



THE COOPERATION BETWEEN THE PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS AND PARENTS ABOUT THE CHILDREN'S PORTFOLIOS – A CASE STUDY

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Abstract:

The cooperation between the Preschool Institutions and the parents whose children attend these institutions is an important issue. We say so, because, as we know, children are very sensitive and they have complex needs. The children's development has several stages, and pedagogues (Vygotsky, Comenius, Dewei, Bruner, etc.) have given different ideas concerning these stages. People who work with children should be familiar with all of them. We suppose that educators who work with children know the stages of the children's development, but it is very important for the parents to be familiar with them as well. The cooperation between the PIs and the parents, the modalities of cooperation in Kosovo as well as the cooperation about the portfolios are just some of the issues treated in this article.

Keywords: children, parents, cooperation, preschool institutions, cooperation, portfolio

1. Introduction

Early childhood education is complex, sensitive and with rapid changes in the children's overall well-being. Based on the recent studies on early childhood development, e.g. those by Tim Waller (2005), it is emphasized that most of the brain connections are developed very rapidly in early childhood, especially in the first three

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years. These facts should convince us that early childhood is very important for all the people. Another important thing in this stage of development is the children's portfolios which are included in the preschool institutions.

One of the definitions of the portfolio is given by Eric: The portfolio is a record of the child's process of learning: what the child has learned and how he has gone about learning: how he thinks, how he makes questions, analyzes, synthesizes, produces, creates and how he interacts – intellectually, emotionally and socially – with others. (Grace, Cathy, 1992). Lee and Bowen (2006, cited in Hartas, 2010) thinks that the portfolio is a statement of purpose and a wide variety of work samples, including successive drafts of work on particular projects.

In this article, we are concentrated on the relationship between the Preschool Institutions and the family as two primary institutions for the children's education in early childhood with emphasis on their cooperation about the portfolios. From our research, we understand that all the children in preschool institutions have their portfolios.

Another issue that poses a problem for the preschool education in our country concerns the number of preschool institutions. So far, there are only 42 public and a relatively large number of private preschool institutions whose exact number remains unknown because there is no research about them.

In Kosovo, the MEST statistics indicate that the number of children included in the preschool institutions is symbolic, under 12%. Therefore, most of the children stay at home being looked after by their family members such as the grandfather, the grandmother, the uncle, the aunt, etc., or by the baby-sitter.

This situation is the consequence of the Law on Preschool Education because only children who are 5 years old are obligated to attend the preschool class. Now, according to the MEST statistics, the percentage of children from 5 to 6 years old included in the preschool classes within the primary schools is about 75%. After 1999, several private preschool institutions were established, but as mentioned above, there is no research, and subsequently, no statistics about them.

Parents do not only have the right to be given information concerning the programs and their children, but also the right for cooperation in planning life and work in the kindergarten and its departments as well as the right for active cooperation in educational activities. (T. Devjak, S. Berqnik, 2009, LYPE).

In early childhood education, portfolios should contain a statement of purpose and a wide variety of work samples, including successive drafts of work on particular projects. Children should be involved in choosing items to preserve so that they can

analyze their work themselves. For parents, Lee and Bowen (2006, cited in Hartas, 2010) identify three forms of capabilities:

1. personal dispositions (sensitivity, warmth, attitudes toward learning);
2. access to education resources and services;
3. access to education, related institutions.

2. Research background

2.1 Instruments and procedure

Data collection in this study was conducted through the questionnaire, as the key tool for research. We have modified the questionnaires of the PhD thesis. The questionnaires had 7 questions for the parents and 9 questions for the educators. The questions were of different types. As a technique we used the survey through which we gathered information on the preschool educators and the parents. These questionnaires were distributed in three public preschool institutions in different cities: Pristina PI "Xixellonjat", Gjilan – PI "Ardhemria II", and Ferizaj – PI "Ardhmeria jone".

2.2 Data analysis

Table 1: The participants of this study

Participants of this study	Nr
PI	3
Educators	24
Parents	60
Total	87

2.3. Data analysis

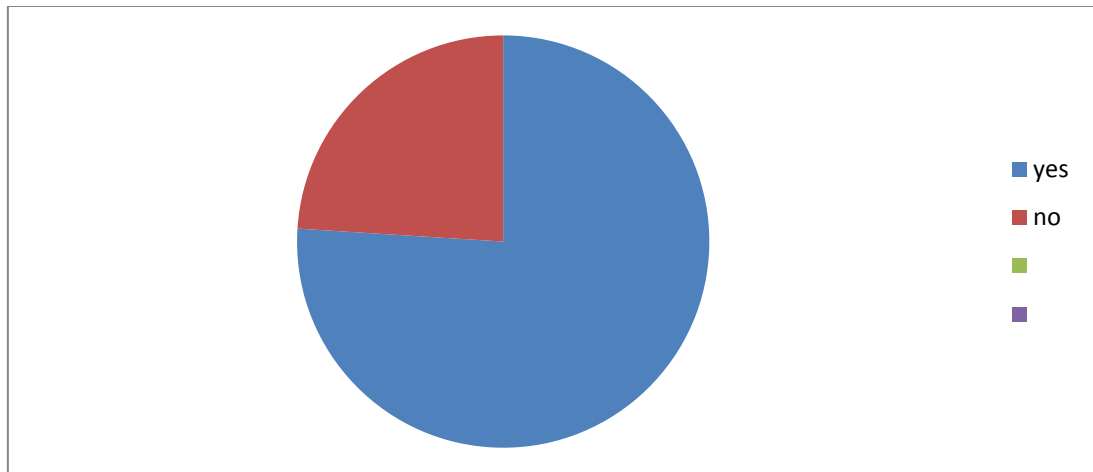
In this research, we used the detailed descriptive analysis. Description of the analysis is done with frequency tables, percentage and standard deviation.

In this research were included 24 educators from three different cities: Pristina, Gjilan and Ferizaj, who work in preschool institutions with children who are 2 to 6 years old, and 60 parents whose children attend these preschool institutions.

The first question in this research was concerned the parents.

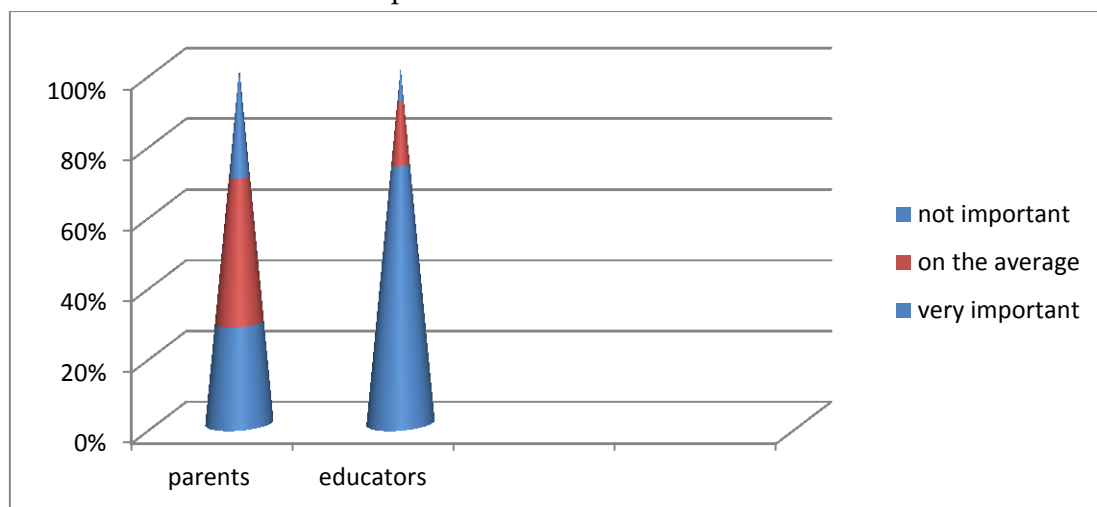
1. We knew that our children have portfolios in the preschool institution: The answer of about 76% of the respondents was yes, whereas the answer of the 24% of respondents was no.

Figure 1: Responses of the question concerning the possession of portfolios



Based on these results, we can understand that most of the parents know about the portfolio, but this is not sufficient as 24% of the parents have no clue about them. We suggest that the educators should work more with the parents in this aspect.

Figure 2: Responses of the question concerning the evaluation of portfolios by parents, the same question was addressed to educators



The educators' response in percentage was the following: 32% very important, 57% average, and 11% unimportant, whereas the parents' response was: 73% very important, 18% average and 9% unimportant.

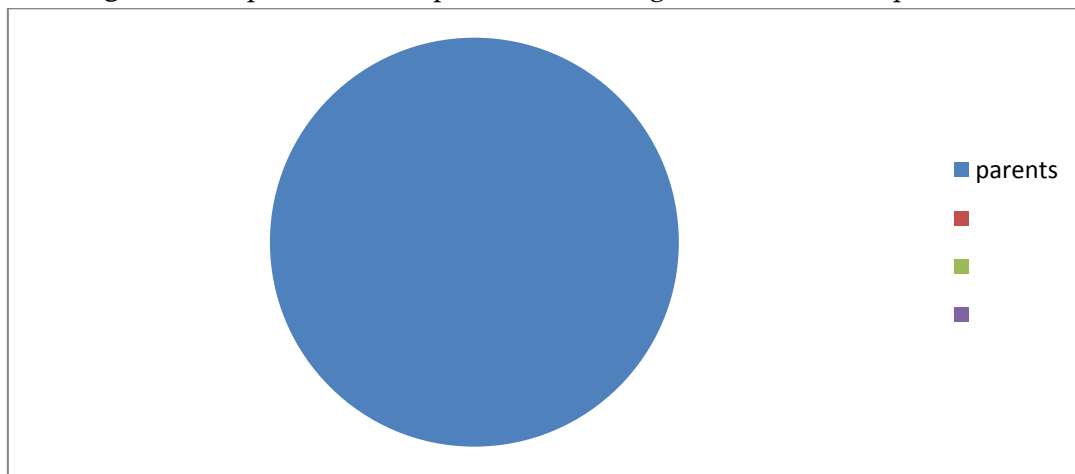
From these figures in percentage, we understand that the community of parents is not aware of the importance of their children's portfolios, but that the educators have a completely different opinion about this issue.

Concerning the percentage of parents who think that portfolios are unimportant, we think that there are several reasons that justify that percentage, among which, the

lack of cooperation between the educators and the parents, therefore the educators should work more in this regard and explain the parents the significance of the portfolios.

The question on who gets the children's portfolios after the completion of the preschool class had the same response by all the educators in this research. They all answered that the portfolios should be given to the children's parents and not to the primary school where the children enroll the first grade.

Figure 3: Responses of the question on who gets the children's portfolios



From this figure, we see that the parents get the portfolio when the children finish their preschool class in preschool institutions. We think that this is not a positive thing because portfolios must be considered an instrument in measuring the children's maturity for the first grade.

We think that this issue poses a problem which requires the attention of educators, the MEST and the experts on early childhood education and should be solved through a successful cooperation of all the parties involved in the process.

3. Conclusion

It should be recalled that this research aimed to control the cooperation between the preschool institutions and the parents about the children's portfolios.

Based on the data from the quantity survey conducted with preschool educators and the parents from Pristina, Gjilan and Ferizaj, we found out that children in preschool institutions have portfolios.

- First of all, the preschool institutions and parents have a cooperation which is not sufficient when it comes to the portfolios.

- Secondly, children in preschool institutions have portfolios (record), which are dedicated to their parents exclusively, and they are not used by their teachers in the primary school.
- Thirdly, the MEST in Kosovo does not organize activities about the portfolio which would bring together the preschool educators and the parents.

4. Recommendations

- The managers of preschool institutions and the educators must have a closer cooperation with parents whose children attend the preschool institutions in order to improve the impact of the children's portfolios.
- Preschool educators must insist on keeping files or records of the children who attend the preschool institutions so that when they enrol in the primary school, their teacher has a background on the children's progress.
- The MEST should establish a group of experts in preschool institutions to analyze the children's portfolios.
- The parents must be aware of the importance of their children's portfolios.

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