their own decisions. Some parents said they create opportunity for the children to discuss their career choices. It was evident during the interviews that some parents do not encourage their children’s choice of professional identity. As a result, some
children keep changing their professional identities. Some parents believed that their children were too young to understand certain things they do and talk about. This was what one parent said:

*My son always says he wants to become a president and I know he is too young to understand how to become a president, so I don't encourage him* (Parent 4).

The results also show that at the early childhood centres, educators act as role models for the children to emulate and also, as part of the centre's curriculum, a day has been set aside as a professional career day where professionals are invited to interact with the children and through this social interactions, children begin to construct and consider their own professional career identities. Centre educators also use professional career role plays and storytelling to promote children's professional career consideration.

**Discussion**

Career construction in early childhood

The study shows that the process of career consideration in the early years helps children to discover who they are and the core outcome is self-construction. Children’s sense of control over their futures is shaped and supported by positive role models. When they feel safe and secure in their environments, they can develop a positive sense of self and become more secure about taking healthy risks. They can overcome obstacles and setbacks as they receive support and encouragement. This in turn fuels their belief in self and willingness to persevere and work through difficulties to achieve goals. This finding is in line with Vygotsky’s (1978) social learning theory which emphasizes the social context of learning and the construction of knowledge through social interaction, with emphasis on collaboration, social interaction and socio-cultural activity.

It has also emerged from the study that early childhood career consideration, like other kinds of childhood development, for example intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development, is a lifelong process that involves constant growth, change, and adaptation. Career consideration is not just about jobs, work and careers, rather it is about life stories. Children actively explore their worlds and begin to construct possibilities for present and future selves. These life stories include a sense of self (self-identity), life roles, skills and knowledge, and are shaped by everyday events and experiences, as well as by interests, attitudes, beliefs, and role models and this is in agreement with Cahill (2017).

Also, through role play, young children explore their environments as they move through various life roles: child, student, adolescent, worker, parent, and adapt skills to cope with educational, career, and personal tasks. Cahill (2017) indicated that the roots of adaptability start early in children's development and play a large part throughout their life adjustment and career planning, and are ingredients of risk-taking, problem-solving, decision-making, planning, transitions and change, and overcoming obstacles and setbacks.

From a very young age, children envision themselves in possible roles for future selves. Children talk about, express, and try on their hopes and dreams for the future. These aspirations change often and are influenced by many personal and contextual factors, including: relationships with family, educators, friends, peers, and significant others; self-knowledge, including, self-esteem and self-efficacy; interests, experiences, values, attitudes, hopes, and dreams; education/learning, knowledge, and skills; cultural and other contextual influences.

As children develop self-identity, interests, and skills, they begin to envision themselves in various career roles. Age-appropriate experiences and reinforcement from loving, caring adults help foster a positive self-identity, often manifested through development of confidence and risk-taking skills. When adults encourage and support children day-to-day, they are nurtured and sustained in their love of learning, natural curiosity, and belief in self.
**Conclusion**

It can be concluded from this study that interactive environmental forces, such as family, early childhood centres, peers, community, and the media, shape children’s social development and that the days when societal emphasis on childhood as a period to “let children be free of responsibilities and concerns” have gone. The study highlighted the formative years of early childhood as an integral part of the broad overall career development and as a life-span construct that begins in early childhood and continues throughout adulthood.

The findings of the study imply that parents and educators are significant co-constructors and, integral to the whole process of children’s early childhood professional career consideration. The roots of career development therefore begin early in a child’s life. Children therefore need parents, guardians, quality educators, and significant others to support, guide and encourage them.

**References**


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Currently, the environmental problem of the interaction between humans and nature has become very acute and has taken on an enormous scale. The planet can be saved only by human activity, which is in itself a part of nature. Such interaction can only be carried out if there is a sufficient level of ecological and moral culture in each person, an ecological and moral consciousness which starts from childhood and continues throughout life.

Young children are at the initial stage of the personality formation necessary for later life. The importance of children’s environmental education for sustainable development is evident in the inclusion of environmental knowledge in all educational programmes of the Russian Federation. Pre-school organizations play a major role in forming the foundation for environmentally and socially responsible citizens of the country. For the implementation of tasks in the field of environmental development, teachers are offered various ways of organizing the way in which children study environmental knowledge. Since 2016, teachers of the kindergarten, Ano Doo Myr Detstva ‘Ladushki’, actively use international commemorative days - holidays that are associated with environmental protection, for example, “Water Day” etc. Children are aware that the teachers at this pre-school are organizing interesting programmes for them, that help them better understand the world around them.

An interesting date appeared in the calendar of dates and events at the kindergarten. It turns out that every year people in Italy celebrate a very unusual holiday on November 17th. This day is called Black Cat Appreciation Day (also known as Black Cat Day). This day was established as an initiative by the activists of the Italian Association for the Protection of Environment and Animals (AIDAA) and was first celebrated in 2007.

Members of this association were the first to draw attention to the unfair and offensive attitude of the public towards black cats. In many countries of Europe and in North America they are considered the incarnation of failure and misfortune. Even now, in the 21st century, in the age of high technology, people continue to be afraid of black cats, which often leads to harsh treatment of these graceful creatures. This may be the reason why black cats disappear from their owners’ homes more often than animals of any other colour. They are less likely to be taken from animal shelters. Activists from the Italian Association for the Protection of Environment and Animals urge people to care for black cats, to protect them from physical extermination, to have a broader view and not to believe in omens and superstitions. Members of the Association are ready, not only to help black cats, but also to reward people who show sympathy towards them.

Fortunately, not all of these black-furred beauties are bad luck. For example, in Great Britain sailors gladly took these black animals on board their ships. They helped to get rid of rats, were pleasing to the eye, and brought good luck. Further stories about black cats reveal that the wives of British fishermen believed a black cat in the house would protect their husbands from trouble at sea. In ancient Egypt and ancient Ireland, to meet a black cat on a journey was regarded as a great piece of luck. And story has it that, in England and Australia, a black cat crossing the road brings happiness. Also, it is said that the British believe that a person sitting near a black cat will soon create a family. Apparently meeting a black cat promises luck in everything,
prosperity and unexpected wealth.

In our country great attention is paid to the protection of animals. Instilling a positive attitude towards nature and animal life begins at an early age in kindergartens and in families, where children are made aware of the characteristics of animals and are encouraged to develop a caring attitude towards them. The children and teachers of the kindergarten ‘Ladushki’, decided to help protect black cats and to better acquaint themselves with these amazing animals.

The teachers at ‘Ladushki’ prepared an interesting and exciting programme for the children. Teachers and children started by watching a movie about cats, from which children learned about black cats’ habits and other interesting facts about their lives. For example, they learned that the number of black cats in cities is greater than the number of black cats in rural areas. No one knows for sure why this is so, but researchers have suggested that these animals are more resistant to stress and that they are mostly calm and friendly. Therefore it is, perhaps, easier for black cats to become accustomed to the urban bustle than for their more colourful relatives. Apparently black cats sense the mood of their owners, and cheer and console their owners with their presence.

At ‘Ladushki’ the teachers read new fairy tales and stories about cats and recalled those already read. They also acted out scenes from their favorite books. Influenced by these experiences, the children began to bring soft toys, figurines, pictures, books and other items dedicated to black cats. Teachers put all the exhibits in a mini-museum at our kindergarten and arranged a museum excursion called “Black Cat” for each group of children. After visiting the museum, the children learned even more about these black creatures, and captured their impressions in amazing drawings! The material for the artwork was rather unusual: decorative charcoal. The pictures drawn by our little artists depict various black cats—playful and lazy, curious and lurking, apprehensive and sleepy, affectionate and elegant. Now the children of our kindergarten know more about black cats and their lives. Their art decorates our kindergarten, and the Black Cat mini-museum is now open, not only for the children of our kindergarten, but also for other children in the district.

Best regards from the pedagogical staff of the kindergarten, Ano Doo Myr Detstva, ‘Ladushki’.
Introduction
The field research to which reference is made, is still ongoing and takes place within the municipal educational services for children from zero to three years of Rome. The author's quest was focused on how useful and appropriate it was for the educator to use the puppet as an educational tool from the early years of the child's life. The aim was not to create a path exclusively to prepare children for theatrical activity, but to experiment how much this tool/resource—which is often forgotten or put aside as a forgotten toy of childhood—is instead a well-known instrument of relationship and support in intergenerational relationships, thanks to its ease of use at every age of life. On the other hand, with its particular attributes, the puppet is present in all the cultures of the world and we find evidence of its use since the dawn of human history. In this sense, as a familiar tool of human education, it was considered that it should be easy to insert the puppet, even into contexts where it was not already known, nor experienced before: even with very young children in the nursery school and with educators who had never used it before.

Context
In the nursery school (0-3) “L’albero azzurro”, in the eastern suburbs of Rome, in a classroom with about twenty-five children aged 2 to 3 years, the inclusion of the puppet as a versatile, playful and expressive tool for everyday use, was introduced throughout the year 2018. The puppets were part of the reception process, accompanied the routines and other significant moments of the day, helped in carrying out some activities, and were part of specific animation interventions (reading stories, singing songs, dancing, storytelling etc). The author has undertaken to introduce it as a complete center of interest and its contextualized and recurrent use has revealed unexpected potential. Within the children's room, a specific corner has been created to house a little theater and a series of places, that have always been available to the children, for the puppets so that the children could use them by themselves or play along with the educators.

Methodology
The idea of the experimentation was to investigate what use the children could make of this object, without being instructed in using it in a rigid, codified or predictable way. The concept was: if the puppet is a typical tool for human education, then children can teach us and show us what place the puppet has within the educational relationship and if there is a deep and real need that is satisfied by the spontaneous use of puppets inside of the community. The educator, as an amateur puppeteer, introduced the puppet as a significant object of affection, with which he loves to play and have fun. He showed his personal way of using it, which is not the only possible way. He wanted to transmit a meaningful use for this tool/resource, in a way that remains authentic and familiar to children.
The children meet the puppets everyday, with great interest and participation. It is a magical and engaging moment, in which the educator creates an intense relationship, while inviting the children to animate together: in a playful, but serious and inspired way.

For the children, puppets soon become familiar figures that they frequently search for and involve in several games. Through their words (a voice that is their own, but different at the same time) they can express and communicate with educators and other children, more freely. These tools are used both in solitude and in shared games, according to each individual's inner need.

After a short period in which the educator has introduced the puppets, the children take over the puppets and begin to use them in an expressive and free way. The roles are reversed: now it is the child who more often invites the adult to participate in the game. It is clear how much this tool interests him because the puppet is easy to handle. Without effort, puppets create a sense of community between adults and children.

The work of animation extends to the whole context of the classroom; it becomes a perspective from which to look critically at reality, meet it with a spirit of initiative and not only passively accept it. Every child and every adult becomes aware of the fact that their active participation and intervention really change the context of life for themselves and for everyone else. By acting you can make the difference, make a change, and your contribution, as a human being, is always requested.

The work of educators with puppets is in response to the proposals of the children who, of their own accord, discover how many and which uses can be made of the objects. Most importantly, the educators themselves are involved in a path of pedagogical, cultural and artistic research that puts them in question.
and pushes them to look for new ways of expressing their creativity, in the best interests of childhood.

Finally, at the end of the school year, given the high presence of immigrant families, it was decided to tell the experience of migration through poetic and storied ways. In this case, the puppets told the children about the journey of Ulysses: with those familiar figures, which the children now know and are willing to listen to, they were able to reflect on a huge issue in a delicate and symbolic way, respecting and valuing their feelings and those of the adults who take care of them.

**Conclusion**

This experience reveals how much children love puppets and how much they interact with them if they find an adult who gives the puppet experience the right importance. This is evidence that should not be underestimated: because in this simple and magical object (the puppet) is evoked some foundational characteristics of human nature (the desire for expression, the ability to animate, the work of the hand, the instinct to play). Puppets are also much loved by adults and this is because of the basic traits of human nature. This reminds us that an educator should never forget to put himself at the level of children, especially the smaller ones, and the puppet makes him remember it: its constant use helps the educator, in some way, to maintain his connection with each child’s unique nature. The puppet is, in fact, an ideal bridge between the children’s world and the adult’s world and contains a total experience between education, art and play. It is the belief of the author that the puppet’s constant and continuous use must be rediscovered and appreciated for its liberating ability to animate a relationship, an experience, a context.

**References**


In Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) there is often an over emphasis on the *product* rather than the process approach to the implementation of the Arts curriculum (McLennan, 2010). Current trends suggest that young children are being offered fewer opportunities to experiment and there is a tendency to override and overpower children’s raw creative talents through template-driven and adult-directed art activities’ (Tutchell, 2014:5). At Cork Institute of Technology (CIT), Ireland, the Arts are central to pre-service training of students studying for the BA degree in ECEC. Students undertaking this programme of study are introduced to an Inquiry Based Learning Emergent Curriculum with a Transdisciplinary Approach to creativity. This approach transcends the boundaries which ordinarily confine discipline areas and allows for deeper, more meaningful understanding of real-life issues or problems to emerge (Leavy, 2011). During this four year undergraduate degree programme at CIT, students take mandatory modules in the Creative Arts; Music, Visual Arts, and Drama and each subject is delivered by individual specialists.

When first introduced to the Visual Arts, many students regard art as a ‘make and do’ or ‘arts and crafts’ subject, using commercially produced art materials, an approach which may very well be as a direct result of a student’s own childhood experience in Art (LaJevic, 2013). There is a reticence to work with materials other than those where the *process* and the *product* are pre-determined due to a lack of confidence in their own creative ability. Lindsey (2016) opines that low self-efficacy may be a factor which influences the types of creative experiences educators feel comfortable delivering to young children. When these preconceived notions prevail at the outset of the degree programme, it is vital to provide a forum for students to challenge the belief that Art is a *make and do* subject, a time-filler to keep children occupied. Alternative methods on how best to reconceptualize approaches to Creativity in Early Years Education, are provided.

This vision is realizable by first introducing students to the seven Artistic Elements; Line, Shape, Form, Colour, Texture, Value and Space, all being central to the concepts addressed within weekly experiential workshops. Students engage in hands-on exploration of the disciplines of: mark-making, drawing, painting, printing, and 3 dimensional processes. Emphasis is placed on the importance of approaching the visual arts as being *process-led* rather than *product-driven*. They are provided with learning provocations to demonstrate how best to promote authentic experiences for children aged birth to three years and children aged three to six years. Throughout Year 1 they are facilitated to question (individually) perceptions of their own creativity and artistic ability, in order to become more connected to the process of making and discussing art work.
From the outset, they document and record processes in the context of how similar experiences may be provided for young children. A basic understanding of the fundamentals of the visual arts is established, leading to a smooth transition to Year 2 where art is now explored as a means of permeating all areas of learning. This approach allows students to develop an understanding of how children learn holistically through meaningful art experiences and how this enables higher-order thinking and advances cognitive development (French 2013). Art processes are not seen in isolation but rather as a pedagogical tool to acquire a better understanding of units of learning; i.e. Mathematics, the Natural World, Science and Language(s). Furthermore, they participate in arts practice-based research and engage in dialogue and analysis of materials, art processes and techniques.

The curriculum in Year 2 allows students to view the arts through a Transdisciplinary lens, to draw connections and relationships between areas of knowledge and see how these are not categorised or confined but rather transcend disciplinary boundaries (McGregor, 2017). This objective is achieved through participation, reflection and analysis (of) how to promote meaningful learning through the arts.
During the final year of the degree programme students are afforded the opportunity to apply theory to practice. The module entitled *Arts in an Emergent Curriculum* aims to equip students with an ability to critically evaluate the role of the visual arts within an emergent curriculum. It emphasizes the role the adult plays in extending learning through the medium of art. The importance of effective documentation of learning opportunities within the Early Childhood Education and Care context is stressed. Students are required to plan, present, observe and evaluate a specific learning opportunity for children under six. At the planning stage they address the following question; Does this process, a) foster curiosity? b) promote creativity? c) inspire imagination? d) enable each child to visually express individuality? The course culminates in an interactive exhibition at the James Barry Exhibition Centre at CIT. Over a five day period, local pre-school children are invited to participate. Final Year students are given the autonomy to operate all aspects of the exhibition, from conception to execution. This provides CIT students with organizational and administrative learning opportunities which stand them in good stead in their future careers as practitioners and managers within ECEC centres. During the interactive exhibition they implement theory into practice. Furthermore, they are provided with a platform whereby they are autonomous and the lecturer assumes a facilitator role. The module culminates in a post-exhibition period of reflection, whereby students document and record children’s learning. The suite of Creative Arts modules comes to a close having equipped students with the wherewithal to implement an Inquiry Based Learning Approach to the visual arts in their future practice.

References


Abstract

With regard to the organization of work and annual leave in the kindergarten during the summer time, children's day care centers run with different groups and educators and ancillary staff are sometimes changed on a daily basis. The possibilities of work are limited by the lack of knowledge of the children. As a consequence, this is a rather chaotic situation with much aggression among children and misbehavior. It is difficult to talk about educational work, except in the sense of “keeping something untouched,” occasionally organizing games with water, all being accompanied by a rather tense state of fear and insecurity and an increased dimension of tension.

From a general point of view and for the benefit of all, especially children, it has been important to try and restore the reputation of an institution that in a small community is regarded as a sanctuary where everyone is trying (and has tried) to work towards a sound pedagogical approach. Enrollment takes place throughout the entire pedagogical year, so children are enrolled at that moment when they are three years old, without precedent throughout the year. The educational staff therefore feel that they have no possibility of upgrading and deepening planned content in continuity.

Following is a study that explores the situation, the ways of acting in all directions, the educators, the parents, the other staff, but primarily the contribution of local administration and local community.

Introduction

The primary role and clear task of infant and tod-

der and pre-school education is to enable the child’s development and realize the child’s potential. The basic aim of the educational process is to ensure child wellbeing, which is interpreted on the child’s individual characteristics.

It is an important task for the family to create a healthy family atmosphere that will contribute to the positive development of the child’s personality - tolerant, willing to cooperate, sensitive to the needs of others, and this is possible if the family members sincerely and directly communicate, if the child experiences a high sense of self, appropriate to current needs and situations, and an open relation to society (Maleš, Milanović and Stričević, 2003). In this process, the child is characterized by its specific rights as outlined in the UN Convention for the Rights of the Child (UNCRC1989). The duty of adults is considered to be one of active involvement.

Starting from the principle of openness to continuous learning and the readiness to improve practice, the current state of affairs was examined by constructing a questionnaire filled out by parents, local educators and other kindergarten teachers. The fact that everyone is aware of the shortcomings and inadequacy of quality practice during the summer period, and yet nothing has been done to change this for the benefit of the children before the poor results of the survey, it was agreed to proceed to full reorganization and concrete proposals for improvement.

1. Organization of educational work

When we talk about factors that affect or can affect the quality of educational work in a preschool institution then we certainly need to pay special attention to the elements that make up the space and the climate that governs the collective because it is very important, given the fact that the child’s time spent in kindergarten is over the most productive part of his/her day. So it is important to mention the importance of elements that directly affect the ultimate result of the work. That is why it is important to pay attention to the environment, as it has a significant influence on children’s cognitive, social, emotional and physical development. By creating a physically, psychologically, and socially safe environment that offers various, developmentally-appropriate materials, tasks and situations, educators create the conditions for learning to take place unhindered.

Creating a pleasant emotional climate is about ensuring a warm, domestic, personal environment for children that brings a sense of well-being and encourages their initiative, independence, and intrinsic motivation. Laevers (2005) says that the child’s welfare is not only related to a rich environment (well-equipped infrastructure, different learning materials, etc.), but also to:

- a positive atmosphere in the group (with a pleasant atmosphere, positive interactions, feeling of belonging, etc.).
- the ability for the child to initiate (freedom to choose their own activities and decide on practical matters, rules and arrangements).
- an effective organization (a clear plan of the day in line with the developmental characteristics of the children, with no gaps, with optimal guidance and appropriate grouping, etc.).
- an empathic adult relationship (which takes into account the needs and feelings of children, and where the adult intervenes in a stimulating way that at the same time leaves enough room for initiative).

Goodness is also associated with an inclusive environment. Sapon-Shevin (1999) states that the inclusive environment includes all kinds of differences that are present in the community:

- open discussion on differences between people and the diversity of needs for each of them.
- commitment to meeting the individual’s needs within the community.
- special attention devoted to ways in which differences among children can become the basis for discrimination and oppression and teaching of children to be one another’s allies.

The goodwill of children is greater when children feel respected. Their different interests, abilities, previous experiences and skills are seen as a wealth, not as a problem to be solved. A classroom environment that promotes the well-being of each child offers opportunities for learning regardless of the learning styles, experience, culture, languages, and preferences.

The environment for learning and being in kindergarten should meet the basic needs (Laevers, 2005) of children, such as:

- body needs (eating, drinking, sleeping, etc.)
- the need for love, warmth and gentleness (physical contact and closeness, receiving and giving love and warmth)
- the need for certainty, clarity and continuity (the need for a predictable environment, to know what they are, what is permissible and not to rely on others)
- the need for recognition and affirmation (feeling of acceptance and appreciation by others, feeling of belonging, to somebody meaning and part of the group)
- the need to feel able (feeling that they can do something on their own, have something in their hands, have experience of success and experience of trying their own limits)
- the need for meaning and (moral) values (feeling that they are ‘good’ per and a feeling of association with others and with the world).

By following the needs of the children, but also the needs of the educators and parents, and to realise the children’s full potential in the preschool institution, we have analyzed the work and program currently being implemented in the kindergarten of Jelsa and tried to make steps to improve relations and work on the basis of evidence, especially during the summer.
2. Strengthening the teamwork of the educator and restoring parents’ trust

Caring for children and working with children is a very demanding job in itself, especially when it comes to children who have certain problems in behavior, it can be physically and emotionally exhausting. As with any other “craftsmanship”, mastery is important through the use of relevant tools, skillful handling of various aids, lessening fatigue and helping to steer productive energy. It is important in these situations to be concerned about mental health and emotions, making sure that there is an awareness of exposure to a greater amount of stress, especially over a longer period of time. In such situations, asking for help and friendship, listening to music, walking, watching a good movie, planning for relaxed moments, etc. It is important to recognize emotional exhaustion and not allow stress to accumulate. Seek help if you do not feel good. Tell your children and colleagues that you need help on that day, explain how you feel and ask them what they need when they do not feel their best. Ask some of them to help you with something specific and thank them for explaining how this helped you feel better. This especially helps children feel good because they take care of others and shows them to be self-reliant, aware of emotional control, consider what helps us feel better, and be able to ask for help. Adults must be aware of emotional “triggers”. Each person responds differently to certain behaviors. It is important that we know what “jumps out of the shoe”, what irritates us and brings us into a specific emotional state. If you take care of it, you’ll react in time, and know to avoid this situation or know that you do not need to react until you are “cooled down”.

Time is not unlimited. Take away planning every day, but be flexible and take time to relax. Learn how to prioritize and do not get rid of insignificant or unimportant things. When you help a child change his/her behaviors and develop social skills, this requires time and sometimes plenty of time. Plan these activities so you do not feel pressured or unsuccessful. Work steadily and always plan.

Take care of each other. The kindergarten should be a place that children, families and, of course, educators come to like. A pleasant atmosphere, teamwork, the feeling that you will get support and help when you need it, feeling that you belong and that it costs you, is needed for every person who works with children. A community is built gradually and with the commitment of all its members. Graduates need opportunities to get to know each other. Organizing sports games and other activities where each member of the community can demonstrate their strengths and abilities. Marking birthdays and other happy moments, expressing gratitude to each other for help and support, appreciating every effort and good idea. The community is also built on small things: cherries from the garden, advice, borrowed books. But these “little things” do not come only from oneself. Really important is working as a team to improve practice and to help every child develop and advance, providing support for families and collaborating with various institutions and individuals in the community. None of us can be alone, and everybody needs help.

3. Methodological framework for research

The aim of the research, which involved the participation of the staff of the kindergarten Jelsa, in conjunction with one central and two suburban facilities, as well as the parents of the kindergarten children, was to evaluate the planning of a constructive educational process during the summer duty period on the island of Hvar in Croatia.
The project began with the knowledge that there was constant change for children and staff, that the intake of children was from different groups and locations, that the government was of the opinion that nothing can be constructively planned in the summer period, that the situation has come to the test collaborative relationships through teamwork, and that there must be a change in the opinion that “there are more kindergartens for both children and staff”. Also, at this time it is too hot for ‘desk work’ and staying in non-changing didactic groups. Even then, various educational materials were stored and not allowed to be used because they belonged to “a particular kindergarten and a specific room”.

The first steps were taken by the end of June when agreement was reached on the desire to make changes. Educators are familiar with the “grape technique” and the clarity provided by such a planning method.

A questionnaire was conducted among the educators and parents to examine the attendance and working hours of the kindergarten during the summer months, asking whether they were satisfied with the changes to the approach, the interrelationships, and the teamwork.

The purpose of the questionnaires was to evaluate the characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of all the participants in the educational work, as well as to offer an explanation of the causal link between phenomena and the detection of relations between two or more related situation. Furthermore, the purpose of the questionnaire was to determine the causes and consequences of the interactions and activities of subjects in the changed educational process. The questionnaire was used to examine attitudes, personality traits, knowledge, habits and customs of the staff in all three kindergartens and their parents as important participants in the process of education. The paper questionnaire consisted of eleven comprehensible, short questions which were linked to the previous experience of each respondent. The questions were of an open type, chosen for offering free and open thinking.

All teachers were selected to represent their profession and the forms of cooperation so far.

A systematic interview process was conducted to pre-defined questions and the careful recording of answers. Questions were numerically marked and analyzed.

The questionnaire was completed by seven educators, five support staff, one cook and sixty parents. The questionnaire was anonymous in order to gain honest and realistic opinions.

Scientific value is manifested in the discovery and measurement of the characteristics, attitudes and behaviors of a particular group of people in the research of social phenomena, for example, researching the relationship between the profession and the everyday practice in the kindergarten.

2. Grape technique: moving from a basic theme, and creating sub-themes / plans that cluster around the first basic theme, then each part is further sub-classified in order to plan to the smallest detail , yet still clustered around the basic theme; hence the name - grape technique.
For the business aspect to the research, it is important to measure the characteristics, attitudes or behaviors needed to make decisions about changes to the institution, for example, researching the degree of employee satisfaction and attitudes of the users. The value of the research is that it can be used for descriptive as well as exploratory purposes. In future research, especially drawing on ‘longitudinal research’, changes and developments over time could be revealed.

4. Concluding considerations and steps taken

From the parent poll results it is apparent that the vast majority welcomed ideas for quality change and more information about activities and plans for the summer. Unhappy with the current approach, they said that the educators are tired, un inventive, and just ‘waiting to go’. Out of consideration for the parents, they were not told that their children are, in fact, tired of kindergarten! A lot of parent objections were about the lack of change to the structure of the living room, a lack of incentives to create any interest and a lack of encouragement for the children’s own desire to be full of happy expectations about coming to kindergarten. Such a child’s relationship to the kindergarten environment creates emotional difficulties for the parents because they leave unhappy when they drop off their child, with the weight of “leaving the child where they would rather not be.” Most parents argued for every possible support and cooperation.

The educators in all the settings expressed tiredness in “running” the summer kindergartens. The reasons for this, they said, are the tough year, the enrollment of children aged three years old during the whole year and that the children are constantly in a period of socialization. The educators felt that they were not respected as experts and that no one understood the seriousness and severity of their work, that they were treated as caretakers and behaved accordingly. The educators warned the parents to take their children away from the kindergarten when it was not necessary to be there, for example during a hot summer. They emphasized the necessity and importance of children being more with parents and families. Mostly, they were waiting for the period of “duty” to pass. They considered that they could not leave their “didactic” approach in that time because “no one is watching the breaking and destroying ...” They found that the summer is not a time for change or projects because the children are from different groups and because “they do not like anything or anything”.

There was an obvious need to start some of the changes that would strengthen the team of educators, restore the parents’ trust in the importance and appropriateness of pre-school education, and ultimately provide the children with the necessary quality and make their stay in kindergarten enjoyable and stimulating; it was the guiding idea to make the changes during the summer duty time.

The teachers held a first staff meeting, with a constructive approach to issues, and the lead teacher expressed her vision of diversity and quality of work during that period. It is important to point out that all educators agreed to implement the changes, which is the first and most important step to achieving the goal.

A plan was constructed and a project begun, starting with the children’s heritage: “Bi son I osto dite skola” which translates as “I am and always will be a child from the island”. This means that people from the island of Hvar have a different way of life, a different language and different habits from the people on the mainland. The people on the island will always love their place and will always be connected with their people, way of life and land. The island heritage is a legacy, it is a heritage as a source of moral, ethical, cultural values, and a heritage that focuses both on similarities and a rich diversity. The proposal for this project was accepted.

During the two summer months important, if not the most important, changes occurred, both in the structure of thinking and approach and in the material environment. The local community became
involved in all the necessary parts of the project, and an excellent and rich cooperation with the Jelsa Municipal Museum, was achieved. This was not just a mere visit and observation but it was an intertwining, negotiating, and creating of new situations and ideas, using intellectual resources and experiences. The 150-year-old library, the oldest in this area, offered old books and records, historical and up-to-date information and educational presentations. We received, as a gift, e-books that became a permanent memory for every child who contributed during the summer, but also for every individual and institution involved in the changes.

On our way to the museum we passed other places of interest: the Museum in the Old Town, the ceramics from Vrbanja, and the Chakavian poet, a great fisherman and poet. We remembered the Chakavian games and phrases, our beautiful rich language, musicians and folklore.

At the end of August, we organized parent meetings with the aim of sound preparation for the next year. The entire project sequence was depicted in the main town square. We also carried out a series of folk games shared by the neighbors and the community.

And, finally, we created each child’s profile/life “through their short-lived history” and set up an exhibition, calling it “I jo san već pinku bi “, which translates as “I am part of the history”. The exhibition included placards with the history of each child who was in summer care, through collected photographs, drawings of family and ancestors, statements, comparisons and items from the child’s life.

We think that a focus on history and heritage makes it easier to understand the relationship between ‘near’ and ‘far’, and that such an approach provokes greater interest. Complete changes to the interior of the kindergarten, the provision of risky play areas, the introduction of high-level hygiene, aesthetic decoration, the creation of atmosphere, have all influenced the parents’ relationship with the kindergarten. With full respect for the rules of the kindergarten, they have understood, too, how important co-operation is in maintaining the health and safety of children. What I want to point out is that we experienced a big change of attitude towards the kindergarten and the educators working within it.

The educators recognised the importance of preserving the profession, raising the reputation of the educator as a highly educated person. Very quickly a new era in raising awareness of lifelong education and the preservation of the profession itself has been established, and the role of educational workers in an institution that carries the adjective “educational” has been accepted and gained the confidence of the wider community.

The kindergarten completely changed. Each room is re-organized in two different centers. Children can

"Children’s lives through their short-lived history” exhibition
go wherever they want to go. This has reduced the resistance met at the first meetings. Educators do not have their “rooms” but, instead, agree to plan together and discuss what connects them as well as, individually, discuss what makes them unique. They help each other out and this leads to cohesion and a strong infrastructure; the process flows smoothly, using all the resources intended for working with children.

Obtaining relevant materials for the whole kindergarten by means that were not only financial, saved money and opened up opportunities that led to a new image of a collaborative team with targeted, guided aims and objectives. The behaviors of both children and educators were altered through participation in the project which, in turn, enhanced the quality of the web of coexistence.

References