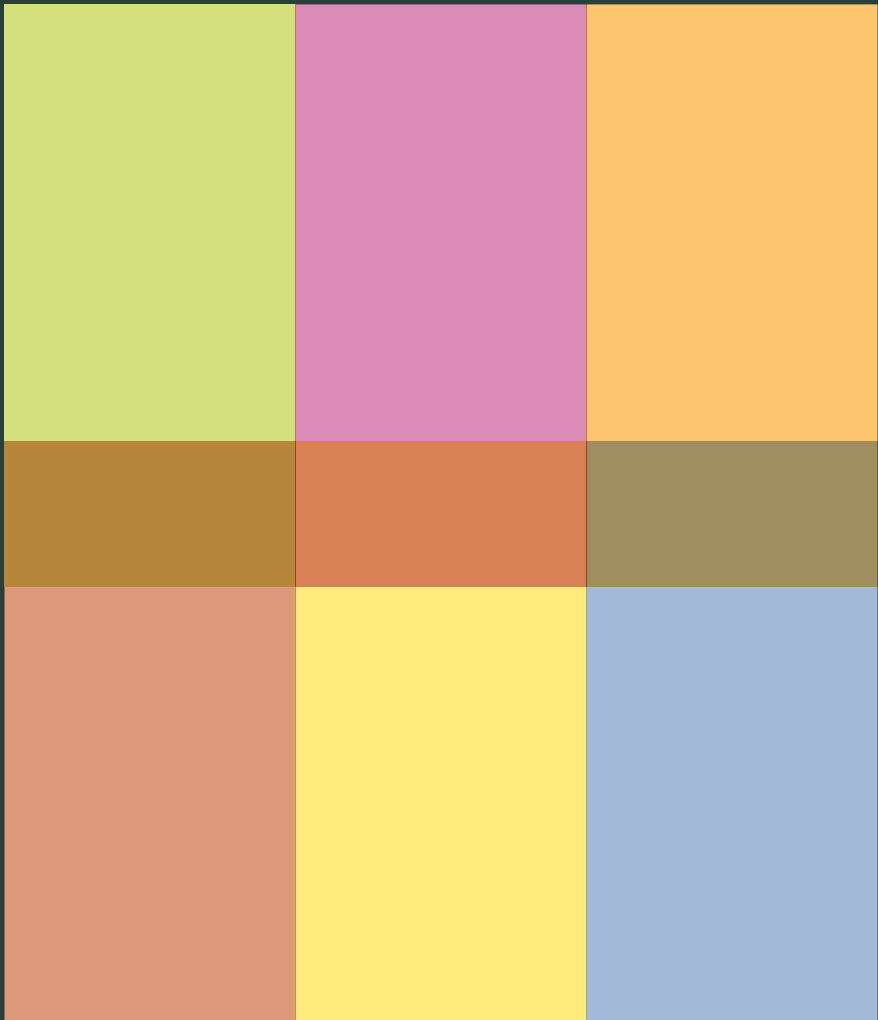


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C · E · P · S *Journal*

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The CEPS Journal is an open-access, peer-reviewed journal devoted to publishing research papers in different fields of education, including scientific.

Aims & Scope

The CEPS Journal is an international peer-reviewed journal with an international board. It publishes original empirical and theoretical studies from a wide variety of academic disciplines related to the field of Teacher Education and Educational Sciences; in particular, it will support comparative studies in the field. Regional context is stressed but the journal remains open to researchers and contributors across all European countries and worldwide. There are four issues per year, two in English and two in Slovenian (with English abstracts). Issues are focused on specific areas but there is also space for non-focused articles and book reviews.

About the Publisher

The University of Ljubljana is one of the largest universities in the region (see www.uni-lj.si) and its Faculty of Education (see www.pef.uni-lj.si), established in 1947, has the leading role in teacher education and education sciences in Slovenia. It is well positioned in regional and European cooperation programmes in teaching and research. A publishing unit oversees the dissemination of research results and informs the interested public about new trends in the broad area of teacher education and education sciences; to date, numerous monographs and publications have been published, not just in Slovenian but also in English.

In 2001, the Centre for Educational Policy Studies (CEPS; see <http://ceps.pef.uni-lj.si>) was established within the Faculty of Education to build upon experience acquired in the broad reform of the national educational system during the period of social

transition in the 1990s, to upgrade expertise and to strengthen international cooperation. CEPS has established a number of fruitful contacts, both in the region – particularly with similar institutions in the countries of the Western Balkans – and with interested partners in EU member states and worldwide.

Revija Centra za študij edukacijskih strategij je mednarodno recenzirana revija, z mednarodnim uredniškim odborom in s prostim dostopom. Namenjena je objavljanju člankov s področja izobraževanja učiteljev in edukacijskih ved.

Cilji in namen

Revija je namenjena obravnavanju naslednjih področij: poučevanje, učenje, vzgoja in izobraževanje, socialna pedagogika, specialna in rehabilitacijska pedagogika, predšolska pedagogika, edukacijske politike, supervizija, poučevanje slovenskega jezika in književnosti, poučevanje matematike, računalništva, naravoslovja in tehnike, poučevanje družboslovja in humanistike, poučevanje na področju umetnosti, visokošolsko izobraževanje in izobraževanje odraslih. Poseben poudarek bo namenjen izobraževanju učiteljev in spodbujanju njihovega profesionalnega razvoja.

V reviji so objavljeni znanstveni prispevki, in sicer teoretični prispevki in prispevki, v katerih so predstavljeni rezultati kvantitativnih in kvalitativnih empiričnih raziskav. Še posebej poudarjen je pomen komparativnih raziskav.

Revija izide štirikrat letno. Dve številki sta v angleškem jeziku, dve v slovenskem. Prispevki v slovenskem jeziku imajo angleški povzetek. Številke so tematsko opredeljene, v njih pa je prostor tudi za netematske prispevke in predstavitev ter recenzije novih publikacij.

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Editorial

The second issue of the third volume of the *CEPS Journal* focuses on the school and its environment. A wide range of topics can fit into this domain, as each school is embedded in its social context on many levels. The social and cultural aspects of the broader and direct environment influence the function and operation of school in terms of pedagogical, material and cultural sources, as well as in the sense of social capital and value, experiential, linguistic and other support to students.

Families of children and youngsters attending a particular school have the most important impact on that school. The whole array of experiences that children have in their families and within their neighbourhoods are also brought to school, and vice versa. All of the other institutions in the local community of a particular school are also influential. The quality of the interactions within schools, and the interactions of schools with their surroundings, can be understood as a process of interplay and co-creation. Adequate education means a balance between individual, social and economic aspects.

The purpose of this thematic edition is to encourage reflection on the various aspects of influences and exchanges on the axis social environment-school, to analyse mutual influences and to present practices that link schools with their local community.

With the selection of this theme, and with the associated papers, we would like to stimulate discussion on the various aspects that colour and determine relationships between schools and their environments.

In their papers, seven authors from Austria, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia discuss different aspects of this sustainable interplay.

The first paper in the thematic section of the present issue has been prepared by Sunčica Macura-Milovanović and is entitled “*Pre-Primary Education of Roma Children in Serbia: Barriers and Possibilities*”. The content of the article makes us aware of current obstacles to Roma children regarding preschool education in Serbia. Roma children are still disadvantaged in their growth in many countries. They are also under-represented in Serbian kindergartens, even they grow up in extremely deprived conditions and would therefore benefit greatly from inclusion, as it is well known that the early integration of children into preschool education stimulates and improves their psychosocial growth. The paper analyses the main barriers to the access of Roma children in the system of pre-primary education, as well as discussing possible ways to overcome these barriers. As a transitional solution, the author proposes comprehensive community-based programmes that could contribute to better care for young

Roma children prior to their inclusion in integrative/desegregated programmes in preschool institutions.

The second paper, entitled “*School and the Cultural-Heritage Environment: Pedagogical, Creative and Artistic Aspects*” has been prepared by Hicela Ivon and Dubravka Kuščević. Attention is drawn to new ways and concrete opportunities to integrate the cultural-heritage environment into school education using a ‘learning-centred teaching’ approach. The authors advocate the idea that learning, both in and out of school, is a cultural act, and that students can, with the help of teachers and other important adults, develop and adjust their behaviour and lifestyle to their cultural milieu. They introduce an integrative approach to learning and teaching – Terhart’s (2001) concept of ‘learning-centred teaching’ – that links cognitive, social and moral aspects. In the second part of the paper, the relationship between school and its cultural-heritage environment is discussed from the creative perspective and from the perspective of art. Through artistic expression when learning about the cultural-heritage and natural school environment, the paper illustrates the active learning of students and their identity development, as well as their acquisition of sensitivity towards the arts.

The third article has been prepared by three authors – Renata Miljević-Ridički, Tea Pahić and Marija Šarić – and is entitled “*A Croatian Study of Practitioners’ and Kindergarten Teacher Students’ Opinions of their Role in Children’s Lives*”. It deals with the preschool period, providing insight into practitioners’ and kindergarten teacher students’ perceptions of and attitudes towards their work by analysing the answers of 69 practitioners and 65 first-year university kindergarten teacher students to the incomplete sentences: “*Children are like... because ...*” and “*Kindergarten teachers are like... because...*”. The authors determine that students and kindergarten teachers perceive children in a very positive way and evaluate their present and future occupation as highly valuable. The greatest difference between the two groups of interviewees occurs in their perception of working conditions, with students displaying a more idealistic approach.

The fourth paper, written by Arijana Mataga Tintor, bears the title “*Community Resilience and the Fulfilment of Child Rights in the Family, School and Community*”. The central topic is the experience of researching the resilience of the local community and the fulfilment of child rights, focusing particularly on the right to participate. The local community of Velika Gorica was chosen for the study, with qualitative data being collected through interviews in seven focus groups in which children, parents and teachers took part. The concept of resilience produced ambiguous reactions among children, parents and teachers,

being perceived in two ways: as “positive” and “negative”. All three groups of respondents (children, parents and teachers) agree that there is a connection between child rights and resilience, and that the relationship is conditioned by interaction.

Dejana Bouillet’s contribution, the fifth paper in this thematic edition, deals with the theme of inclusive education: “*Some Aspects of Collaboration in Inclusive Education – Teachers’ Experiences*”. The author has devoted special attention to the resources of professional support available to teachers in Croatia, as well as to investigating teachers’ views on the content and usefulness of this support. The results highlight several problems: in both the organisation and definition of collaborative work in inclusive education, in the small number of professionals available to support teachers and students in this process, and in the lack of collaboration between schools and professionals in local communities in Croatia. With these findings, the paper emphasises the importance of the cooperation of the school with the local community.

The sixth paper has been written by Arno Heimgartner and Stephan Sting. Entitled “*The Establishment of School Social Work in Austria – From a Project to a Regular Offer*”, it introduces the present situation and the basic challenges of school social work in Austria. The article is based on empirical studies carried out by two universities (Klagenfurt and Graz), including the views of “pupils”, “teachers” and “parents” on the theme. The analysis characterises school social work as a multi-thematic service (covering areas such as conflicts, love, problems at school, and problems of the family) that must oppose reduction to single problem areas such as drug abuse or violence. Structural analyses expose the significance of spatial conditions and the competence of personnel, as well as the social-spatial network.

The last thematic paper, prepared by Metka Kuhar and Herwig Reiter, deals with the theme of parental authority and is entitled “*Towards a Concept of Parental Authority in Adolescence*”. The author claims that the notion of ‘parental authority’ remains largely unspecified. The goal of the paper is therefore to undertake a critical review of conceptualisations of parental authority in some selected developmental-psychological approaches. The author identifies the absence of an explicit and integrated theoretical and empirical conceptualisation of parental authority, as well as a certain lack of consistency in the application of the concept, and suggests some initial steps towards a concept of parental authority as relational, dynamic and co-constituted in the sense of a joint product and outcome of family relationships.

The final paper, prepared by Marianne Juntunen, located in the Varja section, deals with an issue that also has a certain connection with the

environment: “Life-Cycle Thinking in Inquiry-Based Sustainability Education – Effects on Students’ Attitudes towards Chemistry and Environmental Literacy”. The aim of the study is to improve the quality of students’ environmental literacy and sustainability education in chemistry teaching by combining the socio-scientific issue of life-cycle thinking with inquiry-based learning approaches. The case study presents results from an inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project: an interdisciplinary teaching model designed by chemistry teachers. The study shows that the project positively affected students’ attitudes towards chemistry learning. There were evident changes in the environmental literacy of the students, who emphasised the importance of environmental protection and recycling, but perceived that changing their own behaviour is still difficult. The paper emphasises that inquiry-based teaching in interdisciplinary environmental education can be an effective approach to motivating secondary school students to learn chemistry, as well as offering teachers an opportunity to design chemistry lessons comprising sustainable development principles.

As was pointed out at the beginning of this editorial, the scope of the topics in the domain school and the environment can be illustrated from various perspectives. The papers presented open and discuss some of these perspectives, providing us with certain insights and data on these complex relationships.

ALENKA KOBOLT AND ANTONIJA ŽIŽAK

Pre-Primary Education of Roma Children in Serbia: Barriers and Possibilities

SUNČICA MACURA-MILOVANOVIĆ¹

∞ In Serbia, as in the other countries of the Western Balkans and South-Eastern Europe, the most disadvantaged communities belong to the Roma minority. The present paper demonstrates the conditions of Roma preschool children in Serbia: primarily their early education, but also habitation and health in Roma settlements. The data highlight the under-representation of Roma children in pre-primary education, although their growing up in extremely deprived settlements would suggest a need for their earliest possible inclusion in pre-primary services. The paper analyses the following barriers to the access of Roma children to the system of pre-primary education: the poverty of Roma families; discrimination and prejudice towards Roma; the lack of intercultural provision; insufficient inter-sectorial cooperation; the underdeveloped network of preschool institutions; and the absence of kindergartens in Roma settlements. In addition, possible ways to increase the coverage of Roma children in pre-primary education are discussed. As a transitory solution, the paper proposes comprehensive community-based programmes that could contribute to the education, care, health and overall development of young Roma children before their inclusion in desegregated programmes in preschool institutions.

Keywords: Roma children; Pre-primary education; Comprehensive community-based programmes; Serbia

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Predšolska vzgoja romskih otrok v Srbiji: ovire in možnosti

SUNČICA MACURA-MILOVANOVIĆ

☞ V Srbiji in tudi drugih državah vzhodnega Balkana in jugovzhodne Evrope je romska skupnost ena najbolj deprivilegiranih. Prispevek obravnava razmere romskih predšolskih otrok v Srbiji – primarno njihovo zgodnejše izobraževanje, ob tem pa tudi bivanjske in zdravstvene razmere v romskih naseljih. Podatki kažejo, da je število romskih otrok, ki so vključeni v predšolsko vzgojo, zelo nizko, čeprav bi – glede na to, da odraščajo v močno nespodbudnem okolju – potrebovali čim hitrejšo vključitev v predšolske ustanove. Prispevek analizira naslednje ovire, ki otežujejo vključitev romskih otrok v sistem predšolske vzgoje: revščina romskih družin, diskriminacija in predsodki pred Romi, pomanjkanje medkulturnih predpisov, pomanjkljivo sodelovanje med ustanovami, nerazvita mreža predšolskih ustanov in odsotnost vrtcev v romskih naseljih. Prispevek obravnava tudi mogoče rešitve za povečanje vključenosti romskih otrok v predšolsko vzgojo. Kot prehodna rešitev so v prispevku predlagani obsežni javni programi, ki bi lahko prispevali k izobrazbi, negi, zdravju in k celostnemu razvoju romskih otrok še pred vključitvijo v vključujoče programe predšolske vzgoje.

Ključne besede: romski otroci; predšolska vzgoja; celostni programi za skupnost; Srbija

Introduction

Research-based literature clearly shows that high quality pre-primary education, e.g., early childhood care and education (ECCE) (an international phrase that emphasises the continuum of education and care needed for young children) does benefit children in the long term, particularly the most disadvantaged children. Therefore, ECCE is explicitly defined “as an effective means to establish the basis for further learning, preventing school drop-out, increasing equity of outcomes and overall skill levels” (Eurydice, 2009).

There are, however, some intermediary factors that influence the effects of ECCE. For example, it must begin as early as possible: at age two or three (Eurydice Network, 2009; Sylva et al., 2004). Also, high quality ECCE provided on a large scale (in a sufficient ‘dose’) forces the emergence of certain school skills in the areas of language, literacy, maths and science, as well as supporting the development of young children’s learning-related social-emotional skills, in particular self-regulation and social competence (McClelland et al., 2006). If ECCE programmes are expanded by incorporating strategies to work with parents and families in order to support and empower them, the effect on IQ and school achievement is stronger and more durable. In addition, there are positive effects on social-emotional levels, such as better self-esteem, work attitude and sociability (Leseman, 2009).

A systematic review of longitudinal cost-benefit studies of early interventions, presented in *Early Childhood and Care Education: Key lessons from research to policy makers* (European Commission (EC), 2009), identified three major US studies that demonstrate a significant influence on children’s development and further education: the Perry HighScope, the Abecedarian, and the Chicago Child-Parent Centres. These programmes were carried out in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s and in ghettoised areas with mostly African-American and Hispanic children. Each of the studies reported significant longitudinal outcomes of the respective intervention.

The Perry HighScope study, for example, monitored 123 high-risk African-American children from ages three to four through the period 1962–1967, after they had been divided into one group participating interactively in daily preschool with weekly involvement with the family and a second (control) group that had no intervention. At the age of 40 years, the adults who had been in the pre-primary programme had higher earnings, were more likely to hold a job, had committed fewer crimes, and were more likely to have graduated from high school than those who had been in the control group (HighScope, 2004). The Chicago study also reported a significant difference in juvenile crime rates

between the intervention and the control group (EC, 2009).

More recently, the effects of ECCE programmes were studied longitudinally in the UK, with a sample of approximately 3,000 preschool-aged children (Sylva et al., 2004). The experimental groups of children attended diverse early education programmes for various lengths of time, while the control group did not attend early education. Study results show that the duration of early education attendance and the timing of commencement (at or before three years) are related positively to better intellectual development. Early education also fosters children's independence, concentration and sociability, evidenced not only at entry to school but also at the end of the second year in school. One conclusion of the study is that disadvantaged children can benefit from high quality early education, particularly in socially mixed groups (Sylva et al., 2004).

The characteristics of the most effective ECCE programmes could be summarised as follows: they are intensive, early starting (as early as possible, preferably at age two or three), child-focused, centre-based (rather than home-based), with strong parental involvement, parent education, educational home activities and measures for family support (Eurydice, 2009).

In addition to the benefits of ECCE programmes for the development and further education of disadvantaged children, they are also of vital importance for the progress of any country and its economic development. Investment in the coverage of young children with quality ECCE programmes decreases the costs of compensatory and special education, social spending and criminal court costs; furthermore, it increases incomes and taxes paid, and has significant positive effects on the economy of a country due to the increase of GDP through the improved competencies of manpower (Lynch, 2005). In comparison with other measures to stimulate economic growth, investment in quality ECCE has significantly stronger and longer lasting effects. This is why the complete coverage of three- and four-year-olds in ECCE is one of the priorities in developed countries (Ivić, Pešikan, & Jankov, 2010).

The general accessibility of high quality pre-primary education can be particularly important for the mitigation of inequalities caused by factors such as the low educational level of parents, the difference in language that the child speaks at home and the language of instruction at school, and parents' socioeconomic status (Ivić, Pešikan, & Jankov, 2010). The Nobel Prize laureate Heckman has argued that high quality early childhood education and care provides one of the few effective policy means of increasing social and economic opportunities for disadvantaged communities, and, therefore, for society as a whole (Heckman, 2006).

In Serbia, as in the other countries of the Western Balkans and South-Eastern Europe, the most disadvantaged communities belong to the Roma

minority (Save the Children, 2001). The present paper demonstrates the conditions in which preschool Roma children live in Serbia: primarily their early education, but also habitation, health and development in Roma settlements. The data highlight the under-representation of Roma children in pre-primary education, although their growing up in extremely deprived settlements, such as slums, would suggest a need for their earliest possible inclusion in pre-primary² services. The paper analyses barriers to the access of Roma children to the system of pre-primary education and aims to answer the following question: What are the possibilities for enhancing the inclusion of Roma children in pre-primary education?

The paper draws on the Roma Early Childhood Inclusion (RECI) Overview Report based on research conducted under the leadership of Dr John Bennett. The research was conducted in the Czech Republic, Romania, Serbia, and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and was jointly funded by the Open Society Foundations, the Roma Education Fund and UNICEF. The RECI Overview Report (Bennett, 2012) is an interpretative summary of the four national reports. The author of the present paper participated in the RECI project as one of the researchers and writers of the national report for Serbia.

Roma Children in Serbia

The Roma are the poorest and most vulnerable social group, living on the margins of society: 60.5% of the Roma population falls within the category of “very poor”, compared with 6.1% of the average population (UNICEF, 2007). According to the last census, taken in 2011 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2011), there are 147,604 Roma in Serbia, representing 2.05% of the total population of Serbia and the second largest national minority. However, alternative data based on calculations by Roma NGOs and international organisations indicate that there are around 350,000 Roma in Serbia, with the estimated number of Roma children aged 0-18 being 144,000 (Bennett, 2012).

Pre-primary education for Roma children: access and quality

Pre-primary education in Serbia is organised for children aged from 6 months to 6.5 years. The *preparatory preschool programme* (PPP), for children aged from 5.5 to 6.5 years (in the last preschool year), is compulsory for all

2 In the present paper, the term “pre-primary” will be used rather than ECCE when referring to publicly subsidised provision for children under compulsory school age in Serbia, because it corresponds more adequately to national education policy and academic terminology (which generally refers to “preschool upbringing and education”, and does not explicitly assume the concept of “care”).

children, while *nurseries* (for children aged 0–3) and *kindergartens* (for children aged 3–5) are voluntary.

The free-of-charge PPP was introduced in 2010 (The Law on Preschool Education, 2010) with the aim of providing an equal start for disadvantaged children at the beginning of their schooling. Attending a PPP should support Roma children in overcoming the language barrier, increase enrolment in the first grade of primary school, and decrease enrolments in special schools. However, some of the greatest challenges for the implementation of the PPP are the lack of capacities of preschool institutions (PI) and the lack of disaggregated data on Roma children (Baucal & Stojanović, 2010).

The latest results of the *Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 4* (MICS) (UNICEF, 2011) show that the percentage of Roma children covered by pre-primary education is significantly lower than in the general population of children, as the following data illustrate:

- 15.03% of the general population of children are enrolled in nurseries, compared to less than 2% of Roma children (Bennett, 2012);
- 44% of the general population of children are enrolled in kindergartens, compared to only 8% of Roma children living in settlements (UNICEF, 2011);
- 97% of the general population of children enrolled in the first grade of primary school attended a PPP in the previous year, compared to 78% of Roma children living in settlements (UNICEF, 2011).

Although the enrolment of Roma children in pre-primary education is lower than in the general population of children, it is important to stress that the coverage of Roma children has increased significantly in the last five years. The results of MISC 3 show that in 2005 4% of Roma children were enrolled in kindergartens (UNICEF, 2006), while only 45% of Roma children were enrolled in a PPP (Living Standards Measurement Study, 2008). This increase is obviously the result of the introduction of new laws and strategies in the area of Roma education, and the implementation of numerous measures, such as the work of health mediators.

Concerns are, however, raised about the quality of the PPP. As pointed out in an OECD report (2006), in cases where early education services are regarded as a downward extension of the school system, rather than as a system specifically designed to meet the needs of young children, provision may be inappropriate, with formalised teaching of large groups relying too heavily on didactic approaches, exaggerated emphasis on targets and testing, and rigid regimes taking place in unsuitable spaces (OECD, 2006). Moreover, some studies confirm that effective early education programmes focusing on developing children's general

cognitive abilities have more impact on later-life outcomes than those focusing on early literacy and numeracy, which result in more time-limited outcomes only at school (Chambers et al., 2010).

Therefore, even for some of the Roma children included in a PPP, the benefits seem doubtful. Case studies point to the “*schoolification*” of work with preschool children. PPP staff (consisting of primary school teachers and kindergarten teachers) are using content and instruction strategies more suitable for school than for kindergarten, such as teaching children to read and write, activities lasting for 30 minutes, and demands placed on children similar to those in school, including doing homework (Pešikan & Ivić, 2009).

The key factor that contributes to the quality of the PPP is the pre-service education and in-service training of staff who carry out the PPP. The challenges are greater in environments where the PPP is conducted by school teachers, because kindergarten teachers are better prepared for working with preschool children due to their pre-service education. However, the PPP is frequently conducted by young kindergarten teachers without the sufficient experience, knowledge and competencies necessary for programme adjustments to disadvantaged children. More experienced kindergarten teachers avoid working in a PPP, because it covers only 75% of working hours, and therefore results in a lower salary (Pešikan & Ivić, 2009, p. 27).

Housing of Roma children: growing up in an environment of poverty

The issue of education of Roma children and their under-representation in pre-primary education, particularly in kindergartens, can hardly be addressed without taking into consideration the extremely poor housing conditions and degraded environmental surroundings in which they grow up. The poverty level for Roma children is especially high: 67% of children from Roma settlements are poor, and 62% of Roma households with children are living below the poverty line (UNICEF, 2007). According to the recent UNICEF study *Women Motherhood Early Childhood Development* (UNICEF, 2011), poverty increases family stress. Studies show that in households below the poverty threshold, one in four mothers of infants experiences moderate-to-severe levels of depressive symptoms. When mothers are depressed, children are less likely to receive adequate nutrition or preventative healthcare (UNICEF, 2011).

Fifty percent of the Roma population in Serbia live in the 573 Roma settlements scattered throughout the country. Of these settlements, 44% are slums: favela-like settlements, in shelters patched together out of mud, cardboard, metal sheets and plastic. According to the official definition, these settlements are

“illegal”, which means that their inhabitants do not have building permits, planning documents or regulated property issues. These settlements lack basic infrastructure: it is estimated that 35% do not have a water system, 65% do not have a sewage system, 45% do not have proper streets, and around 10% do not have an electricity supply network. The slums are overpopulated, with a low number of housing units per family and limited or no access to public services, public transportation, kindergartens and schools (Strategy for the Improvement of the Status of Roma in the Republic of Serbia, 2009, pp. 16-17). Therefore, 24% of Roma parents state the distance to preschool facilities and the lack of transportation to kindergartens as reasons for not enrolling their children in kindergartens (UNICEF, 2011). Roma settlements are often located under bridges, squeezed between factories, in the dump areas, or other degraded sites. Members of mainstream society, including staff of various state services, rarely visit Roma settlements defined as ghettos (Mitrović, 1992).

How does living in Roma settlements influence the health and development of young Roma children? According to the preliminary results of MICS 4 (UNICEF, 2011), health conditions of Roma children growing up in a slum environment are significantly worse than in the general population. Some of the striking results are:

- the Roma infant mortality rate (IMR) is estimated at 14 per thousand live births, and the probability of dying under the age of five is 15 per thousand live births, whereas, on the level of Serbia as a whole, IMR and the mortality rates of children under the age of five stand at 7 and 8 respectively per thousand live births;
- the nutritional status of Roma children is poor and malnourishment is several times higher than the national average: 6.6% of Roma children are underweight, compared to 1.6% of the general population, and 23.6% are stunted, compared to 6.6% of the general population;
- in the Roma population, 10.2% of infants have a low birth weight (less than 2,500 grams at birth), which is more than twice as high as in the general population (4.8%);
- in Roma settlements, 14% of children under five years of age had had diarrhoea in the two weeks preceding the survey, compared to 7% in the general population; 18% of children aged 0–59 months in Roma settlements were reported to have had symptoms of pneumonia, compared to 5% in the general population.

These data clearly show that the health and early development of Roma children is not adequately supported. As Bennett (2012) points out, childhood

is a critical stage, during which extreme poverty and malnutrition have lasting negative effects on subsequent health and development. “Unnecessarily high mortality rates should not leave indifferent any society that is based on human rights and social justice. Neither should the effects of ill-health and early malnutrition in children who survive be a matter of indifference. Infant malnutrition and stunting strongly impact on cognitive development and education attainment” (Bennett, 2012, pp. 34-35). It is obvious that there is a strong need to support Roma maternal and infant nutrition and health. Such support should begin before childbirth and continue throughout early childhood.

In addition, Roma mothers lack both support and information regarding health issues in the prenatal and postnatal periods. The majority of women from focus groups are convinced that they do not need advice about infant care, since they already know how to take care of a baby. Young Roma mothers (16% of Roma girls in Roma settlements are married before 15 years, UNICEF, 2011) rely on traditional knowledge and advice from older women within the family and social network. One possible consequence is that young Roma mothers do not have enough knowledge regarding children’s health, nutrition and vaccinations. When the mother is poor, illiterate and has limited access to information on health issues, she is less likely to have sufficient opportunities and awareness to ensure her child’s optimal health and nutritional status (UNICEF, 2011). Although public nurses are obliged to visit Roma women in settlements – and do so in 80% of cases (UNICEF, 2011) – for young, uneducated Roma mothers this might not be enough. Just as young disadvantaged children need more years of early education, young Roma mothers living in shacks without water and electricity need more visits and outreach from public health services.

Barriers to the access of Roma children to pre-primary education

The issue of barriers to the inclusion of Roma children in pre-primary education is a complex one because it comprises numerous interlinked and overlapping factors that contribute to exclusion, disadvantage and ethically unacceptable inequalities in pre-primary education (Macura-Milovanović et al., 2013). Some of the major barriers to access and equitable participation of Roma children in preschool education in Serbia, identified in various research and reports (Bennett, 2012; Macura-Milovanović et al., 2013; Open Society Foundations, 2007; UNICEF, 2007, 2011) are: the poverty of Roma families; majority discrimination and prejudice towards Roma; the lack of intercultural provision; insufficient inter-sectorial cooperation; the under-developed network of

preschool institutions and the absence of kindergartens in Roma settlements.

Lack of financial support for disadvantaged children

The poverty of Roma parents, e.g., the lack of financial support for children at potential educational disadvantage, is one of the major causes of the low coverage of Roma children with pre-primary education. Roma children fail to attend kindergarten due to financial reasons in 38% of cases, while in the general population this is true in only 12% of cases (UNICEF, 2007). However, even the free-of-charge compulsory PPP contains hidden costs, e.g., for didactic materials that parents are obliged to buy. In addition, poor Roma families cannot afford the costs of childrens' hygiene and clothes, as the following statement by a Roma mother illustrates: *"Who can pay for kindergarten? Books are expensive, and children need clothes, shoes, snacks... everything has to be paid for. I can't earn for everything by myself, I don't have money to pay even for electricity. I know that it would be better for children to go to kindergarten and to learn something. But I can't help it, that is our destiny"* (Živković, 2012, p. 34).

Discrimination against Roma

Discriminatory behaviours towards Roma in the field of pre-primary education are not always easily recognised, as in cases of the denial of Roma children's access to kindergartens or giving false information to Roma parents. For example, Roma parents are told that there are no available places in PIs, are advised to send their children to other, often remote, locations, and that attending kindergartens needs to be paid monthly per child (although according to the *Law on Preschool Education, 2010*, underprivileged children have priority for enrolment). Uneducated Roma parents, who are not informed about their rights but are aware of discrimination and negative attitudes towards them and their children, easily abandon efforts to enrol their children in kindergartens, as the following statement of Roma mother illustrates: *"Who am I? I am nobody and nothing. People (the majority population) don't see us, they won't talk with us... and who cares if Gypsy children don't go to kindergarten? That is normal here, and they won't accept us"* (Živković, 2012, p. 45).

In other cases, discriminatory behaviour of kindergarten staff and non-Roma parents towards Roma children is openly demonstrated. In their study, Pešikan and Ivić (2009) refer to such a case of discriminatory behaviour towards Roma children, in which non-Roma parents, dissatisfied with the high number of Roma children enrolled, refused to bring their children to

kindergarten. The problem was “solved” in the following way: Roma children were transferred to other kindergartens, irrespective of how much further they were from their place of residence. Even though there was an appeal for official intervention, the city authorities failed to respond or even answer the appeal (Pešikan & Ivić, 2009, p. 23). Roma parents and children suffer deeply when they experience discrimination from teachers and/or peers. As Pantić, Ivošević and Closs argue, “Teachers who, knowingly or unknowingly behave exclusively and in discriminative ways must either be unaware that they are modelling intolerance and injustice for their pupils, or they must believe that their views are justified. Neither is acceptable” (Pantić, Ivošević, & Closs, 2010, p. 90). The behaviour of discriminative teachers models attitudes of majority children towards their minority peers, possibly contributing to the latter group’s social and educational exclusion.

Lack of intercultural provision in preschool institutions

The lack of intercultural provision in PIs is, on a concrete level, manifested through a failure to introduce Roma culture, e.g., signs and information in Romani language, as well as content regarding tradition, customs, culture and language. However, as childrearing is inevitably linked to culture, minority parents and children need to be reassured that they are fully entitled to retain their culture, language and cultural practices, and that these will be respected by majority staff and children within PIs.

On a more subtle, symbolic level, the lack of intercultural provision is reflected by the domination of the values and norms of mainstream society. Kindergarten teachers’ perception of Roma parents’ behaviour reveal concealed or open criticism of Roma parent’s parental competencies. Negative attitudes towards Roma children and parents are illustrated in statements (shared by many teachers in primary schools), such as the following: “*Roma parents are not motivated to send their children to the PPP... parents do not get involved in the work of the PPP... children have no support at home, many Roma parents enrol their children only because the PPP is compulsory*” (kindergarten teacher, reported by Pešikan & Ivić, 2009, p. 34). However, the majority of the female respondents in a UNICEF study (2011) were very interested in sending their children to preschool or alternative early childhood development centres run by NGOs, as they were aware of the benefits of preschool education.

The above quote illustrates a common perception of problems in the education of Roma children by members of the majority population. They judge the behaviour of Roma even though they have little knowledge and/or

understanding of people living in extreme poverty, whose priorities are directed at meeting the basic needs of food, clothing and health, as well as the physical safety of children in the hostile environment of the slums. The RECI Report cites Vandebroek, who reported a similar belief regarding immigrant parents in Belgium, highlighting a tendency within the majority population to culturalise the 'deviant' behaviour of minority groups, e.g., "Immigrant parents don't like to send their children to services before the age of four". Vandebroek recommends less culturalisation of motive but more culturalisation of the programmes in which immigrant and ethnic children are enrolled (Bennett, 2012, p.42).

In the conflict between the values and models of childrearing in the family and in PIs, some Roma children may drop out, as the following statement by a Roma father illustrates: *"My youngest daughter is three years old. We enrolled her in kindergarten, but she does not want to go. I can't force her to go, she refuses any company except us (father and older sisters). I would prefer her to attend, but she doesn't want to, she cries all the time."* (Živković, 2012, p. 36).

The lack of intercultural provision is also reflected in the intentions of kindergarten teachers to "mend" Roma children in a way that corresponds to their own implicit ideas about "good" and "well mannered" children. However, the ideas of kindergarten teachers about education and childrearing may differ significantly from those of Roma parents. Rosenthal (1999) argues that minority parents rightly observe discrepancies between socialisation practices in PIs and their own socialisation goals. According to Farran (2000), this problem could be dealt with by organising preschool education that better matches the families' childrearing goals and values, and by employing staff from the minority communities. Minority families have to deal with a great deal of stress regarding family income, unemployment, daily childrearing and the neighbourhood in which they live. Trying to meet the requirements of personal involvement in an education programme, or observing the time schedule and rules of the PI, may be an extra burden for them.

Insufficient inter-sectorial cooperation

Meeting the needs of preschool children assumes the interconnection and coordination of different services and ministries (education, health, social protection). Insufficient cooperation between ministries (who have different goals, different personnel, different modes of intervention, different offices and services – all working for the same children) leads to a fragmented approach in meeting the educational, health and social protection needs of Roma children.

What occurs in practice is both duplicated services and large service gaps.

In some cases, lack of cooperation and complex administrative procedures prevent or prolong access to PIs and schools, as well as to personal documents, social benefits, etc. This leads to demotivation and a loss of Roma trust in the goodwill and ability of state institutions to provide them with the necessary assistance and support. The result is that not all parents want their children to be enrolled in PIs. From their perspective, pre-primary education seems either unavailable in general, or unavailable specifically to their family or community.

Proper information about the availability of pre-primary education services – about vacant places for Roma children in kindergartens, transport from home to the PI, financial support for hidden costs, assurance for Roma parents that their children will be treated adequately and that they are welcome – are problems that Roma parents see as obstacles to the enrolment of their children in the system of pre-primary education (UNICEF, 2011). However, these problems could be resolved through cooperation and the clear distribution of duties and responsibilities among various ministries and the relevant services.

Underdeveloped network of preschool institutions

Last but not least, there is the barrier of the underdeveloped network of PIs. Due to the lack of buildings and employees, the network of preschool institutions can not meet the need for pre-primary education in the whole territory of Serbia. Therefore, the coverage of children is insufficient in the areas in which it is most needed, as is the case of Roma settlements. Furthermore, a weak network prevents the realisation of the PPP as a part of compulsory primary education (Ivić et al., 2010, p. 68).

Finally, a special challenge arises where there are no kindergartens available, as is the case in isolated Roma settlements and slums. In the following subsection, one potential solution for overcoming the barriers listed above will be discussed.

Community-Based Programmes in Roma Settlements

What can be done to provide pre-primary education to Roma children living in poverty and in isolated settlements? One of the solutions proposed in the RECI Overview Report is to conceive a comprehensive, multidimensional intervention model that integrates health, care and education services for the communities where Roma mothers and children live. Such a service model

should include prenatal and postnatal health, parenting and adult education, and play and stimulation programmes for toddlers, conducted in the relevant Romani dialect, with a particular focus on the education of girls. This could be achieved by the local health and paediatric services. As the RECI Overview Report stresses, such a model could be realised only in consultation with Roma communities and NGOs, and with the help of Roma health and education assistants (Bennett, 2012, p. 62).

Bearing in mind the health and living conditions of young Roma children in slums, as described above, it seems obvious that such community-based programmes are desperately needed for children until the age of three, four or five years (Bennett, 2012, p. 58). However, it is important to stress that programmes in Roma settlements could only be justified as a transitory solution, i.e., as the first step towards subsequent enrolment of Roma children in kindergartens and the PPP, and their full education and social inclusion. In other words, these programmes could contribute to the health and development of young Roma children before their inclusion in desegregated programmes in preschool institutions.

Although such a solution is contentious, both from Roma and non-Roma perspectives, due to the risk of further segregation of Roma children, it seems that, for the time being and in the circumstances as they are, this could be the only solution. Under the current circumstances, where housing segregation in Roma slums already exists, and while Roma children are very young, their regular attendance in PIs is unlikely if the institutions are located far from the settlements, as is the case at present. This is especially true during cold winters and when there is no money or public transportation. "In these cases, services need to be brought to where people are, with the support and input of the local community. This manner of programming keeps the child within the family circle and has the advantage of raising community knowledge and, if properly organised, of providing local employment" (Bennett, 2012, p. 58). This viewpoint is echoed by a Roma NGO leader: *"I think that work in the local community should be conducted with children between 0 and 5 years of age, to start from birth, both with parents and children. Practically, when the time comes for the PPP, Roma children would be as ready for school as any other non-Roma child and parent. And I think that this would be far cheaper, from a financial point of view. This would involve a global approach to Roma families and the Roma community, by forming multi-functional centres in Roma settlements"*.

The features of a comprehensive model can be found in certain community-based programmes implemented in the last decade by Roma and non-Roma NGOs in various districts throughout Serbia. The following list is by no means exhaustive:

- The project *Kindergarten as a Family Centre in Roma Settlements* was carried out in 10 locations (1997–2005, supported by the Open Society Institute, Fund for an Open Society in Serbia). Roma children (3–7 years old) participated in high quality education programmes based on the Step by Step methodology, in newly built kindergartens in Roma community centres. Subsequently, all of the children from these Roma groups were enrolled in mainstream schools. Furthermore, efforts were made for kindergartens in local communities to be integrated into the regular school system (Open Society Foundations, 2007, p. 37).
- The project *Slum Upgrading Model in Deponija Roma Enclave*, implemented by the NGOs Society for the Improvement of Local Roma Communities (SILRC), Roma Hart and Bibija – Roma Women Centre (funded by the EC, NOVIB and UNICEF, 2000–2004) in Belgrade. This project consisted of several programmes concerning education, housing, health, women's programmes and employment, all carried out in the settlement. Once installed, education programmes were attended daily by around 100 children aged 3 to 15 years. The majority of pre-school and school-age children were subsequently included in primary school (Macura-Milovanović, 2006).
- From 2002, SILRC implemented the project *Improvement of Roma Education in Southern Serbia: Developmental Education Centres* (supported by UNICEF in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and local municipalities) in nine of the poorest towns in the south of Serbia. Some of the most important results of the projects relate to the high enrolment rate of Roma children in the PPP, the small percentage of drop-out after the 4th grade of primary school, and the large percentage of children enrolled in secondary education (Bauca & Stojanović, 2010, p. 235).

There are several interrelated components of community programmes that contribute to their efficiency: establishing and maintaining trusting relationships with Roma children and parents, a Roma community approach, and the high quality of kindergarten programmes (Macura-Milovanović, Tatić-Janevski, Kovačević, & Arsić, 2010).

The aforementioned examples of successful programmes implemented in settlements illustrate the huge efforts of NGOs, who aim to compensate for the missing link: the complex trust-building process between institutional services and the Roma. Only trusting Roma parents will accept the advice of kindergarten teachers regarding the nurturing, health, learning and development of children. Therefore, kindergarten staff should be trained to actively listen to

parents (their needs and feelings, fears and worries), in order to establish a basis for trusting relationships.

There are no uniform solutions for all situations and each context, no ready-made recipes. It is necessary to adjust state services to Roma children and parents (not vice versa), to be creative and willing to search for the best possible solutions. This is why it is necessary to establish direct contact with Roma families in settlements, e.g., a community approach. Instead of the insensitivity and arrogance of imposing the values and standards of mainstream society, solutions should be created with Roma, who could choose among the alternatives offered in a clear and sincere manner, with a detailed explanation of the consequences of any alternative chosen by Roma. Neither children nor parents can be regarded simply as clients of a preschool or other institution pretending to have an exclusive claim to knowledge of what is right or wrong, and rejecting the very idea of the necessity of adapting to Roma needs.

The high quality of kindergarten programmes for Roma children is related to low child/staff ratios, experienced, well-trained teachers who are capable and motivated to maintain social and instructional interactions with children that foster their academic, language and social competencies. The continuity of children's experience is significantly improved when parents and kindergarten teachers adopt consistent approaches to socialisation, daily routines, child development and learning. In order to avoid assimilation of Roma children, continual reconstruction of the daily practice of kindergartens and intensive interaction with children and families is needed.

Conclusions

With funding representing only 0.43% of GDP, pre-primary education in Serbia is underfunded (Bennett, 2012) and underdeveloped, despite the proven benefits to the child, the economy and society. Increasing coverage of Roma children in pre-primary education is an undertaking that is unquestionably necessary but very complex. Even though the state creates a new social and political context through the adoption of new education laws and strategies, trying to meet the needs of marginalised groups and individuals, in practice, institutions fail to utilise available potentials in order to efficiently solve the accumulated problems. If Roma children are to have a fair start in life, the state and its institutions should take the responsibility to help all children achieve their full potential, whatever their background or circumstances. The state and its institutions should take actions to support disadvantaged children, because it is crucial to help them to fulfil their potential.

What actions are needed to support disadvantaged children?

It is unquestionable that the best solution is to include all Roma children in state preschool institutions at the earliest possible age, in high quality programmes conducted by interculturally sensitive and motivated staff ready to reach out, cooperate and build trust with Roma parents. Research data are clear: the lack of high quality early childhood services results in more harm than good for children. The RECI Overview Report conclusion, *inter alia*, is that a free place in kindergarten should be provided for at least two years to every child coming from an 'absolute poverty' background, and disadvantaged Roma parents should be provided with the necessary support to enable their children to attend programmes continuously. In addition, extra funding is needed in order to achieve the highest quality of kindergarten programmes (Bennett, 2012, p. 47). Both suggestions assume an increase in the percentage of GDP allocated to pre-primary education. As already pointed out, increased investment today results in greater gains in the future, not only for the Roma community but for the whole society.

It has already been stressed that the PI network is underdeveloped, that present capacities are insufficient for all children, and that there are no PIs in Roma settlements. What should be done with the thousands of Roma children who are out of reach in the period until the state builds sufficient PI buildings, constructs sufficient social housing for Roma families, and provides sufficient employment for Roma parents if they have to cover the hidden costs of 'free-of-charge pre-primary education? The suggestion presented here is the establishment of community-based programmes in Roma settlements, as a less expensive and real possibility to overcome the numerous obstacles present today. Moreover, high quality programmes depend on the staff who realise them, on their experience and education, rather than on the sites where these programmes are realised.

Finally, the suggested model assumes the resolution of problems there where they appear: within the Roma settlements themselves. There is a need to strengthen not only pre-primary education services for Roma families with young children, but also to strengthen services for prenatal care, infant health, outreach health nursing, social services and parental involvement.

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School and the Cultural-Heritage Environment: Pedagogical, Creative and Artistic Aspects

HICELA IVON*¹ AND DUBRAVKA KUŠČEVIĆ²

≈ The present paper explores the idea that learning, both in and out of school, is a cultural act, and that school and its cultural-heritage environment stamp their own characteristics on pupils. This implies that pupils gradually, with the help of teachers and other relevant adults from their close social environment, develop and adjust their behaviour and lifestyle to their cultural and civilisational milieu. An integrative approach to learning and teaching, through the concept of “learning-centred teaching”, can be instrumental in this regard (Terhart, 2001). This approach aims at linking cognitive, social and moral teachings. According to this teaching concept, pupils learn to appreciate the value of their cultural-heritage environment by living and reliving its experience, while freely and reflexively interpreting and becoming active participants in the culture of those who “learn about life by living” (Terhart, 2001). The relationship between school and its cultural-heritage environment is discussed from a creative and artistic perspective in the second part of the paper. By visually stimulating artistic expression when learning about the cultural-heritage and natural environment of school, and through the concept of “action-centred learning”, we explain how pupils can be motivated to learn and display creative-artistic expression, and how they can be actively involved in their communities (participating in organising art exhibitions in their neighbourhood, working in museum workshops, etc.). Pupils’ art projects, inspired by the historical, cultural and natural heritage of their environment, confirm that such projects are an effective way of encouraging pupils’ identity development and sensitivity towards the arts. They teach pupils about the importance of preserving cultural heritage, which is one of the basic principles in the upbringing of future participants and creators of new cultural values. Children’s artistic works illustrate examples of good school practice.

Keywords: Cultural-heritage environment; School; Project methods; Pupils’ artistic creativity

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Šola in kulturna dediščina okolja: pedagoški, ustvarjalni in umetniški vidik

HICELA IVON* AND DUBRAVKA KUŠČEVIĆ

☞ Prispevek utemeljuje prepričanje, da je vsako učenje v šoli in zunaj nje hkrati tudi kulturno ravnanje ter da šola in kulturna dediščina okolja s svojimi značilnostmi zaznamujeta učence. To pomeni, da učenci ob pomoči učiteljev in drugih vplivnih odraslih oseb iz ožjega socialnega okolja razvijejo ter prilagodijo lastno vedenje in življenjski slog skupnemu kulturnemu in civilizacijskemu okolju. Predstavljen je pristop k učenju in poučevanju, ki ga je razvil Terhart (2001) in ga poimenoval koncept akcijskega učenja. Pristop povezuje kognitivno, socialno in moralno poučevanje. Ob uporabi tega pristopa se učenci (na)učijo spoštovati vrednost kulturne dediščine okolja s pomočjo vživljanja in podoživljanja izkušenj. Pri tem svobodno in reflektirano interpretirajo kulturo ter se vanjo aktivno vključujejo prek »izkustvenega učenja« (Terhart, 2001). V drugem delu prispevka je predstavljen odnos med šolo in kulturno dediščino s kreativne in z umetniške perspektive. Pojasnjeno je, kako lahko s pomočjo vizualnega spodbujanja umetniškega izražanja pri učenju o kulturni dediščini in naravnem okolju šole s pomočjo koncepta akcijskega učenja motiviramo učence za učenje in kreativno umetniško izražanje ter njihovo aktivno udeleženo v lastni skupnosti (s sodelovanjem pri organizaciji umetniških razstav v njihovi soseščini, z delom v muzejskih delavnicah itn.). Umetniški projekti učencev, ki so izšli iz zgodovinske, kulturne in iz naravne dediščine njihovega okolja, potrjujejo, da so taki projekti učinkovit način spodbujanja razvoja identitete in občutka za umetnost. Učenci se naučijo tudi pomena ohranjanja kulturne dediščine, kar je eno izmed osnovnih načel pri vzgoji prihodnjih udeležencev in soustvarjalcev novih kulturnih vrednot. Pri tem nastala umetniška dela otrok ponazarjajo primere dobre šolske prakse.

Ključne besede: kulturna dediščina okolja; šola; projektne metode; umetniška ustvarjalnost učencev

Introduction

When talking about culture and education, it is impossible to ignore the connection between these two concepts. On the one hand, there is culture, with symbolism and an endless range of meanings and content; on the other hand, there is the human being capable of understanding culture, capable of transferring its values in creating new cultures. Social action and social communication are the areas where this cognitive clash of subjects with reality takes place, in which the individual forms his/her knowledge in creating his/her own image of the world, through which he/she realises utterly new and different connections to the world. Thus, it is possible to define culture as a “network or a system of accumulated knowledge, customs, values, beliefs and behaviour patterns with which to solve the fundamental issue – our own survival” (Ogbu, 1989, p. 5).

In the 1990s, Bruner (1990), Shweder (1991) and Wertsch (1991) wrote interesting papers on the tradition of cultural psychology, emphasising the fact that culture is entirely man made, and that it shapes and allows the functioning of the human mind. Their view was that learning and thinking always takes place in specific cultural contexts. “Culture shapes the mind of an individual. Its individual expression is achieved through the creation of meaning, through the attribution of meaning to things in different contexts and situations” (Bruner, 2000, pp. 9-10).

Bruner’s idea stems from the evolutionary fact that implies that the mind cannot exist outside the cultural context. He summarises the freedom of the individual in relation to culture: “Nothing is ‘culture free’; however, individuals are not merely reflections of their culture. Interaction between individuals provides a common framework for individual thoughts and enriches the lifestyle, opinions or emotions of every culture” (Bruner, 2000, p. 28).

Learning and thinking, disseminating knowledge in organised societies, take place in educational institutions. “Education is one of the most complex and at the same time most responsible human activities” (Rosić, 2009, p. 19). Therefore, it is impossible to observe educational institutions outside the cultural context, beyond correlations between culture, education and the individual, which is why Komar (2009) emphasises: “Education cannot be without a time frame, ... it cannot be out of time, ... education is essentially temporal” (Komar, 2009, p. 297).

“The basic principle of Vigotsky’s work is that a child’s development cannot be separated from the social context in which it occurs; learning results in development and is mediated through interaction of cultural tools and sign systems” (Eckhoff & Urbach, 2008).

Starting with the assumption that every culture is alive, and that in every society different cultures coexist, Lesourne (1993, p. 201) correctly raises the question: What kind of schools do we need for culture and what kind of culture do we want to disseminate in schools? In his view, any reflection on future relations between culture and schools needs to focus on the content to be found in two assumptions: (1) the role of schools is to foster a relationship with contemporary culture, (2) the contribution of schools does not lie primarily in the special programmes it proposes, but rather in creating a meaningful relationship between a certain number of different fields.

Schools can establish relationships with contemporary culture by connecting and supplementing the following three positions:

(1) *The isotonic position* allows the school to be sufficiently similar to the environment that surrounds it. It would be fatal for a school to act as if it were from another age; if it were to cling to obsolete values and formulas it would be considered the opposite to reality. On the contrary, school needs to be “modern” in its treatment of subjects and the pedagogical forms it applies, as well as in the behaviour it accepts and the equipment it uses (Lesourne, 1993, p. 201). Schools need to prepare pupils for life, not for schooling. Smolec (2002, p. 16) suggests: “Pupils and their teachers should get out of school ghettos, outdoors to a museum, an exhibition, to visit archaeological excavations, city streets, squares, workshops, laboratories, studios and factories, everywhere where life flourishes. They should learn there. When it is necessary to find a peaceful and pleasant environment for thinking and other mental work, let them return to their classrooms”. A requirement exists for the de-intellectualisation of teaching, for prevailing over achievement-oriented aspirations deprived of content, for opening schools to life, comprehensive learning and the pupil’s independence of action. Therefore, repeatedly presented old and new arguments of the critique of schools correspond to the requirement for a new quality of learning and teaching, i.e., a new school culture. Since, as Lesourne adds: “...the new society is saturated with information, overflowed with science and technology, open to the world, a society determined more by the diversity of individual situations than the volume of large societal groups, a society yearning for permanently renewing competences, shortly, a society we could also call a society of education or training” (Lesourne, 1993, p. 177). The education system is bound to gradually transform in accordance with the values of contemporary culture (Cindrić, Miljković, & Strugar, 2010, p. 227).

(2) A *distantiated*, or defensive, position of the school towards culture advocates keeping it from reckless acceptance of fashionable ideas in a frantic quest for lost time and lost identity, to avoid falling into the arms of each passing seduction.

School must not forget that its future lies in the innate, key qualities of knowledge; in other words, in its capacity to transfer knowledge effectively, to navigate knowledge reliably, to develop a capacity for cognition accurately, and to form meaning “intelligently” (Lesourne, 1993, p. 202). In this sense, Terhart (2001, p. 121) warns that today’s school must take into account the influence of the “mass” media, which, with their numerical and pictorial language, simultaneously function as a complement and competition to the family and school, both expanding knowledge and providing behavioural models. The knowledge offered by such media is linked to individual events. It is, however, often an unsystematic knowledge that emphasises the extraordinary, and it is provided without historical, geographical, cultural and ethnic characteristics. It is up to the teacher to assist the pupil to position, decode and interpret such knowledge. We must bear in mind that the media open doors widely towards culture, but do not provide a platform for young people to build their own personalities.

(3) *The expert opinion* of schools on culture assumes that learning means: to observe the world (nature and society) and its events, to explore it, to think, reflect, conclude and act, to solve problems, to communicate with peers and everyone who learns, to express oneself orally, in writing and through art, to master cultural, work and hygiene habits, and to cope in new (unknown, unexpected) situations (Smolec, 2002, p. 43). “Nowadays, a holistic education is needed, i.e. multiple dimensions of human personality must be taken into account – physical, intellectual, aesthetic, emotional and spiritual and in such a way make a step towards an integrated individual who lives on a harmonious planet” (Terhart, 2001, p. 173). Such an approach to learning is also reflected in the basic axioms of the newer developmental psychology of learning; more precisely, in the thesis that learning is an active process that derives from contact between the individual and the environment. The confrontation of schools and cultural heritage forms the basis for developing knowledge and imagination, as well as life experience (Terhart, 2001). Nevertheless, we need to consider new media and their more extensive use by children and youth, which may take the form of a “second hand” reality, orchestrated by the media, i.e., learning that excludes the quality of gaining “hands on” life experience (“simulation” becomes better than what was once called reality). We wonder, says Terhart, “what are the possibilities for an active relation with such ‘artificial cultural reality’, which should become a starting point of learning for pupils?” (Terhart, 2001, p. 181). Such impoverishment in the process of gaining actual, authentic experience in school can, as Terhart states, be opposed to using an integrative approach to learning and teaching, i.e., a quality of learning that aspires to connect cognitive, social and moral learning.

Establishing a relationship between the school and the cultural-heritage environment through the concept of “action-centred teaching”

The heritage environment includes cultural heritage that should be nurtured, preserved and transferred to children from an early age, while at the same time raising awareness of the importance of its preservation. In this sense, the task of kindergartens and primary schools is to teach, value and preserve the unique cultural and natural heritage through various teaching areas, especially creative areas – art.

The cultural-heritage environment of the school is perceived as an important resource for “lively” and dynamic upbringing activities, and education is seen as a process of internalisation of inherited historical values. In the context of heritage and traditional values, which present the entirety of the material and spiritual heritage created by humans in a certain environment, upbringing enables pupils to better understand the “present moment” and their place in it, and in so doing channels their personal development and promotes them as individuals with an identity and a developed style of behaviour, communication and reaction (Tomić Ferić, 2003).

In order to make pupils sensitive to the values of the cultural heritage in their environment, upbringing practice must provide an incentive, not in the form of the verbalisation and passive assimilation of facts, but through interactive, integrative learning, by creating conditions that enable pupils to experience and live their heritage practically, a path towards cognition through authentic activities and immediate experience that implies a creative interpretation of reality and creative communication (Stevanović, 2002).³ Such a perspective treats pupils not only as consumers of cultural values, but also as creators of culture and its future values; it approaches the school not only as a place where one is prepared for cultural living, but also as a source of culture and civilisation, as well as a promoter of a cultural and civilised way of life. A possible path towards achieving the goal of upbringing is found in Terhart’s concept of integrative teaching and learning through “action-centred teaching” (Terhart, 2001). According to Terhart, the necessity of integrative learning and teaching oriented towards such learning derives from the fact that the school

3 While reflecting on heritage as a content parameter of upbringing practice, Stevanović (2002, p. 153) lists two levels of creative communication: diachronic communication, as a chronological presentation of the development of a certain heritage or as an encounter with the topic of the past through the lens of the present time; and synchronic communication, as an interdisciplinary observation, i.e., studying heritage from the perspective of heterogeneous educational areas (customs, beliefs, songs, dances). This is a multidisciplinary approach to heritage contents.

experience protrudes more intensively in the life environment of the pupil and influences the entire personality, and thus the school increasingly becomes life itself. It is, therefore, necessary to change the character of learning and teaching in the school and provide a framework for experiences that surpass intellectual learning and encourage a more comprehensive developmental process in pupils. Starting from Gudjonson's overview of the action-centred approach as a methodical principle of teaching, Terhart (2001) offers the concept of action-centred teaching (ACT), with the following characteristics:

(1) ACT implies that the pupil and the teacher jointly attempt to do something, to practice, to work while activating as many senses as possible: the mind, emotions, hands, legs, eyes, ears, etc. Spiritual and sensory-bodily activity should be "reunited" again. Studying and work, thought and action, school and life, cognition and the senses come closer again (Terhart, 2001, p. 185). Learning that aims to experience and understand the values of heritage, to construct personal attitudes and the entire personality of the pupil, has to establish an active relationship between the different experiences the pupil lives in his/her cultural-heritage environment. Such learning starts with an analysis of the pupil's authentic experiences, events and situations, through interaction with objects and social relations, and their "free" interpretation. The task of the teacher is to awaken and transfer interest, and to encourage pupils to perceive the interconnectedness of everything in life and their place in this totality. Content, principles, methods and actions, as well as the entire didactic-methodical organisation of the classroom (school), should help to develop the pupil's personality (identity) as the basic goal (Matijević & Radovanović, 2001, p. 68). Since the pupil is prepared in school for a better life, he/she should be included in trends of enrichment of life with valuable content in accordance with nature and the development of society – while respecting moral values. The integrative approach to learning advocates the pupil's learning and acting in life by changing and enhancing it, fitting into its trends, not merely as its part, but as its creator and cultivator. "It is important for the pupils to be aware that they are not merely passing guests in this world and life, but that they are trusted with a task of being reasonable and hospitable hosts in nature to all beings and existence in it" (Smolec, 2002, p. 109).

(2) Practising an approach that by teaching the teacher learns as well, permanent and transparent communication between the teacher and pupils is enabled during the entire process of learning and teaching. This kind of teamwork sheds light on the problems of learning and teaching (important starting points for the successful professional development of teachers); problems are resolved successfully, efficient communication is acquired, manners, language and

thoughts are cultivated, listening and verbal expression is mastered, etc.

(3) ACT attempts to establish an active relationship with “reality”. A “learn to live by living” approach – in order to understand the values of heritage in its environment – implies learning through dialogue and modelling. The effectiveness of dialogue lies not only in the direct transfer of knowledge and the potential for revealing various contradictions in life situations, but also in the opportunities for pupils’ moral action and behaviour. The teacher’s behaviour serves as a role model for pupils’ decent and cultural behaviour. “In order to be successful in setting “positive models” while teaching, the teacher needs to be sincere, benevolent and reliable, therefore a legitimate, experienced, in one word, authentic professional, and the school needs to be the temple and the cradle of culture and the cultural centre of its environment” (Smolec, 2002, p. 113).

(4) The model offers a lot of room for the self-organisation and self-responsibility of pupils, although initially mainly “co-organisation” and “co-responsibility”. The activity plan is not determined solely by the teacher, but by the pupil as well. Life within and outside school, in the family and in the peer group, offers enough stimuli for choosing learning situations.

(5) ACT is goal directed and should determine the goals to be realised through activities. The problem lies in the fact that the teacher’s teaching goals should be linked to the pupil’s goals for action.

(6) Teaching pursues the possibility of creating concrete products. These products can be perceptible through the senses (a series of photographs, a theatre show, an overview of Latin words, etc.), or they can have a utilitarian and informative value. “Internal products” are also an option; for example, to influence a change in attitudes towards certain historical events, other nations and their customs, localities, behaviours, etc.

(7) Such teaching requires cooperation through the joint action of teachers, pupils and other people from the environment. Learning takes place through overall interaction, not only with the teacher, but with everyone involved in the process. In certain circumstances, the process of cooperation is equally important as the construction of a certain product. Social teaching is taken seriously: small groups and partnership in work activities are necessary social forms in action learning.

(8) ACT is a concept that has the capacity to integrate known and similar forms of teaching, such as: “discovery learning” (learning through research and construction by creating and verifying hypotheses), “principles of exemplarity” (reducing the volume of content, parts are reflections of a larger whole), “empirical teaching” (possibilities for experience are pursued, up to the point of explicit understanding of the principle: outside of school, to have “hands on” experience). The

focus is not only on the experience itself. This remains on the level of emotions; it is important and good, but the experience is created only through reflection on and processing the event. As early as in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, the works of J. Dewey, along with the teaching of J. Piaget and L. Vygotsky, contributed to experiential, research and constructivist learning, which emphasises active and participatory learning. However, their work set foundations for what we nowadays identify as place-based learning. As Cohen states (2011), “We can define it as an approach to learning which uses local economic circumstances, specific history, culture, tradition and other relevant elements related to a certain community with an aim to create a more efficient connection between children and culture and members of the local community” (Cohen & Milne, 2007, cf. Cohen, 2011, p. 2).⁴

(9) Finally, such teaching ideally attempts to “be engaged” in current social relationships, projects and problems, and to initiate useful and practical change. This can start primarily in school through the development of the pupil’s interests in certain elective (extracurricular) activities (school cooperative, literary group, art group and other activities, decorating school corridors on certain holidays, volunteering in the school library, etc.) In this way, the pupils’ work becomes public, and this encourages their growth and motivation.

The indisputable qualities of integrative learning should not be overlooked, especially in relation to the matters discussed in the present paper. Although action-centred teaching can demonstrate its success in very conditional and special circumstances, its challenging pedagogic morality enables a comprehensive spectrum of quality of learning and complete “live” experiences that surpass intellectual learning, as well as practical knowledge of basic human values and of acting upon them. In addition, by approaching heritage as an integrative area that encourages the pupil’s integral, creative behaviour, we validate the contemporary pedagogical approach that we advocate: “the pupil is a holistic being, rich in potentials, “a unique occurrence” in continuous evolution, where the pupil of emotions and imagination does not oppose the pupil of intellect” (Rodari, 2001).

4 In Norway, as early as 1987, a Framework Plan of the Preschool Education and Upbringing and a National Curriculum for Compulsory Education were created that required kindergartens and schools to develop their own plans in which they specify the broadly define goals of child development in their local communities. This is explained in detail in: Cohen, B., & Milne, R. (2007). *Northern Lights: Building Better Childhoods in Norway*, Children in Scotland, www.childreninscotland.org. UK, p. 26.

The cultural-heritage environment of school from the creative and artistic perspectives

Visual-artistic creation presents an intriguing chapter in human history, and the area of art in particular is an interesting part of cultural heritage, or, as Crespi (2006) states, artistic production is an important part of cultural content. As a part of cultural-heritage content, artistic creation encompasses the visual experiences of generations, visible over vast periods of time. The language of artistic heritage is a dynamic connection to the participatory quality of society, a voice of beauty that, through heritage-human interaction, enables people to sense the shared facet of life: the universal voice, the voice of silence, the voice of the century. Being the timid bearer of the century, cultural heritage refers pupils to diachronic identity, it describes past centuries, touches invisible history, stirs emotions, and allows the visible to awaken imagination. In so doing, heritage lives a beautiful temporal dynamic of silence and echoes, creating meeting points on the trail of the past. Cultural heritage deserves attention – observation – in order for it to remain visible to new generations.

Through children's artwork, an introduction to heritage is constituted through a complex communication process between the child, his/her creativity and heritage. In order to support the development of sensitivity towards creative and artistic work in the context of heritage, it is necessary to open pupils' eyes and encourage them to perceive cultural heritage and express themselves according to their capacities. Furthermore, it is certain that the development of an aesthetic understanding and artistic expression of heritage content is strongly dependent on the individual interests and experiences of each pupil, a fact that schools must take into account.

Within school activities, we believe that it is especially important that cultural heritage is taught through both the cognitive and social dimensions; in other words, communicating with heritage through artistic activities should be based on theoretical and empirical learning. Theoretical learning requires pupils to participate cognitively in the experience, collecting information about the objects of cultural heritage they encounter, whereas empirical learning implies that the pupil creates using various artistic techniques and materials, based on observation and experience.

The art teacher should assist pupils to interact with objects of their cultural heritage in order to raise their interest, to persuade them, to spark a desire in them to paint this heritage, to draw it, to express it graphically or depict it in three dimensions. In this sense, the teacher is a mediator between the pupil and heritage, a figure who facilitates empirical learning and secures the pupil's

individual perspective; therefore, artistic activities should be planned with attention to children's knowledge and their understanding of the world in which they live.

Pupils should be invited to get out of the classroom in order to observe the environment, to observe what amazes them, to explore by observing, listening, touching, tasting and discussing the colours, forms, sizes, shapes, surfaces, rhythms and contrasts they perceive, learn and experience in the environment while observing forms of heritage. "Basic experience of observing and seeing in children is marked with personal attitudes toward objects and the environment the child observes. During this process experiences and emotions set forward different sensory experiences, and the real world reveals itself in the imagination of a child's world as a revelation of a simple, joyful existence" (Kelava, 2006, p. 73). Working in such a way, we will surely justify Terhart's concept of "action-centred teaching", and raise pupils' awareness of the existence of artistic and compositional elements within heritage. By drawing pupils' attention to the artistic quality of heritage, they will master the content they experience more successfully and translate it into an individual artistic voice. Raising awareness about the content of artistic language is significant for achieving aesthetic quality in pupils' works. If we truly seek to create a basis for developing a visually-artistic culture in pupils, this awareness-raising through creative and artistic play is a necessity.

Pupils' artistic language on the topic of heritage should, therefore, be a free, open-minded experiment, or, more precisely, an expressive play with the ideas and materials offered to the pupil. Thereby, children's creative potentials will be released, and their artistic work will be a result of interaction between their thoughts and experiences, in accordance with their individual developmental capabilities (as will be shown in the examples below).

Selected examples from educational and upbringing practice in the Republic of Croatia refer to the good practice of connecting scientific and professional knowledge with cultural heritage content.⁵ These projects have made

5 As Ćurin (2012) mentions, the professional and scientific conferences entitled From Heritage to Heritage, initiated by H. Ivon, introduced new strategies in practical work with children in the area of heritage content. As early as 2000, numerous Croatian and foreign experts and scientists (from Greece, Slovenia, Italy, Portugal, France, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina) who attended these conferences presented their projects in working with children to implement heritage stimulus. In 2007, the expressiveness of the artistic expression of children inspired by the heritage environment resulted in a touring exhibition entitled "Sea and Marine in the Past and Today", which was presented throughout Dalmatia (Hvar, Brač, Split, Solin, Kaštela and Korčula). Within the scientific project entitled *Artistic Topics of the Eastern Adriatic: Art, Politics, Maritime Experience*, organised by the Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies – Studia Mediterranea, at the Faculty of Humanities in Split, a monograph was printed with children's works: *Heritage – Artistic Inspiration for Artistic Expression of Children*.

heritage an inspiration for working with children, and children have vividly expressed how they communicate with their social and cultural environment and how capable they are of being creative and constructive subjects in the environment they live in: pupils are perceived as creators in a concrete cultural and historical environment. By bringing together the heritage environment and artistic creation, the school can create an opportunity for the pupil to connect the past and the future in the best possible manner, and to perceive him/herself as an active and responsible mediator between heritage and society.

In 2007, the Faculty of Philosophy in Split commenced a research project⁶ called *Eastern Adriatic Artistic Themes: Art, Politics, Maritime Experience*, which included research on the territorial, national, artistic and cultural identities of the eastern coast of the Adriatic between the 14th and 20th centuries. In this project, this complex issue was studied in various ways: from so-called “high art” to children’s creativity. The project included the study of various topics in the field of heritage environment in children’s artistic creativity.

One of the goals of this project was to focus on the process of children’s artistic creativity. Through the project, we sought answers as to how natural and cultural heritage environments affect children’s understanding of the environment in which they live, and how children can express themselves creatively.

Starting with Terhart’s concept of learning, we created a method of learning, through the educational project, that involved detailed investigation of certain heritage content and its creative expression.

The pupils’ work on the project was accomplished in three phases: (1) first, visits to cultural and natural heritage sites, and raising awareness of the experience of heritage; (2) second, the process of artistic realisation; (3) third, collective reflection and evaluation of the children’s artworks, with pupils exhibiting their artworks in the exhibition halls of museums and galleries (where their work was presented to the entire sociocultural community).

In the first phase of the project, the most important task of the teacher was to provide pupils an opportunity to acquire experience “first hand” through visits to important heritage sites, encounters with people important to the topic of study, direct observation of the environment (objects, monuments, natural scenery), and by collecting interesting items, such as books, photos, etc., that could be relevant to the topic. During this phase, the teacher aimed to encourage pupils to ask questions, express their opinions, recall what they already knew about the topic, and form associations with other current knowledge and life experience.

6 The project was realised within the framework of the Croatian Ministry of Science, under number 244-2440820-0794.

In the second phase of the project, the pupils were encouraged to express themselves artistically and create art in an authentic heritage area (location, museum, gallery, monastery, workshops for arts and crafts, etc.). During this process, the teacher's most important task was to monitor pupils' involvement in what they were doing, and to encourage their collaboration and efforts to express themselves, but also to encourage them to ask questions regarding the choice of other art techniques and materials in order to express what they had experienced.

In the third phase – reflection on and evaluation of pupils' art creations – the pupils, with the help of their teachers, museum curators and gallery managers, organised public art exhibitions of their work in their own towns. They made their own programmes and invitations, and asked pupils from other schools to serve as art critics for the exhibition. The opportunity to display their artworks not only inspired a deeper understanding of their cultural, historic and natural environment, but also increased their awareness of their new (growing) competencies. This confirms Terhart's claim that "it is important to experience feelings and sensations, but only reflection and analysis of the experience creates an experience".

The pupils' works presented, shown in Images 1, 2, 3 and 4 (the main criteria for selection were spontaneity and expression), are a result of the project conducted with pupils in the lower grades of elementary school.

The children's works show how the school established a successful dialogue with the culture of its time through art classes topics (in the sense of respecting previously presented positions regarding establishing a relationship between the school and culture, Lesourne, 1993).

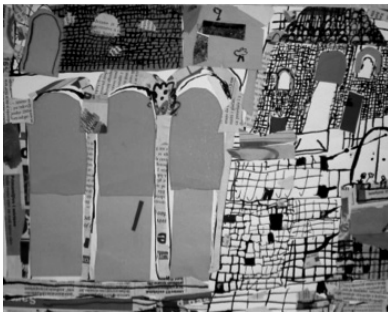


Image 1.



Image 2.

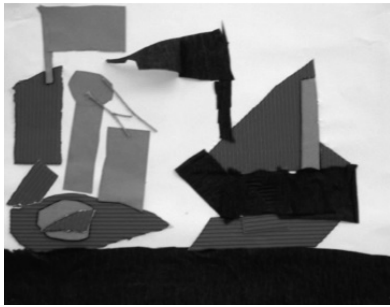


Image 3.

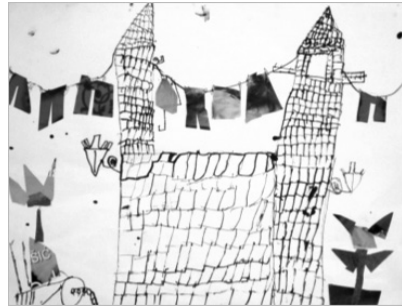


Image 4.

The artistic quality of the children's works presented originates from the fact that they have, through contact with heritage, observed heritage as creative interpreters by communicating creatively with the offered content on levels of diachronic and synchronic communication (Stevanović, 2002, p. 152). We have identified the following pedagogic positions:

(1) The artistic motives of heritage should be presented to pupils in a problematic way, because this stimulates children's curiosity and helps them to understand the reasons for learning artistic language. Learning about heritage based on one's own artistic research and discovery increases the intrinsic motivation and intellectual power of pupils, thus making their perception more efficient and their artistic expression richer and more interesting. The observation of artistic and compositional elements in heritage content becomes an act of discovery and satisfaction through an individual quest, through a joyful exploration of the heritage environment, through focused observation of artistic language with regard to the experience and to artistic expression. This is emphasised by Kvašček (1981, pp. 255–261), who refers to research arguing that creative perception is one of the important components of the creative process, and that the child's perceptive and sensory capacities can develop rapidly in early childhood. Gardner (1999, in Pivac, 2007) also highlights this point, stating that capacities for perception are developed considerably through the arts.

(2) The emotional component and the pupils' imagination, which are fully expressed, contribute significantly to developing the holistic mental life of pupils, helping them to overcome templates and schematics in artistic works and making the spirit receptive to the birth of new ideas and the discovery of previously unrevealed aspects of heritage.

In contact with heritage content, it is necessary to change artistic motives, techniques and paper formats frequently, and it is important to encourage pupils to work in combined techniques of artistic expression, in order to support the induced motivation and creativity. In an atmosphere of mutual respect, through free

communication, pupils freely exchange and develop artistic ideas, resulting in original artistic solutions.

(3) Creative artistic games of recomposition, redefinition and combining (appropriate to the pupils' artistic activities) create possibilities for the dynamic restructuring of existing artistic heritage content, making pupils think of new ways of connecting and structuring the available artistic and compositional elements, thus achieving their own new artistic knowledge through artistic activity. Working in this way, pupils communicate with the heritage both diachronically and synchronically, and their artistic work arises spontaneously as a result of diverse activity, which is a basis for developing many other competences. As Sekulić-Majurec (1997, p. 60) says, "creative thinking of pupils should be developed because it enhances metacognition of the individual, intellectual functioning and problem solving capacities". Artistic activities develop creative thinking, which is then transferred to external situations beyond art, resulting in the pupil's success in other areas of learning and living as well.

As long ago as 1929, A. N. Whitehead wrote: "There is only one subject important for education, and that is life in all its realisations" (cf. Anderson, 2003, p. 59). The pupils got out of the classroom during the creation of the artistic works presented, visiting places where they could witness the visual beauty of cultural heritage and observe life in its different forms. They were encouraged to recognise those parts of their environment that had, until then, remained unrecognised, because, as Husković (2009) says, plainness is the basic precondition for, and the beginning of, the aesthetic act. The artworks presented bear witness to the pupils' efforts to learn to think about life and the environment with a perception that frees them to notice artistic values, making their experiences alive and purposeful. We encounter elements of artistic language in two forms, as stated by Damjanov (1991): as sensory (visual) and sensory performance (artistic). The pupils successfully translated this experienced visual sensuousness into consciousness and knowledge about the artistic language of heritage. Matasović (2001) states: "There are different criteria for defining language, which in a certain sense originate from three basic functions of language: communicational – corresponding to the criteria of comprehensibility, cognitive – corresponding to the structural criteria and values – determined by the criteria of identification of the speaker" (Katunar, 2008, p. 82). These linguistic criteria are also facets of artistic language.⁷ In the 21st century, the communication structure of artistic language has been

7 The language of visual art is part of the structure of art and a mode of communication in the fine arts. The language of visual art is a wider term than visual elements (line, colour, surface, etc.) or art pattern, because it involves the meaning that it can receive, read and experience. The purpose of the language of visual art is to enable the visual reading of drawings, paintings, sculptures and architecture.

absolutely indisputable: it is artistic language that enables the receptibility of the mutual understanding of different visual-artistic symbolic worlds. The cognitive criteria of artistic language are based on the innate human capacity for observation and visual thinking, which, once structured, becomes the basis for learning visual-artistic language, while the criteria of the values of use of artistic language lie in the individual artistic language of each artist, which determines the criteria for artist identification. We can conclude that artistic language is learned and taught in socially motivating relationships and situations: it develops and exists in artistic-aesthetic communication influenced by learning, education and the environment in the process of acquiring artistic culture, to which the artworks presented bear witness.

During the creation of the artworks, we asked the teachers to decode and interpret the knowledge of culture gained by the pupils, knowledge that enables pupils to develop their own personalities, or as Phillipson states: "Art is present in culture with a function of practical conceptualisation. It serves as a way to place art in relation towards us, and to establish our relationship with it" (Phillipson, 2002, p. 284). Sociocultural cognition perceives knowledge as a constructive process, and learning as a process by which pupils become aware of themselves in society. Given the creativity of the artistic expression, it is clear from the artworks presented that the pupils experienced heritage in a genuinely emotional way, thus helping them to understand themselves and others in the process of creating aesthetic forms. The quality of the artworks presented is reflected in the fact that pupils created their perspectives of reality guided by their own artistic experience. Through the pupils' artwork, cultural heritage has become a key for the construction of meaning in the understanding of the relationship between the pupils and society (the environment). Construction of meaning is a process of dialogue that engages people in communication, and through artworks related to cultural heritage we can provide an opportunity for pupils to construct their own cultural meanings that allow social communication to take place, while, at the same time, the pupils' personality is developed along with an awareness of belonging to their own culture. The released force of visual cognition is transformed in the pupils' artistic-creative artworks as a result of an experiential cognitive interaction with heritage, enabling the pupils to develop their cognition through artistic creation. As explained by Pivac (2007, p. 32), the most frequently used activities that can encourage children's creativity in the area of artistic expression are: directing the children's attention to a certain phenomenon or form, evoking their memory through conversation about things they have seen and experienced, encouraging their fantasy and imagination regarding a certain topic, whereby children find new solutions in

different variations of known and acquired experiences, or by transposing different non-visual perceptions and concepts into artistic expression.

Piaget (1976, p. 20) says that “to understand means to discover or reconstruct through rediscovery. Such conditions must be met if in the future individuals will be formed capable for productivity and creativity, and not only for recognition”. Pupils’ artworks are an excellent depiction of Piaget’s thought; they speak of the very power of creation of new flexible ideas and images through the combination or reorganisation of previous experiences, which is a serious and deeply creative capacity. During pupils’ encounter with cultural heritage, they focus on action and are encouraged to notice rules of form in the artistic language of the heritage. This mode of children working through self-activation supports Piaget’s thesis “of the child as the main constructor of its own self-understanding” (cf. Wood, 1995, p. 205). As Ingarden points out (1915), “what is important for constitution of an aesthetic experience is not the spontaneous emotional reaction to sensory qualities of an object, but a focused exploration” (cf. Spajić, 1989, p. 57). Pupils’ activity, their active participation, becomes the value of the contemporary school. Therefore, “active learning becomes more and more a term of the contemporary pedagogical-methodological literature referring to the activity in which the child through his/her experience of independent exploration – with the support, cooperation and supervision of adults – acquires knowledge and capabilities in accordance with personal developmental potentials” (Kuščević, 2007, p. 22).

Vygotsky’s theory, which belongs to early theories of social constructivism, is based on the premise that the social environment in which the child gains experience is significant for the development of higher cognitive functions. “As opposed to Piaget, who deems that learning is conditioned by the level of biological maturity, Vygotsky argues that social learning precedes development. The basis of cognitive development is learning a system of symbols which enable a child to reconstruct meaning of the phenomena from its surrounding” (Vizek-Vidović et al., 2003, p. 57). Therefore, it is important to bring children closer to their environment: to nature and heritage, as well as to cultural, artistic values through artistic and creative activities.

Conclusion

Contemplation of the relationship between the school and its heritage-historical-cultural environment is purposeful for various reasons: it illustrates the effects of cultural traditions on upbringing and education; it points to the need for the preservation and renewal of cultural traditions; it helps us to

understand ourselves and our place in the world; it points to the desirable core of common universal values that should be nurtured through upbringing and learning; and it emphasises pupil-centred development, with pupils as future promoters of authentic life, humanistic and cultural values. This consideration is irreplaceable for developing cognition that supports a deep understanding of previous events, in order to cope with the present in a better way, but also to make a better judgement of the future of “solidarity” (Nazhao, 1998).

School must value the meaning and experience that pupils acquire outside of school, and it must incorporate this into a more dynamic learning process, because, as Cohen (2011) says, the place of our upbringing, our cultural and local community, has a major significance for, and impact on, the lives, learning and development of the identity of children and youth. Education and upbringing are directed to learning in the immediate cultural-heritage community and they are a significant tool that pupils can use to learn and appreciate their own cultural heritage and identity (Cohen, 2011, p. 2).⁸

As a possible thematic framework and incentive for a project-based approach in schools, the cultural-heritage environment of school offers numerous possibilities for a correlation between heterogeneous – particularly artistic – areas. Correlation and integration of heritage content and synchronic creative communication can be realised particularly effectively in pupils’ artistic expression (language, music, dance, artistic, etc.).

After meetings of theoreticians and practitioners from Dalmatian primary schools,⁹ where pupils’ and teachers’ heritage projects entirely or partially following the concept of “action-oriented teaching” were presented, our experiences reveal a richer and more integrated knowledge of pupils in this teaching area, especially in the humanities and in artistic subjects. They also point to the fact that learning in the authentic environment is more motivating, active and “lively”, as well as being cooperative and creative.¹⁰ All of this impacts school culture, not only in terms of a more dynamic organisation of learning, or of the didactic aspect or the aspect of materials, but primarily through more open relationships between teachers and pupils, as well as between pupils, school, parents and other adults from the social environment.

8 Cohen, B. (2011). Razumjeti sebe i druge: važnost mjesta odrastanja i vlastitog identiteta u multikulturalnom društvu. *Dijete vrtić obitelj*, br. 65. Pučko otvoreno učilište Korak po korak, pp. 2-7 from: Cohen, B., & Milne, R. (2007). Northern Lights: Building Better Childhoods in Norway, Children in Scotland, www.childreninscotland.org. UK, p. 26.

9 Expert-scientific conferences Days of Primary Schools of the Splitsko-Dalmatinska County “Towards a Quality School” (eight such conferences have been held so far). Texts by Ivon, H. (2002, 2007), and Kušević & Pivac (2008) should also be taken into consideration.

10 Projects presented in the Proceedings of “The 8th Days of Primary Schools of the Splitsko-Dalmatinska County - Towards a Quality School”, Split: Hrvatski pedagoško-književni zbor - Ogranak Split; Filozofski fakultet Sveučilišta u Splitu.

Schools should introduce pupils to artistic cultural heritage from the earliest possible age, focusing on the creation of opportunities for children to see the artistic value of heritage as their culture. Pupils should be able to take part in school experiences involving heritage in their creative artwork within the framework of teaching art, in order for them to know how to value, recognise and understand the significance of cultural heritage in the society in which they live. Artistic activities inspired by heritage content offer pupils an opportunity for deep experience, for impressions that inspire “liveliness”, spontaneous expression, the possibility of “entering” relationships, and of experimenting and exchanging their internal richness with others. A pupil who possesses a “key” for the identification and interpretation of elements and levels of experience will easily be able to transform him/herself into the “protagonist” of an artistic creation (Supek, 1987). This connection is evident in the examples given above, as well as in reported observations by the teachers in the arts field who were involved in our project.

Apart from everything mentioned thus far, a quality relationship between the school and its cultural-heritage environment through artistic projects and action-centred teaching can decrease the “prejudice” of many school staff, and of those outside school, that the arts are not sufficiently intellectually challenging future professions for pupils. Most often, art is discussed as entertainment, as a “nice” cultural experience of pupils realised to the extent that time and circumstances allow. Even those who teach art often describe their efforts as nurturing creative expression, and forget that creativity is not deprived of thought, intellectual effort and the acquisition of knowledge, making an important contribution to strengthening the culture of mind and forming the personality (Efland, 2002, pp. 6-7).

An extremely significant part of this art project was the teamwork of pupils, teachers, educators, parents and specialists in various fields of art and culture. As a result, learning about heritage and its values became a joint construction of knowledge. This not only offers opportunities to integrate heritage with different subjects, but also provides a higher level of understanding of the world that surrounds the child. The travelling children’s art exhibition, which made its way through the towns and settlements of Dalmatia, and the scientific monograph entitled “Heritage – The Artistic Impetus for Artistic Expression in Children”, suggest that the heritage of the area in which pupils live is not learned in classrooms but in the heritage environment.

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A Croatian Study of Practitioners' and Kindergarten Teacher Students' Opinions of their Role in Children's Lives

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☞ In the project *Methods and Models in the Education of Preschool Children in Kindergartens* conducted at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, we were interested in practitioners' and kindergarten teacher students' opinions, motivation, satisfaction, expectations and attitudes with regard to their work. Two open-ended questions regarding the role of the kindergarten teacher in children's lives, were set as a separate mini-questionnaire. For the purposes of this particular study, practitioners (N=69) and first-year university kindergarten teacher students (N=65) had to complete two sentences: "Children are like...because..." and "Kindergarten teachers are like... because...". Their responses were content analysed and then compared. Analysis shows that both students and kindergarten teachers perceive children in a very positive way and evaluate their job as highly valuable. They also highly value their role in children's lives (as another parent, teacher, helper, model, safe haven, etc.). The most significant difference between practising teachers and students is their perception of working conditions, where students show a more idealistic approach.

Keywords: Kindergarten teachers; Kindergarten teacher students; Perception of children; Perception of the kindergarten teacher's role

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Hrvaška raziskava mnenj vzgojiteljev in študentov predšolske vzgoje o njihovi vlogi v življenju otrok

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∞ V okviru projekta Metode in modeli v vzgoji predšolskih otrok v vrtcih, ki smo ga izvajali na fakulteti za izobraževanje učiteljev v Zagrebu, so nas zanimali mnenja, motivacija, zadovoljstvo, pričakovanja in odnos do dela vzgojiteljev ter študentov predšolske vzgoje. V prispevku predstavljamo odgovore na dve odprti vprašanji, ki se nanašata na dojetje vloge in pomena vzgojitelja v življenju otroka v obdobju predšolske vzgoje. V raziskavo je bilo vključenih 69 vzgojiteljev in 65 študentov prvega letnika predšolske vzgoje. Odgovarjali so na naslednji vprašanji: "Otroci so kot ..., ker ..." in "Vzgojitelji so kot ..., ker ...". Odgovore smo vsebinsko analizirali in primerjali med skupinama. Analiza je pokazala, da študentje in vzgojitelji otroke dojemajo zelo pozitivno ter da hkrati izjemno cenijo svoje delo. Izjemno cenijo tudi svojo vlogo v življenju otrok (kot »drug starš«, učitelj, pomočnik, vzornik, varno zavetje itn.). Med študenti in vzgojitelji se najočitneje razlikuje njihovo mnenje o delovnih pogojih, ker študentje izkazujejo bolj idealiziran pristop.

Ključne besede: vzgojitelji; študentje predšolske vzgoje; dojetje otrok; dojetje vloge vzgojitelja

Introduction

In Croatia, there have only been a small number of studies to date in the field of the profession of preschool teacher. According to the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports (Ministarstvo znanosti obrazovanja i sporta Republike Hrvatske, 2013), in 2012 there were 742 public and private preschool institutions in Croatia, attended by 141,608 children. Most of these institutions are responsible for the education of children from the age of one to six or seven years, while some of them deal only with the education of children from the age of three to the age of six or seven. The number of children in the age group from one to three was 24,337, while there were 102,338 children from three to five, and 14,933 from six to seven. No preschool programme is compulsory, but it is recommended that all children be involved in one year of preschool education immediately prior to starting school. As many as 99.60% of children attend such a programme, either in a kindergarten or in the nearest school (Ministarstvo znanosti obrazovanja i sporta Republike Hrvatske, 2010). Most of these children spend 7-10 hours per day at kindergarten. Kindergarten teachers work 40 hours per week, of which 30 hours are spent in close contact with children. Although preschool teachers are required to hold a master's degree in preschool education, which provides a relatively high degree of certainty regarding their qualification for the job, it is clear that they face many different challenges that, in addition to adequate knowledge, require a great deal of commitment and motivation.

Following the romantic conception of an idealised early childhood, the curriculum of early childhood education/kindergarten should be thought of in terms of child activity and experience through interaction with the environment (Anning, 1997), rather than the acquisition of knowledge and the assimilation of facts. An effective teacher should provide a social context in which there are opportunities to learn and where children can exercise some control over their construction of meaning and understanding. The next important requirement is high quality teaching and assistance in learning, including effective communication, empathy, assessment and the provision of appropriate and well-informed support and instruction (Pollard & Filer, 1996).

Such thinking emerged in the middle of the previous century, when Piaget conceptualised the child as an independent knowledge constructor, a person who is able to learn from experience (Piaget & Inhelder, 1986). Piaget's concept was complemented by Vygotsky's and Bruner's emphasis on the social dimension of learning, which implies that a large part of the child's learning is done through interaction with others (Daniels, 1996). In these new

relationships between the content of learning, the educator and the child, the latter is no longer viewed as a passive recipient of information. By adjusting the physical and social environment, adults seek to ensure the conditions for “building, constructing, acquiring and developing a child’s knowledge through the active participation of the child” (Miljak, 1999, p. 310). According to Bruner (2000), in social interaction with others, children build, complement and change their knowledge in their own way according to their natural rhythm. This means that learning is a cooperative and communicative activity that enables the child to create knowledge and construct meaning in the world together with other children and adults. This notion, which is supported by findings from the field of developmental psychology, brain research and research into language acquisition, strengthens the idea of the child as a subject of his or her own development, as well as a person who participates in determining his or her own educational process and social relations (Bašić, 2011). Petrović-Sočo (2007) claimed that the role of educators in promoting child development and education lies in creating a network of reciprocal relationships that support a variety of individual and group processes, in order to encourage and direct the child’s education and development. Manning and Payne (2010) point out that the educator’s perception of his or her own personality is also an important factor in determining the nature of the relationship with the child in early education. Research on teachers’ thinking assumes that teachers’ beliefs influence their practices (Isenberg, 1990). Clark and Peterson (1986) state that teachers’ thought processes are reciprocated by their actions, reinforcing the idea that there is a very close relationship between beliefs and practices.

Modern educators are supposed to continually adjust their work based on knowledge and on the understanding of children in general. They have to understand the principles of children’s learning and contribute to the creation of an institutional context that supports children’s culture. According to Šagud (2006), the central role of educators is to help children in finding topics of interest. Furthermore, they should provide an environment in which children are able to explore issues of interest in order to reach deeper understanding and knowledge. In this sense, kindergarten teachers have to assume different roles: the role of evaluator, organiser, motivator and collaborator with the children. On the other hand, Finnish educators, according to Puriola (2002), distinguish five different aspects to their role: educational, caring, managing, practical and personal aspects. The *educational* aspect is oriented towards the children’s learning and development. The *caring* aspect relates to children’s health and growth, as well as to emotional security and social factors. *Caring* implies not only the natural caring and nurturing that does not require specific knowledge,

but also the caregivers' drive to enhance his or her own vision of him or herself as a moral person. *Managing* refers to activities such as leadership, decision making, discipline and control. The *practical* aspect refers to the organisation of daily activities. The *personal* aspect highlights the complexity of the educator's role: underneath his or her professional role, each educator is also an individual with his or her own emotions, personality traits and personal life.

However, there are also certain problems related to the kindergarten teacher's profession. Wallace (2005) believes that educators have problems with the comprehension, translation and interpretation of theory, resulting in difficulties arising in practice due to a limited understanding of strategies.

In fact, mere theoretical knowledge is not sufficient in addressing the daily demands of pedagogical practice, because there are no two identical children and no two identical situations. Therefore, educators need to develop their own strategies built from the experience of exploring their own practice (Babić, 2010), which makes the role of the early-age educator extremely challenging (Einarsdottir, 2010). Furthermore, there is evidence of a kind of *reality shock* for teachers-beginners in Croatia. Specifically, while studying, teacher students have a rather idealistic conception of their future job, which is not quite compatible with the experience in practice (Rijavec, Miljević-Ridički, & Vizek Vidović, 2006). This may also occur in the case of kindergarten teachers.

Considering the different roles of kindergarten teachers, we were especially interested in the way practitioners and preschool student teachers see children, as well as the way they see their own role in children's lives.

Problems

- (1) To explore kindergarten teachers' and kindergarten teacher students' perception of children and kindergarten teachers.
- (2) To explore whether kindergarten teachers' and kindergarten teacher students' perceptions differ in some respects.

Methodology

The present study is part of an ongoing research project *Methods and Models in the Education of Preschool Children in Kindergartens*, which is designed to gather information on practitioners' and student teachers' opinions, motivation, satisfaction, expectations and attitudes with regard to their work. For the purposes of this particular study, two sentences completed by respondents, set as a separate mini-questionnaire, were subjected to content analysis. The incomplete sentences were: "*Children are like... because ...*" and "*Kindergarten teachers are like... because...*".

Sample

The original study sample consisted of two sub-samples: 90 kindergarten teachers from 10 different public kindergartens in Zagreb and North-Western Croatia, and 108 first-year students enrolled in the study programme for preschool teachers at the Faculty of Teacher Education, Zagreb. The number of participants in the present study varies from 50 to 69, depending on the number of participants who completed the incomplete sentences. The kindergartens at which the research was conducted provide for children from nursery age to school age. The children's education is organised mainly according to age groups (nursery age, 2 to 3 years, 3 to 4 years, 4 to 5 years, 5 to 7 years).

Procedure

The analytical tools employed were workplace metaphors. The teachers and students were asked to complete two incomplete sentences "*Children are like... because ...*" and "*Kindergarten teachers are like... because...*". Consenting teachers from ten different kindergartens were given the sentences to complete individually at home, while students who agreed to participate in the survey completed the sentences during a lesson.

Metaphors occur in every sphere of life, including the professional sphere, and provide tools with which we can explain things to others and to ourselves. Using metaphors, researchers gain a better insight into problems. The use of an open-ended elicitation procedure enables an understanding of the participants' metaphorical conception, and of the relationship between their thoughts and the subject. It also reveals individuals' attitudes, prejudices and inclinations with regard to certain aspects of their profession. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) see a metaphor as a way of conceiving one thing in terms of another in order to reach a better understanding. They also believe that people define their reality in terms of metaphors and then proceed to act on the basis of these metaphors. Metaphors can carry a lot of meaning and paint a vivid picture (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Therefore, analysis of kindergarten teacher practitioners' and students' metaphors is a good way to ascertain their attitudes toward their profession.

Findings and Discussion

Content analysis reveals the themes that emerge from the kindergarten teachers' and students' associations with the incomplete sentences "*Children are like... because...*" (Tables 1 and 2) and "*Kindergarten teachers are like... because...*" (Tables 3 and 4).

Table 1. Kindergarten teachers' associations with: "Children are like... because..." presented according to themes that appear in the analysis

Children are like ...	(f)	... because ...
Abstract concepts		
Happiness	1	They give us joy
Soul	1	They are full of goodness
Fairy tale	1	They always have positive thoughts
Natural phenomena		
Rainbow	1	They are unique; to shine in all of their glory they need to experience both raindrops and the sun
Flame	2	They illuminate us, but we must create a spark
River	1	They are unpredictable, sometimes fast, sometimes quiet, variable
Beings and people		
Beings from a fairy tale	1	They just want to enjoy the world of imagination
Little princes and princesses	1	They learn and work by playing, they are great in their benevolence and purity of spirit
Beings	2	They are interesting, creative, original, give love in return, unique
People	4	They have needs, rights, characteristics, they are original, unique, priceless treasures, unformed, curious, worthy of love and attention
Explorers	5	They are curious, learn with all of the senses, explore, solve problems, develop, interested in the new and unfamiliar, develop skills, acquire knowledge through play
Travellers	1	They choose, search for the straight path, develop
Plants		
Plants	4	They are fragile, delicate, magnificent, vulnerable, they give us power, radiate with sincerity and joy, they should be nurtured, loved, taken care of, they grow, develop, blossom
Buds	1	They are unique, they open up slowly in front of our eyes and we admire the richness and diversity of the flowers
Flowers	4	They are wonderful, precious, they should be pampered, nurtured, educated and guided; the more attention we give them the better they grow
Inanimate objects		
Clay	2	In the hand of an artist they become a work of art; they can be modelled and modified
Paper with invisible letters	1	Every day they reveal the same letters and add a new one
Ships	2	They are sailing across the sea, we are sailing with them
Whirligigs	1	They are on the move all the time
Sponges	14	They absorb everything, learn from the environment, observe, think, feel, perceive, put everything together, they have not been squeezed yet
Total N	50	

Table 2. Kindergarten teacher students' associations with: "Children are like... because..." presented according to themes that appear in the analysis

Children are like ...	(f)	... because ...
Abstract concepts		
Miracles	1	They are full of surprises and they conquer all
Future	1	They are our projections
The best gift	1	They are priceless
Natural phenomena		
Sun	1	They warm us with love and sincerity
Beings and people		
Beings	6	They are unprotected, small, restless, unpredictable, dependent, honest, simple, challenging, insatiable for knowledge, not aware of danger, they need love and a stimulating environment
People	4	They are curious, full of expectation, sweet, they love the world and people around them, they are those who should learn how to live and how to be independent
Pupils	1	They learn from us and improve themselves that way
Explorers	4	They are interested in new ideas and insights, they want to know more about the world, they give love
Little philosophers	1	They have opportunities to learn, they have a pioneering spirit and the power of wonder
Team players	1	Teachers and children make a team
Animals		
Little lambs	1	They need security and support
Little teddy bears	1	They are full of love and tenderness, they are willing to share love with everyone
Plants		
Plants	1	We should shape them and help them grow
Flowers	6	They are soft, they need to be nurtured and guided, we have to provide a shield for them, they require a lot of hard work and would die without love
Inanimate objects		
Uncut diamonds	5	They shine if we take good care of them, we must shape them to become perfect
Clay	2	They are suitable for shaping
Unread book	1	They always invent something new
Blank plate	1	They must be taught everything
Picture	1	We are creating them
Glass vase	1	They are fragile and vulnerable, one wrong move is enough to destroy them for good
Sponge	20	They are curious and absorb everything around them, they follow, imitate and learn from adults
Total N	61	

Teachers and students describe children in similar ways through abstract concepts and through the characteristics of natural phenomena, beings and people, plants or inanimate objects. It is very clear that the concepts that both groups of respondents use to describe children are positive and glorifying, indicating their extremely positive attitudes towards children, attitudes that are required in their work. Further analysis of their explanations reveals two basic approaches: 1) the traditional approach, where the child is seen as an object in the educational process; and 2) an alternative approach, where the child is viewed as an active being. Although quite different, both approaches are present in education; one follows the *educational* image of the child, which views the child as an *object*, while the other favours a *romantic* approach, where the child is seen as the *subject* of his or her own development (Bašić, 2011).

It is evident that some teachers and students see the child as a helpless, dependent, protected and passive creature that has yet to be shaped and educated by adults: “*Children are like a soul for receiving good*”; “*Children are like clay because in the hands of an artist they become a work of art*”; “*Children are like little lambs because they need security and support*”. Others see the child as an independent, loving, curious, unique, unpredictable, giving, creative and active being: “*Children are like miracles because they surprise and conquer all*”; “*Children are creative, original, unique, interesting beings*”; “*Children are like explorers because they explore and solve problems*”. Consequently, teachers and students see the kindergarten teacher’s role as that of teacher, substitute parent and role model: “*Kindergarten teachers are like parents because they are full of love for children*”; “*Kindergarten teachers are role models because they spend a lot of time with children and influence them*”. Alternatively, they see the teacher’s role as a mediator in the child’s development, and as being responsible for providing optimal conditions for the child’s development, as suggested by Miljak (1999): “*Kindergarten teachers are reflective practitioners because they support their own development as well as the development of the child*”; “*Kindergarten teachers are observers who listen to the needs of children and act accordingly*”; “*...people who are involved in the child’s gaining knowledge but do not want to take authorship of the child’s activities*”.

From the descriptions in Tables 1 and 2, it is evident that kindergarten teachers see children as more active and able to contribute than students do. We assume that such differences occur due to the kindergarten teachers’ professional knowledge and experience, which first-year students are still lacking. Analysis also shows that both the students and the teachers are, as suggested by Šagud (2006) and Puriola (2002), aware of the different roles they have in their profession: the role of organiser, motivator, collaborator, educator, nurturer, practitioner, etc. However, we presume that each respondent emphasises the role they personally

find the most important in their work with children. In this way, unlike students, teachers in general see themselves as multitasking people (Table 3).

Table 3. Kindergarten teachers' associations with: "Kindergarten teachers are like... because..." presented according to themes that appear in the analysis

Kindergarten teachers are like ...	(f)	... because ...
Natural phenomena		
River	1	They flow easily and children follow them
Rain and sunshine	1	They shine like a rainbow
Tree on the moor	2	They are in the crosswinds - unprotected while they are bearing fruit and providing shade, protection and support, they have to be durable
Things		
Never-ending story	2	They make the story never ending, they are faced with many obstacles, ups and downs
Open book	1	They open up new horizons
Way mark	1	They direct, lead, help
Windmill, bridge, earth	1	They tame the wind, they connect and support
Mirror	2	Children learn using imitation
Lighthouse	1	They illuminate
Sponge	1	They absorb all of the bad things, and are squeezed by everyone
Squeezed mop	1	Everyone uses them
Strong brace	1	They take care of children's needs
Strongest link	1	They are the first in the education system, very important people in establishing positive interaction and modelling
Animals		
Squirrels	1	They search for acorns all the time together with children
Giraffes	1	They have the biggest heart
People		
Weavers	1	They weave together with the child
Gardeners	1	They create optimal conditions for the child's growth
Role models	7	They spend a lot of time with children and influence them
Children	3	They are constantly looking for new games and play together with children
Mothers	6	They care for, nurture and love the child as their own, they are full of love for children, they provide love, warmth and understanding
Friends	4	They lead children in the way they should go, give children pleasure and fun, they love and accept them as they are, play and learn with them, enable mutual giving with love

Teachers	4	They have knowledge and skills, provide understanding, the basis for life, sometimes they invest more effort than the parents do
Observers	5	They listen to the needs of children and act accordingly, they are involved in the acquisition of knowledge but do not want to take the authorship of the child's activities, they are continually adapting their work with children, they investigate, lead, encourage, but do not make suggestions
Helpers	1	Children learn best when exploring alone
Important people in the child's life	1	They provide security and protection for children
People who know and can do a lot	1	They learn something new and interesting every day
People full of love	1	They give their love selflessly
Reflective practitioners	3	They support their own development as well as the development of children, they must have a lot of knowledge, they discover and act
Professional coordinators	1	They coordinate the child's learning
Multitalented person: a router, initiator, the eternal player, safe haven, a supplement to the family, friend, confidant, entertainer, teammate, partner of the child and the parent, psychologist, speech therapist, nurse, teacher, angel, monster, clown, police officer	11	They spend a lot of time with children, invest a lot of love in their work, provide safety, pleasure, fun, they play and learn with children, give love, comfort and affection, ensure the children's happiness
Humiliated people	1	Constant changes drive them crazy, their salaries are low, their working hours are long, there is no improvement in their working conditions
Total	69	

Table 4. Kindergarten teacher students' associations with: "Kindergarten teachers are like... because..." presented according to themes that appear in the analysis

Kindergarten teachers are like ...	(f)	... because ...
Natural phenomena		
Sun	1	They spread the rays of knowledge towards children
Water	3	Water is essential for living just as kindergarten teachers are, they lead to the right path
People		
Explorers	1	They help, love and guide
Observers	1	They listen to the needs of children
Helpers	3	They direct and encourage children
Shepherds	1	They feed their flock, they guide, care for and teach
Sculptors	3	They shape the children as they would shape a sculpture, they encourage them, guide, provide for them, make them ready to encounter cruel reality

Painters	1	They shape and complement
Gardeners	3	They shape, plant and nourish
Friends	6	They provide understanding and love, they are people of confidence, they are honest, always willing to help and care, they give themselves unconditionally
Another parent	19	They spend more time with the child than parents, they teach children, talk to them, meet their needs, educate, take care of the child's development, they are responsible for the lives of other people's children, they encourage children to play and have fun, make them ready for school, and have the toughest job in the world
Another (additional) educator	2	Parents are (the) first (educators), they educate children when parents are unable to
Models	3	Children watch adults and learn from them
Teachers	4	They develop the child's skills in their preparation for life, they model proper behaviour and socialisation, teach children new things
Necessary people	2	Children need love and affection
People who are always there for the child	1	Being a kindergarten teacher is a vocation and mission
People who guide the child	2	They guide and stimulate children
People who care for children	2	They care for them as well as the parents
People who raise other people's children	1	It is their vocation
People who know their job	1	Their job makes them satisfied since they work with children
Companion in child's development	1	They help them grow
Leaders	4	They direct, provide a framework, help children to develop a self-image, and walk with children through a phase of their life
Total N	65	

We can recognise all five aspects distinguished by Finnish educators (Puriola, 2002) both in the description of children and kindergarten teachers:

(1) Educational: *Children are like explorers or sponges – they learn with all of the senses, solve problems, develop skills, learn and work by playing. Kindergarten teachers are like teachers, observers, helpers, models – they provide the basis for life and have knowledge and skills.*

(2) Caring: *Children are like plants, buds or flowers – fragile, delicate, the more attention we give them the better they grow. Kindergarten teachers are like gardeners, mothers (parents) – they care for, nurture and love the child as their own.*

(3) Managing: *Children are like clay – they can be modelled and modified. They are travellers – they search for the right way. Kindergarten teachers are like role models, observers, friends, signposts – they lead the child, direct, and help.*

(4) Practical: *Children are like people – they have needs and rights. Kindergarten*

teachers are like protectors – they take care of children’s needs. Kindergarten teachers are like observers – they listen to the needs of children and act accordingly.

(5) Personal: *Children are like happiness – they give us joy. Kindergarten teachers are important individuals in the child’s life; people full of love; giraffes (have the biggest heart). Kindergarten teachers are like a tree on the moor – they stand in the crosswinds unprotected while they bear fruit and provide shade, protection and support. They have to be strong and durable and at the same time they are like a sponge – they absorb all of the bad and are squeezed by everyone.*

Furthermore, it is clear that both students and kindergarten teachers perceive their job as highly valuable. Therefore, some kindergarten teacher students see themselves as “*necessary people in children’s lives*”, or the essentials of life, like “*the sun or water*”, and believe that their noble work is both a profession and mission at the same time. Likewise, preschool teachers largely see themselves as “*multitalented people*” who are ready to cope with different challenges in children’s daily activities and developmental requirements.

Both students and teachers highly value their role in children’s lives (“*another parent*”, “*teacher*”, “*helper*”, “*model*”, “*safe haven*”, etc.). Nevertheless, we have some concerns on account of some of the kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of children and their role in children’s lives. Firstly, some teachers see children as working material that should be shaped by adults (Table 1). Secondly, some of them see their role exclusively as parental, while others seem to criticise parents (“*...kindergarten teachers sometimes invest more effort than the parents do*”) (Table 3). Thirdly, some of them are more focused on the negative aspects of their profession: “*Kindergarten teachers are undermined because they are exposed to constant changes, which drive them crazy, the salary is low and they have long working hours*”; “*Kindergarten teachers absorb all of the bad and they are squeezed by everyone*”; “*Kindergarten teachers are like a squeezed mop*”; “*Kindergarten teachers are like a tree on the moor – they stand in the crosswinds, all of the winds are against them, and they are unprotected while they bear fruit, provide shade and protect*” (Table 3).

The first and second issues are mainly related to kindergarten teachers’ theoretical framework, which reflects their attitudes and directs their approach towards children. It seems that some kindergarten teachers see children solely as beings to be shaped by adults, with no regard for their active contribution to their own development. As stated earlier, such attitudes do not encourage children to take the initiative in activities. Instead of placing children in the active, strong and independent role of constructors, they are placed in the passive role of reproducers of knowledge, identity and culture. As suggested by Dahlberg

et al. (1999), seeing a child simply as a reproducer (“*Children watch adults to learn*”) or as an innocent being (“*Children are fragile, delicate, vulnerable*”) has the potential of producing a weak, passive and dependent child, which is certainly not the goal of contemporary education. Given that the basic vocational education of some older kindergarten teachers may have been more traditionally focused, continuing education is necessary in order to help them build a new educational framework for their actions. Furthermore, our analysis shows that some students in our research sample also share the view of children as material “*suitable for shaping*” (Table 2). However, the students in our sample are still at the beginning of their studies, and we strongly believe that their attitudes reflect the traditional family approach, and that these attitudes will change as a result of the students’ vocational education.

The second problem is related to the teachers’ image of their role as parents or as a parental substitute. We agree that the parental role is almost certainly one of the most important and demanding roles; however, as Dahlberg et al. (1999) suggest, the role of the kindergarten teacher in a childhood institution is supposed to offer the child something quite different but complementary to that which parents provide, so that the child can get the best of two environments. It is a fact that not all parents approach parenting equally responsibly and conscientiously. The teacher’s task, as a professional, is to try to influence parents through education and reference to the child’s needs, without jeopardising their relationship with the parents or the child. These competences, if not acquired in basic vocational education, should be acquired in continued life-long education formally provided for by the system in which they are employed and by the relevant ministry.

The third issue that emerged was the negative aspect of the kindergarten teachers’ profession. While students’ perceptions of the professional role of the kindergarten teacher are clearly idealistic, tending to encompass only the positive aspects of the profession, it is clear that practitioners face various obstacles in their work and often feel that they remain undervalued. Although the number of children and educators per educational kindergarten group is determined by the State Educational Standard of Preschool Education (Državni pedagoški standard predškolskog odgoja i naobrazbe, 2008), ranging from 10 children per group for infants to a maximum of 25 children in a group of seven-year-olds, these norms are often not respected in Croatian kindergartens (Petrović-Sočo, 2007).

As Chartier and Geneix (2006) report, children’s groups in Italian, Belgian and French nurseries are also large: a class may number 25 children or even more. According to their report, children attending nursery schools have

recently become younger and more numerous, which has revealed the weaknesses and segmentation of the early-year childcare networks in these countries. Large kindergarten groups can also be found in Croatia's neighbouring country, the Republic of Serbia (IT za inkluzivno društvo, 2010), while the number of children per kindergarten group in Slovenia is somewhat lower, ranging from 14 per group of children aged from one to three years, and 22 per group of children over three years of age (Sindikát vzgoje, izobraževanja, znanosti i kulture Slovenije, 2009). This implies that there are better working conditions in Slovenia than in the other countries mentioned. Palmerus (1995, according to Chartier & Geneix, 2006) pointed out that educational interactions, such as the time spent playing or talking with children, increase when the number of children in a group decreases. Consequently, too many children in a group may negatively affect the educator's interaction with children (Chung et al., 2005). In addition to kindergarten teachers' opinions regarding their long working hours, low salaries and lack of autonomy in work ("*Kindergarten teachers are exposed to constant changes, which drive them crazy*"), too many children in a group contributes to a feeling of dissatisfaction, ineffectiveness and helplessness among teachers.

In addition to the above, Fumoto (2011) emphasises that a further problem may be the lack of autonomy of teachers at work. He stresses the importance of supporting preschool teachers' professional autonomy, because this directly influences their behaviour and attitude towards children. Due to the significant influence of the institutional climate on the teacher-child relationship, particular attention should be devoted to our data showing the dissatisfaction of kindergarten teachers in practice ("*squeezed by everyone*", "*responsible to everyone*"). Specifically, a negative, uncooperative and hostile climate can significantly aggravate tension and discipline problems, while a positive and friendly climate can encourage teachers to engage in effective and creative teaching. In order to reduce educators' sense of helplessness and to empower them to control the situation, there is a need to publicly advocate the increased autonomy of educators in their work, thus enhancing their participation in decision-making. It is also necessary to make the relevant institutions aware of any violation of pedagogical standards. On the other hand, despite less than ideal working conditions, highly qualified and motivated staff constitute a strength of Croatian preschool institutions.

As can be observed from Tables 3 and 4, kindergarten teacher students and teachers in Croatia rarely have a vision of themselves solely as a teacher figure. The teaching practice of public kindergartens reflects standards set by state educational policies; for instance, the Croatian preschool educational standard

resembles the Italian standard in many ways. In accordance with official Italian documents, nurseries are not schools (Chartier & Geneix, 2006); children in Italian nurseries play freely, speak, sing, recite, paint, draw and listen to stories, as well as starting to learn to count, read and write. Although nearly all children attend nurseries, attendance is not compulsory and the “teaching” programme does not have to provide results. The aims and teaching practices in Italian nurseries are very similar to those in Belgium and France. In Germany and Sweden, on the other hand, there is a shift towards making preschool institutions part of the primary school system, with an emphasis on learning. In this regard, it would be interesting to investigate how kindergarten teachers from other countries see their role in children’s lives, because we assume that kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their roles in children’s lives differ depending on the educational goals.

Conclusion and Implications

Content analysis reveals that both kindergarten teachers and trainees postulate the multiplicity of their professional roles. These roles can be classified into five aspects: educational, caring, managing, practical and personal. Given their awareness of the substantial and varied contribution of kindergarten teachers to the educational process, it is not surprising that both groups highly value their role in children’s lives. One salient finding, however, is the perception of some kindergarten teachers who see their professional role as a parental role. Such attitudes indicate the need for the ongoing professional development of kindergarten teachers, as they should be constantly reminded that their professional role is complementary to, but quite different from, the parental role. Furthermore, kindergarten teachers’ perception of the child – more so than that of students – is derived from a romantic approach, according to which the child is seen as a creative and active being. Differences in perception can be attributed to the influence of experience and vocational education. However, even some practitioners perceive the child as a passive being, further emphasising the need for lifelong education and professional development. We believe that students’ perceptions change during their vocational education, which is based on a contemporary view of the child as the subject of its own development. Finally, the dissatisfaction of some kindergarten teachers is also striking, with long working hours, low salaries and a lack of autonomy in work, as well as too many children per group, contributing to a feeling of dissatisfaction. Kindergarten teacher students have yet to face the difficulties that arise in real working situations, and therefore have a more idealistic image of

their profession. We note the importance of supporting the professional autonomy of kindergarten teachers because it directly influences their attitude towards children. The standards of preschool education in Croatia are often not respected, which is evident in the large groups in kindergartens. We therefore also highlight the need to make relevant institutions aware of any violation of pedagogical standards.

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Community Resilience and the Fulfilment of Child Rights in the Family, School and Community

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∞ The present paper presents the experience of researching the resilience of the local community and the fulfilment of the rights of the child. The aim of research was to place the assessment of the rights of the child in the function of local community resilience, focusing on one particular group of rights: the right to participate. This concept is defined through the view of the local community from the perspective of children, parents and teachers, within the context of the realisation of child rights at the local level, which has a direct influence on the development and upbringing of children. The local community selected for study was the town of Velika Gorica in the Republic of Croatia, and the research included qualitative data collected through interviews in seven focus groups. The study included 13 children, 9 parents and 10 teachers. The results show that the key element of children's understanding of the concept of child rights is respect and appreciation from adults despite differences in the amount and type of power possessed by children. The understanding of the concept of child rights from the perspective of adults is based on the need for these rights due to children's dependence, immaturity and need for protection. Discussion about resilience opens up a new dimension for nonprofessional interpretation. The concept of resilience produced ambiguous reactions among children, parents and teachers, being perceived in two ways: as "positive" and "negative". In all three focus groups, participants agree that there is a connection between child rights and resilience. They explain the connection as clear, logical and conditioned by interaction.

Keywords: Resilience; Child rights; Children's participation

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Odpornost skupnosti ter uresničevanje otrokovih pravic v družini, šoli in v skupnosti

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∞ V prispevku sta predstavljena izkušnja raziskovanja odpornosti in virov moči lokalne skupnosti ter doživljanje uresničevanja otrokovih pravic. Cilj raziskave je bil umestitev vrednotenja otrokovih pravic v konceptualni okvir odpornosti. Raziskava je bila osredinjena na pravico otrok do sodelovanja. Koncept je definiran na podlagi doživljanja lokalne skupnosti s perspektive otrok, staršev in učiteljev v kontekstu uresničevanja otrokovih pravic, ki ima neposreden vpliv na otrokov razvoj in vzgojo. V raziskavo je bila vključena skupnost Velika Gorica na Hrvaškem. Podatki za kvalitativno raziskavo so bili zbrani z intervjuji v sedmih fokusnih skupinah. Vključenih je bilo 13 otrok, 9 staršev in 10 učiteljev. Izsledki kažejo, da otroci izpolnjevanje svojih pravic povezujejo predvsem s spoštovanjem s strani odraslih, ne glede na razlike v moči, ki jo otrok poseduje. S perspektive staršev so otrokove pravice potrebne zlasti zaradi njihove odvisnosti, nezrelosti in potrebe po zaščiti. Razprava o odpornosti skupnosti odpira tudi nove poglede v laični interpretaciji koncepta, ki je med otroki, starši in učitelji spodbudil različne odzive. Dojemali so ga na dva načina – kot nekaj »pozitivnega« ali tudi »negativnega«. V vseh treh skupinah (starši, otroci, učitelji) se udeleženci strinjajo, da obstaja povezava med otrokovimi pravicami in odpornostjo oziroma viri skupnosti, pri čemer je povezava odvisna od tipa interakcije.

Ključne besede: odpornost; pravice otrok; sodelovanje otrok

Introduction to the research problem

Children are perceived as a social group with a special approach due to their position in society. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (2001) is the basic international agreement regulating the rights of children. The Convention clearly obliges states to provide a child care and education system that promotes the child's development and that is accessible to all children equally. The Republic of Croatia signed and ratified the Convention, thus taking on all of the commitments pertaining to it.

Although the fulfilment of child rights has been more serious and effective in the states that signed the Convention, the question of child rights implementation on the local level has not been addressed sufficiently. Two decades after the adoption of the Convention, the time has come to consider this question on the local level, since the first two immediate environments of the child, after the family, are school and the local community.

The study is based on work and research concepts of child rights fulfilment and local community resilience that assume a mutual connection and influence between child rights fulfilment and the building of a healthy and resilient local community. It has the concrete research mission of clarifying the role of child rights in building a resilient community, with a special emphasis on one group of rights: participation rights. Children's participation implies active parental support in expressing their opinions and providing the conditions required for expressing these opinions.

The literature in which a relationship is found between child rights and local community resilience concludes that several possible connections exist with regard to this relationship. The relationship between education and empowerment is based on the initiative of community institutions that educate and invigorate citizens. Connection through social (and even political) activism influences the creation of a positive environment for children to grow up in. Recognition of resilience as an outcome is based on an understanding of healthy child development.

Authors who focus on democracy education and child rights agree that the education of children about their rights and the fulfilment these rights on the part of adults strengthen society because they influence the development of healthy and responsible individuals (Roose & Bouverne-de Bie, 2007; Thomas, 2007; Tisdall & Bell, 2006; Williams, 2007). Howe and Covell (2005) state that education on child rights builds up positive mechanisms that encourage positive values in children. Their research data demonstrate the value of teaching children about their rights, as is evident in the acquisition of skills and

encouragement of the characteristics of democratic leadership and individual responsibility. The authors also reveal the development of personality traits such as self-respect and awareness of individual value, as well as increasing respect for others. The data highlight the importance of democracy education and critical thinking in classrooms.

Torney-Purta et al. (1999, according to Howe & Covell, 2005) believe that, in addition to families, schools should take more responsibility for civic education. They claim that schools make insufficient efforts to promote child rights, emphasising that learning about these rights must begin with adults. Gurwitch, Pfefferbaum, Montgomery, Klomp, and Reissman (2007) identify resilience elements that influence the building of a resilient local community, namely: connection, commitment and shared values, participation, structure, roles and responsibilities, support and education, critical thinking and skill development, resources and communication. The authors point out that children's resilience can be improved if they participate in family, school, cultural, religious and extracurricular activities. Resilience can be further enhanced if children feel respected and appreciated by others and if they contribute to their community.

Supporters of positive child development focus special attention on interaction between the individual and the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Chaskin, 2008; Dumont & Provost, 1999; Fergusson & Horwood, 2008; Fergus & Zimmerman, 2005; Fraser, 1997; Rolfe, 2006; Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009). Some authors (Hawkins, Catalano, & Miller, 1992, according to Bašić, 2009) consider the connection between a young person and the important figures within their community as the key element of the healthy development of young people. There are three protective processes leading to this connection: opportunities for active participation, skills that enable successful participation, and recognition and strengthening of opportunities to use these skills.

The essential meaning of ecological theory (Berger, McBreen, & Rifkin 1996; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Fraser, 1997; Ungar, 2011), as well as the theory of risk and resilience (Kirby & Fraser, 1997; McCarthy, Laing, & Walker, 2004), is based on respect and fulfilment of human rights, with an emphasis on child rights. In view of the strong need to act on the local level, we may conclude that it is precisely in local communities that the Convention should be implemented, taking into account the specific needs and problems of these communities.

In discussing the relationship between risk and protective factors and community resilience, McCarthy, Laing, and Walker (2004) highlight family and children involvement in making decisions about certain issues regarding life in the community. Parents and children have to know what is happening in the community, and should be given a chance to contribute with their own

ideas and opinions. Children can be involved on different levels: they can put the information they receive into practice, they can share their attitudes and help by offering a new perspective on a specific situation, and they can be included in decision making by offering their opinion on the types of interventions that may help them.

As a phenomenon, resilience is an active process. Resilient people can successfully manipulate their environment in order to isolate themselves from the negative consequences of harmful events (Luthar & Cicchetti, 2000; Luthar, Cicchetti, & Becker, 2000; Masten & O'Dougherty Wright, 2010; Murray, 2003; Normand, 2007). This makes young resilient people identifiable as those who actively participate in creating their own environment (Scarr & McCartney, 1983, according to Bašić, 2009). Rutter (1987, according to Bašić, 2009) notes that resilience is a process, not just the identification of static factors, and therefore defines both the process and outcome constructs.

On the other hand, individual and environmental potentials are considered to continuously affect negative risk, stress and trauma factors (Perez et al., 2009, according to Žižak, Ratkajec, Nikolić, Maurović, & Mirosavljević, 2010). This is very important in terms of treatment, because risk and protective factors operate during the treatment process as well. As a result of their interaction (Ajduković, 2000), resilience (or lack of resilience) is not only a final outcome but also an ever-present potential. Therefore, the concept of resilience, although connected to risk exposure, is focused on strength, not on weakness, and on an understanding of healthy development, or, in other words, on a positive developmental outcome (Luthar, 2006; Masten & Obradović, 2006; Rutter, 2007; Ungar, 2004; Ungar et al., 2008; Windle, 2011).

Critical school competencies are developed in an environment with an enhanced positive attitude towards critical thinking (McDermott, Scacciaferro, & Visker, 2012; Vieno, Perkins, Smith, & Santinello, 2005). The right to participate helps in learning about critical thinking, because by stating one's own opinion other opinions must also be taken into consideration. Different opinions can lead to confrontation and even to conflict, which creates an opportunity for progress in terms of democratic dialogue.

Taking into account and integrating the knowledge and ideas presented thus far, the research was carried out with the aim of understanding concepts of child rights and resilience in the community, family and school environments. The town of Velika Gorica was chosen as a local community in which special, scientifically based programmes for children and youth have been organised over the last 15 years. Some of the features of this town that influence the way of life of children and their families are: its vicinity to the city of Zagreb,

population growth (about 70,000), an influx of young families, and positive natural increase.

Reviewing, reflecting on and integrating the facts from the relevant scientific literature, and from the rather small quantity of scientific research, enabled the formulation of the present study's work research concept of child rights in connection to child rights awareness (from the perspective of children and important figures who influence their growing up in the community), in connection to the participation right as an essential innovation and challenge for children and adults and for the whole society, and in connection to the estimation of child rights fulfilment from the perspective of children and other community members through changes in education policies and the democratisation of society. The study's research concept of local community resilience is defined in terms of the perception of children, parents and teachers in the context of child rights fulfilment on the local level, where there is a direct influence on child development. In the research, resilience is considered as a capacity to resist and overcome problems and difficulties. This capacity helps to decrease and overcome negative influences despite the presence of risk factors, as well as helping to find positive outcomes and solutions for negative life circumstances. Moreover, local community resilience is considered not only as connected to ways of overcoming crisis situations, but also as a systematically built imperative of the healthy and supportive development and life of its citizens.

Whether these particular outcomes of respecting child rights and building a healthy resilient community are mutually conditioned, and to what extent, is still impossible to conclude on the basis of the available research. This is an ongoing challenge, and part of this challenge has been accepted by the present research.

This study presents research on the connection between child rights fulfilment and some elements of local community resilience. Qualitative data have been used to achieve objectives. The basic aim of acquiring qualitative data was a need and desire for insight into the research problems through a direct approach to the research participants. The research section presents an understanding of concepts of child rights and local community resilience from the perspective of children, parents and teachers.

Research objectives

The basic objective of the present research is to determine the connection between child rights fulfilment and certain elements of local community resilience.²

² The research is part of a broader research project conducted for the doctoral dissertation "The Realisation of Children's Rights in the Process of Creating a Resilient Local Community".

On the basis of literature dealing with children's rights and resilience, the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child is associated with a healthy and resilient environment for children. However, a question arises regarding the participant's attitudes about the process of children's upbringing. According to literature-based expectations, it could be expected that the fulfilment of children's rights in the local community is recognised as an important community capacity.

Some specific aims have been derived from the basic objective:

- (1) To gain an insight into how children, parents and teachers understand the concept of child rights.
- (2) To gain an insight into how children, parents and teachers understand resilience.
- (3) To determine how children, parents and teachers understand the connection between the concepts of child rights and resilience.

Research methodology

Qualitative data have been used to realise the set objectives. The aim of acquiring qualitative data was to gain insight into the research problems through a direct approach to the research participants.

The main reasons for adopting a qualitative methodology are:

- (1) to gain insight into the key research concepts – child rights and resilience – from the individual perspective of the child and from the perspective of figures important to the child;
- (2) to give a role and importance to the child's right of participation, balanced by the very essence of this right: active involvement according to individual abilities;
- (3) to approach the participants with direct communication in order to gain insight into individual perspectives, and to bring the research leader and participants together to work on 'locally relevant facts' pertaining to child rights in terms of new actions in the local community.

Data on the perception of child rights, quality of life and the local community in the town of Velika Gorica were collected through interviews organised in children's, parents' and teachers' focus groups. There were three regular levels of interviews in the groups: introduction, key questions and conclusion questions. Three introduction questions opened the topic of the understanding of child rights and the reasons for special rights. Six key questions were related to resilience and the connection between the phenomenon of resilience and child

rights fulfilment, quality of life and growing up. Three conclusion questions dealt with perceptions of the relationship between rights, responsibilities and rules.

The qualitative data have been processed according to the principles of qualitative text analysis.

The responses were grouped into categories according to the key concepts and ideas of the research participants. The analysis of data has been made in these categories, and data are integrated and interpreted.

In the qualitative part of the research, 13 children took part in interviews in three focus groups, while 9 parents participated in two focus groups and 10 teachers took part in two further focus groups. The group of children consisted of 7 girls and 6 boys from the 7th grade. The subsample of parents consisted of 7 mothers and 2 fathers, while the teacher subsample is made up of 10 female teachers. The children's subsample structure is balanced in terms of gender. However, in terms of the important adults, the child rights evaluation is much more coloured with the female point of view, including the author of the present research.

Research results

How children understand the child rights concept

The analysed answers show two categories of reasons for the existence of special child rights. The first category is related to power. Children claim that they are weaker, different and powerless, and therefore cannot fight for their rights on their own. The second category, related to respect, conveys a clear message that the need for special child rights lies in the need for child respect despite differences in social power between children and adults.

When asked *Do you know what child rights are?*, children responded differently. An analysis of the responses enables the recognition of four categories: answers related to concrete child rights, to respect for children and their opinions, to life without violence, and to a decrease in differences and social exclusion.

The concrete rights that children mention relate to their everyday life (their example is that all children have the right to education, which is fulfilled in Velika Gorica because all children go to school). Children associate respect for children with child opinion appreciation (*'It is necessary that grown-ups have respect for us and our opinion'*). They are dissatisfied with their situation and state that 'it would be better if adults respected us more because children are sometimes smarter than adults'.

Since the participation right is emphasised in the present research, the children were asked *What does the participation right mean to you?* They

explain that children have the right to be listened to, to express their opinion, to be involved in making decisions that concern them, and to have their suggestions taken into account. *Are you involved in making decisions in your family, school and local community?* is the next question, with children providing detailed responses about their experience. The best situation is in their families. They agree on mutual activities and discuss the rules with their parents, and are satisfied with the way their participation right is fulfilled. Next is the local community. Most children perceive the local community (city government, local self-government) as an institution where they have the right to express their opinions, problems and demands. Although they are not completely satisfied with reactions to their needs, they do manage to have their wishes and needs partly fulfilled. On the other hand, children express dissatisfaction concerning schools. Participants of all of the focus groups consider that they have no right to express their opinion in school, and have experienced rejection when their demands had to be supported. Children claim they have no rights in school and are not respected there. They consider the Pupils' Council to be a declarative body with no open possibilities to improve student status. This situation is explained by possible reasons related to school rules, which do not allow any student activities. Almost all activities unrelated to classes (such as school trips, etc.) could be discussed with students, but instead they are agreed upon only among teachers, class teachers and principals. This causes dissatisfaction among students, making them feel inferior and powerless, as some of their statements demonstrate: *'When we say something, it is like we have not said anything, they do not care'* *'The worst situation is in school, because no one ever listens to us and we really feel miserable'*.

How parents and teachers understand the child rights concept

The concept of child rights was examined in four adult focus groups: two groups of parents and two of teachers. It is interesting to compare their understanding of child rights.

Parents are highly critical of child rights as a new legal and social phenomenon. Although most parents support the existence of special child rights, some parents consider their existence unnecessary. They justify their opinion by the idea that children and adults should have the same human rights (*'Children are the same as adults, aren't they? Consequently, human rights should be valid for them too'*). The highest level of criticism is directed towards adults, because they exaggerate with too many different types of documents, including the Convention, on child rights (*'With so many rights, child rights are made up in order to hide the fact that there are actually fewer and fewer rights'*). However,

most parents think that child rights have to be specially regulated because children are not independent and do not possess material assets, and therefore need special protection (*'Children cannot earn money and are not able to take care of themselves', 'Children are not emotionally and physically mature for independent life'*). Some parents state that there are adults who physically, psychologically and existentially threaten children, and there is a need for a system that protects such children. Parents with a highly critical opinion on the existence of special child rights conclude that child rights are inseparable from human rights and therefore discriminatory. (*'It is two-faced – children should be treated the same as adults, and adults have made up some special rights for them', 'In the developed world, there are no discussions about it – human rights are the same for all people and children are little people'*). These statements initiated a discussion on the concept of child rights, with the parents who believe there is a need for special child rights claiming that children need help in human rights fulfilment because they naturally depend on adults and cannot fight for their rights and interests on their own. Most parents agree that there is a need for special child rights, but think that they should be approached correctly (*'These are human rights for the little ones and the weak'*).

Unlike parents, teachers agree that there must be a special regulation system for child rights and that adults are responsible for their fulfilment (*'A child has the right to be cared for by adults'*). Like most parents, teachers believe that child rights are necessary due to protection of children whose parents do not take appropriate care of them (*'Not all children are in the same situation'*).

All of the adult participants claim to understand what child rights are and state three groups of basic needs for the existence of child rights: dependence due to objective natural reasons, the immaturity and incompetence of children, and their need for protection. Both parents and teachers know all of the types of rights and can name all of the categories.

The parents' reply to the question *What does the participation right mean to you?* is that this right enables children to express their opinion, which helps them to be involved in making decisions important to them. According to parents, the right consists of agreement and negotiation between parents and children. Parents decide on the right's fulfilment in the family (*'It is a licence for children to participate in decision making'*), which is good because adults sometimes do not understand children and should ask them about their opinion (*'Adults decide on rules and rights but perhaps do not understand what children think and want'*). To sum up, children have the right to express their opinion when parents allow it, with the aim of better understanding their needs and wishes.

On the other hand, teachers do not have conditions for participation right fulfilment. In their opinion, children can participate in almost all positive aspects of life (*'When we respect their participation right we allow children to develop and form their personality'*).

Regarding the question *'Do children have any influence on making decisions in the family, school and local community?'*, parents consider that children's influence in the family can even be too great (*'Sometimes we even adapt to them too much'*). The main reason for respecting the child's opinion in the family is the desire of parents to make their children happy and satisfied. Even if children do not directly express their desires, they have an indirect effect on the process of fulfilment (*'Children have the greatest influence in the family. They influence us directly or indirectly'; 'They are cunning little creatures, they do not have to say anything and we know what we have to do'*). Parents generally agree that children's greatest influence on decision making is in the family, directly or indirectly, and that they support this primarily because they want to please their children. Only a small number of parents believe that children can affect decision making in schools (*'School sometimes allows them to say what they think and some issues can be changed under their influence'*), but most parents disagree with this. They argue that the rules of the school system do not allow students to be involved in decision making (*'They do not have any influence in school'; 'The only influential person is the principal'; 'Teachers are all-powerful in classrooms'*). According to parents' statements and opinions, it can be concluded that there are two levels of children's influence in schools: the first is declarative, according to which the right of children to be involved in decision making is fulfilled, and the second is real, whereby there are standardised sets of rules that exclude children from making decisions.

Teachers completely disagree with this opinion. Like parents, they think that children have the greatest influence on decision making in families: opportunities for participation exist, and parents respect children's opinion. However, teachers claim that children have a significant influence on decisions made by them as well. As an example, they mention agreement on when to do exams, what to choose for a menu, which plays they want to see and which books they want to read for compulsory reading. Moreover, children vote for classroom representatives to the Pupils' Council, they can evaluate their classmates in oral exams (*'Students are much stricter with their classmates and mostly give lower grades than teachers'*). In short, the child participation right in schools is fulfilled and children influence teachers' decisions, as the following statement confirms: *'Children participate in school life more than is believed'*.

How children understand the term resilience

The most confusing question for the participants was: *Do you know what resilience is?*

The concept of a resilient individual is ambiguous for children: it is perceived both positively and negatively. Children with a negative perception of resilience consider resilient individuals to be lonely and introverted because they are resilient to social rules (*'Resilient people are reserved', 'Resilient people do not respect social rules'*). In their opinion, resilience, in relation to rules and norms, is not a positive category, as rules represent a social value that is important for a healthy society, and resilience with regard to the rules means disrespecting them (*'A resilient person is stubborn and disobedient'*). However, most children understand resilience as a positive concept. It was concluded that a resilient person resists negative and harmful influences and has a very strong personality (*'A resilient person is one who does not react if someone teases him or her', 'A resilient person says NO to drugs'*). In the opinion of children, there are physical and psychological types of resilience. The physical type means resistance to diseases (*'A resilient person is someone who is immune to diseases'*), while the psychological type refers to psychological stability (*'A resilient person ignores bullies and can talk to a class teacher or principal'*). In the end, the positive aspect of resilience prevailed in all of the focus groups, i.e., the view that a resilient individual is someone who can resist negative influences.

The discussion on resilient individuals clarified the term resilience, resulting in the interview concerning a resilient school and a resilient community proceeding without ambiguity with regard to the definition of terms. A resilient school is oriented towards the creation of a positive atmosphere, resistance to harmful and negative behavioural patterns, acceptance of diversity, and respect of child rights. Establishing a positive atmosphere depends on teachers and the dominant school value system accepted by most of the students. Adults working in school are responsible for creating a 'resilient climate' (*'In resilient schools, experts help students'*). Rather than being 'rejected', students who disrupt this atmosphere are influenced by the majority of their peers, leading to a positive change in their behaviour (*'A resilient classroom wins a bad student over', 'A resilient classroom accepts problematic students who cannot harm the class but are improved by the class'*). A resilient school accepts all students irrespective of their personality traits, helping them to adapt and create their own resilience (*'In a resilient school, students help others with problems on their own. If the situation is serious, then experts help'*). It is interesting that children connect a resilient school and child rights already in this set of questions, stating that in a resilient school child rights are respected and fulfilled.

Children define a resilient local community as a place where resilient individuals live and where schools nurture their own resilience (*'A resilient community has resilient people and resilient schools'*). Like schools, a community has its own elements of resilience: resistance to harmful influences, a negative attitude towards individuals who behave inappropriately, and the respect and unity of the people who live there (*'A resilient community is one where people respect each other and make agreements'*). Moreover, children state that a resilient community is a comfortable and safe place to live, in which choices are created and children are offered a range of possibilities for spending their free time.

How parents and teachers understand the term resilience

Most parents answered the question *Do you know what resilience is?* by defining the term as a scientific or medical category (*'The term resilience reminds me of immunity; if your immune system is strong you can resist diseases'*). Some parents define it as a physical term (*'Resilience is a physical term meaning resistance to some force'*). Only a few parents understand it as a general term on the social level (*'It is an ability to resist different influences'*). It is interesting that most parents divide resilience into positive and negative aspects. In their opinion, external influences can be both positive and negative, and therefore so can resilience.

In this regard, the participants gave more detailed descriptions when they defined a resilient individual, school and community. If an individual resists positive influences it means that person has negative resilience (*'A child has a problem with learning; parents and teachers try very hard but the child does not improve, which means resilience is negative'*). Positive resilience implies resistance to negative influences (*'That would be a kid who is not influenced by something negative; for example, the kid goes to football matches, supports the team among violent groups but is not with them, does not accept their behaviour'*). There is a very significant opinion of a few parents that if resilience is too strong it can be harmful. According to them, there is a need to measure the level of resilience because (*'Resilience can be very problematic – my daughter is very resistant in terms of health, her body does not indicate any disease with temperature or anything, and it can have very serious consequences'*). More emphasis was placed on this attitude in the discussion about a resilient school (*'A resilient school does not allow any external negative influences'*). Most parents agree that a resilient school does not necessarily represent something positive. If a resilient school does not allow external influences it means that it cannot face the difficulties and solve the problems that are bound to arise occasionally. It was concluded that school cannot be isolated and resilient to the extent that no problems can reach it.

In the opinion parents, negative influences create opportunities for learning about different ways to solve problems and deal with stressful situations. As such, resilience could be explained as a flexible term that includes the existence of so-called permeability with regard to real life situations and problems.

There was no detailed discussion of a resilient community, as most parents claimed that whatever is true for school is also true for the community. A resilient community takes care of its inhabitants (*'It is a community with politicians who make good decisions'*), has a good standard, a favourable environment and many facilities for children and other sensitive social groups. The view regarding limited resilience is valid for the community as well (*'It is not good when a community is too resilient because it will be isolated; a person, a school and a community have the right to make mistakes; mistakes teach us something'*).

Teachers also found a connection between the term resilience and positive and negative context. They explain resilience on the individual level as a medical phenomenon, identifying it with the immunity system (*'Resilience is immunity: the condition when a person does not catch an illness'*). The longest discussion was about a resilient school. Like parents, teachers assume that a limited amount of negative influence is welcome, as it enables learning about how to react in unexpected and problematic situations. Teachers even claim that in certain cases the education system does not create a quality space for educational possibilities aligned with children's needs. In other words, a resilient school must know how to reduce instructions and influences on a formal level (*'A resilient school resists political influences'*, *'A resilient school conducts its own policies wisely'*). Resilient schools influence the building of a resilient community, and resilient communities are like generalised forms of resilient schools (*'A resilient community also has its wise politicians and conducts its policies, but on behalf of its citizens'*).

How children understand the connection between child rights and the concept of resilience

In all of the focus groups, children agreed that resilience and respecting child rights are connected. This is explained in two ways: a logical connection and a mutual reaction. When children logically connect the terms, they state *'If resilience is good and if rights are good then they belong to a group of good things and share that quality'*. The mutual reaction of the concepts is explained by the influence of rights on building resilience and by the reciprocal influence of resilience on respecting rights (*'If rights are respected then there is resilience as well, 'but if there is resilience then rights are respected'*). These reflections

encouraged participants to discuss which concept is more important and which has to come first (*‘It would be perfect if everyone was resilient – children, schools and the community; those who are resilient do not violate others’ rights’*. *‘If people did not violate others’ rights it would mean that everyone was resilient’*). Students were equally divided when discussing this topic, concluding that the two concepts are strongly connected and that it is meaningless to determine whether rights influence resilience or the other way around (*‘It is the same as the question about the egg and the chicken’*).

How parents and teachers understand the connection between child rights and the concept of resilience

In all of the focus groups, there was a unified opinion regarding a connection between the concepts of resilience and child rights. It is not important which concept was defended, because there is a logical and natural connection between them. Both parents and teachers connect the two concepts in a similar way. Like children, they state that resilience influences the respecting of rights, just as respecting rights builds resilience. Since child rights are regulated, parents think that institutions and community services are responsible for respecting and fulfilling rights (*‘If child rights are regulated, the resilient community will apply them’*). The problem that emerges with regard to child rights and the building of a resilient community is that of the failure to respect existing regulations (*‘Our state is too standardised, and so is the community’*). The large number of set norms prevents their application in practice, which is why parents and teachers consider it necessary to reduce the number of existing norms. Priority should be given to the best norms for the needs of community (*‘All these norms are traps, because it is impossible to conform to all of them and it is a very bad example for children’*). Respecting child rights is extremely important for a good life in the community, and participants claim that the community has to determine its priorities and choose the concept supported by its citizens (*‘For example, children have the right to play, the community builds parks and playgrounds and sends a message about the importance of child rights’*).

Discussion and conclusion

Children’s reflections on the concept of child rights provided a good basis for describing their understanding of this legal and psycho-social construct. The key element of their understanding of the concept of child rights is respect and appreciation from adults, despite differences in the amount and type of power they possess. Moreover, the children’s concept is of a specific, and

not abstract, phenomenon. Concretising (concrete thinking is typical of the age group to which the children belong) relates to participation rights, which children discuss primarily through specific rights.

The understanding of the concept of child rights from the perspective of adults is based on the need for these rights due to children's dependence, immaturity and need for protection. Differences in opinion between parents and teachers derive from their positions with regard to children. Teachers tend to be more critical of the parents' role in the fulfilment of child rights, whereas parents criticise the role of schools in this respect.

Children do not perceive the concept of resilience as unambiguous and clear. From their perspective, it is the negative phenomenon of resistance to positive values, while, on the other hand, it is the positive phenomenon of resistance to negative influences. The arguments of the participants who insist on an ambiguous meaning of this concept are not irrelevant. They highlight the importance of clarifying the concept of individual, school and community resilience outside the scientific framework.

Unexpectedly, the concept of resilience produced ambiguous reactions among parents and teachers, being perceived in two ways: both as positive and negative. Moreover, if resilience is too strong, then it is not completely positive. There is a logical basis for the arguments explaining this opinion, as they speak of the need for learning how to react in problematic situations. According to parents, problems and discomforts are part of life, and facing them prepares children for real life, which is never free of difficulties. If children live in a completely resilient environment, they will not be able to learn the skills and methods of dealing with stressful events. This strict definition of resilience supports the fact that it is necessary to clarify terms outside professional circles to avoid literal understanding.

When parents and teachers talk about negative resilience, they identify it with resilience that can go in two directions: as resistance to negative influences and resistance to positive influences. Moreover, for them, resilience is not only an outcome or result, but also a way of life that deals with negative influences.

It can be concluded that discussion about resilience opens up a new dimension for nonprofessional interpretation. Experts can and must integrate complicated mechanisms in one entity, and are therefore obliged to clarify and connect terms within the phenomenon of resilience. However, differences in expert and nonprofessional interpretations can lead to misunderstandings. Non-professional interpretation may derive from the semantic origin of the word 'resilience', which is reminiscent of the word 'resistance'. It is important to prevent misunderstanding of the phenomenon of resilience due to semantic ambiguity.

Burger (1994, according to Ungar, 2008), confirms that there is a reason why some parents and teachers take issue with resilience as an ambiguous concept. In his work 'Risk, Resilience and Protection,' he explains the understanding of resilience, mentioning two types of resilience: healthy and unhealthy. Healthy resilience is expressed through pro-social, sympathetic, harmonious and adapted behaviour, as opposed to unhealthy resilience, which manifests itself in aggressive, controlling, introverted or self-destructive behaviour.

Negative resilience is counterproductive. In the short run, such behaviour appears to be a necessary mechanism for facing problems; in the long term, however, it poisons relationships and prevents the development of healthy resilience. By comparing Burger's resilience with that of the participants, it can be concluded that the same two types are identified. Burger's healthy resilience is the positive resilience mentioned by parents and teachers, while unhealthy resilience is the negative resilience. Ungar (2008) warns that there are no empirical proofs for the existence of good and bad resilience, explaining that Burger, along with many others, claim what is obvious intuitively but cannot be confirmed.

Understanding the concept of resilience from the participants' perspective, as well as the clarification of the term resilience, served as an introduction to the realisation of a specific aim: determining and describing how children, parents and teachers understand the connection between the concepts of child rights and resilience.

In all three focus groups, the participants agree that there is a connection between these two concepts. They explain the connection as clear, logical and conditioned by interaction. All of the participants reached a unique agreement, and the results of the discussions can be summed up in three conclusions:

- (1) there is a connection between the concepts of resilience and child rights;
- (2) the two concepts are reciprocally connected and there is interaction between them;
- (3) as a phenomenon related to the individual, the school and the local community, resilience influences respecting child rights, just as the fulfilment of child rights influences building resilience.

Although the literature connects the concept of resilience with concepts of risk and protection factors, and despite the fact that child rights are problematised on general levels (international and national), the idea of the need for the stronger implementation of a system for respecting child rights in local communities has become more frequently expressed lately (Howe & Covell, 2005; Mortier, 2002; Veerman & Levine, 2000; Vizek-Vidović & Žižak, 2000).

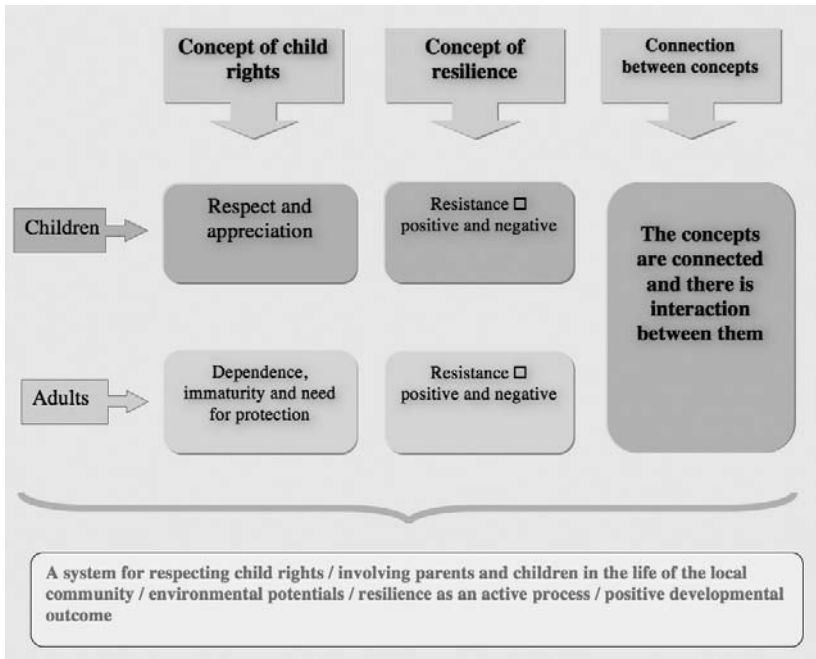


Figure 1. Schematic view of the presented results

If the implementation of child rights fulfilment is connected to the idea of the importance of involving parents and children in the life of the local community, especially in decision making that is important for children and families (McCarthy, Laing, & Walker, 2004), the result is that local communities become healthier and stronger, and children have a better, safer and happier environment in which to grow up.

In general, the conclusion is that the theoretical contribution of the present research lies in connecting the concepts of child rights and resilience (Figure 1). On the basis of the literature studied, multi-component theoretical models of these concepts have been suggested, both separately and in interaction. Moreover, work research concepts of child rights and community resilience have been constructed. The attempt to determine the understanding of resilience from a nonprofessional perspective is very significant. Differences between nonprofessional and professional perspectives have provoked new and interesting questions regarding the understanding of resilience, as well as regarding mutual understanding in terms of theoretical and practical discourse. On the other hand, on the level of community profit (influence on education policy, the democratisation of society, knowledge of resources, etc.), some elements of these concepts are still to be verified by putting the given results into practice.

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Biographical note

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Some Aspects of Collaboration in Inclusive Education – Teachers' Experiences

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~ The main aim of the present article is to analyse some aspects of collaboration in inclusive educational practice in Croatian schools by analysing teachers' experiences. Special attention is devoted to the professional support resources available to teachers, as well as to teachers' views on the content and usefulness of the professional support they utilise. The article presents partial results of a larger research project regarding various components of inclusive practice in Croatian primary schools, organised at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb. A total of 69 primary school teachers were interviewed regarding the elements of inclusive practices in their own schools. Each teacher also completed a short questionnaire about their opinions on elements that weaken inclusive practices in their school, as well as on some general data about schools. The data obtained were analysed on both the qualitative and the quantitative levels. The results suggest that, at the present time, collaboration in Croatian schools is not well organised and defined. It is shown that only a relatively small number of various professionals who could support teachers and students in inclusive processes work in schools. Furthermore, it is established that schools do not compensate for this problem with stronger collaboration between schools and professionals in local communities. Teachers would like to receive more specific advice, as well as more concrete assistance in the education of students with disabilities. The author concludes that a better conceptualisation of collaboration between schools and local communities is needed (especially a higher level of team work). This would certainly contribute to improving the quality of inclusive education in Croatian schools.

Keywords: Collaboration; Inclusive education; Teachers' experiences; Professional support

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Izbrani vidiki sodelovanja v inkluzivnem izobraževanju – izkušnje učiteljev

DEJANA BOUILLET

☞ V prispevku so na podlagi analize izkušenj učiteljev predstavljeni izbrani vidiki sodelovanja v inkluzivnem izobraževanju v hrvaških šolah. Posebna pozornost je namenjena virom strokovne podpore, ki je na voljo učiteljem, ter njihovim mnenjem glede vsebine in uporabnosti obstoječih oblik podpore. Prispevek predstavi delne izsledke širšega raziskovalnega projekta o različnih komponentah inkluzivne prakse v hrvaških osnovnih šolah, ki ga je izvedla Pedagoška fakulteta v Zagrebu. O elementih inkluzivne prakse na šoli je bilo intervjuvanih 69 učiteljev. Vsak je izpolnil tudi kratek vprašalnik o lastnem pogledu na elemente, ki negativno vplivajo na inkluzivno prakso njihove šole, ter o šoli podal nekaj osnovnih podatkov. Izvedeni sta bili kvantitativna in kvalitativna analiza vseh podatkov. Na podlagi izsledkov lahko sklepamo, da trenutno sodelovanje pri inkluzivnem delu v hrvaških šolah ni dovolj dobro organizirano in definirano. V šolah je prisotnih le malo strokovnjakov, ki bi lahko učiteljem in učencem nudili podporo pri inkluziji. Ugotovimo tudi, da šole za nadomeščanje tega primanjkljaja ne sodelujejo s strokovnjaki v lokalnih skupnostih. Učitelji bi želeli bolj specifične nasvete in konkretnjšo pomoč pri izobraževanju otrok s posebnimi potrebami. Avtorica ugotavlja, da je potrebna boljša konceptualizacija sodelovanja med šolami in lokalnimi skupnostmi (še posebej višja raven timskega dela), kar bi prispevalo k izboljšanju kakovosti inkluzivnega izobraževanja v hrvaških šolah.

Ključne besede: sodelovanje; inkluzivno izobraževanje; izkušnje učiteljev; strokovna podpora

Introduction

It is well known that, over the last three decades, school populations have become increasingly diverse, with students coming from a broad range of cultures, socioeconomic backgrounds, language environments and family structures, as well as having a wide range of abilities (Meadan & Konda-Amaya, 2008). Providing a quality education for all students in an inclusive setting is therefore acknowledged as the most challenging issue in education today (Amer et al., 2009). Although the principle of inclusion has received a good degree of consensual support in society as a whole, there has been much less agreement about whether this principle can be realised in practice (Farrell et al., 2007).

Providing adequate care and education for children with disabilities in an inclusive context is a complex issue. Each child confronts health and education professionals with a diversity of individual problems in the physical, psychological, social and educational domains (Nijhuis et al., 2007, p. 196). Teachers and other education professionals support students in acquiring academic skills, as well as in developing the knowledge, skills and attitudes that students need to become caring and compassionate citizens.

It is obvious that inclusive education requires a high quality of service, well-trained teachers, support personnel and material resources. Moreover, collaborative schools are at the heart of inclusive education. Such schools promote cooperative relationships, not only in school but also between school and the whole community. Authors agree that “the essence of inclusive education is a joint vision producing the necessary changes, transformations, improvements and new directions, guidelines as well as the outcomes representing the benefit for all the subjects involved and the entire society, as well. It is a process that brings together people, ideas, systems, communications, technologies...” (Pavlović & Šarić, 2012, p. 511).

As is stressed in *Key Principles for Promoting Quality in Inclusive Education* (European Agency for Development in Special Needs Education, 2009, p. 22), support structures that impact upon inclusive education are diverse and often involve a range of various service professionals, approaches and working methods. At the same time, support structures that promote inclusive education are coordinated both within and between various sectors (education, health, social services, etc.) and teams of support personnel. In addition, considering students’ needs holistically, such support structures should promote an interdisciplinary approach that integrates the knowledge and perspectives of various areas of professional expertise.

An important role in supporting inclusive education is therefore played by teamwork, exchange of experiences, partnership in schools and developing positive relationships between all educational actors (Mărgărițoiu, 2010). Berlin (2010, p. 1315) explains that, in executing tasks, teams are regarded as being more focused than groups. This means that “all team members need to know what should be achieved jointly, and be given clear information on what can be solved collectively. The task should be clear so that all team members understand their own initiative.” However, researchers have highlighted various obstacles – both structural and cultural in nature – to collaboration between professionals from different sectors of society. In a review of the relevant literature, Widmark et al. (2011, p. 2) stressed that “the structural barriers include differences in the regulatory, financial, and administrative boundaries, and the cultural impediments consist of the various ways that the needs of individuals are considered, which are often a product of educational and organisational cultures.” Rose (2011) has identified problematic power dynamics, poor communication patterns, and a poor understanding of roles and responsibilities as obstacles to successful interprofessional collaboration, resulting in boundary infringements and conflict due to differences in approaches.

On the other hand, evidence also suggests that diversity in teamwork promotes innovation, which has multiple positive effects, such as a higher level of creativity in problem solving (Voutsas, 2011). “Through collaboration, ideas can be shared, new and better strategies can be developed, problems can be solved, students’ progresses can be better monitored, and their outcomes are evaluated effectively.” (Lee, <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu>). Thus Widmark et al. (2011) point out that collaboration should be seen as a tool for achieving users’ objectives. This is, however, impossible if managers and personnel do not have a clear understanding of the factors that impede or promote collaboration, and if the professionals involved lack motivation, mutual trust and common interests. Collaborative, interprofessional cooperation can be defined as “a process which includes communication and decision-making, enabling a synergistic influence of grouped knowledge and skills.” (Bridges et al., 2011, p. 2). The same group of authors point out the following elements of collaborative practice: (1) responsibility, (2) accountability, (3) coordination, (4) communication, (5) cooperation, (6) assertiveness, (7) autonomy and (8) mutual trust and respect. This means that true collaboration is demonstrated only in teams in which the goal is clearly established, decision making is shared, and all of the members feel that they are respected and that their contributions are valued.

Salisbury (1994, by Atta et al., 2009, p. 281) suggested that “collaborative problem solving to promote inclusive education is typically carried out

between teachers and other support professionals who get together to solve specific problems, usually concerning a student or group of students, focusing on classroom-based interventions increases the students' chances for success." Assistance might involve interactions between classroom teachers and speech and language specialists, school psychologists, specialists in visual and auditory impairment, special education specialists, or other professionals (pedagogues, social pedagogues, etc.). This is the case in Croatia, where around 3% of all students in primary schools have some developmental difficulties (Croatian Bureau of Statistic, 2011).

Inclusive education in Croatia

In Croatia, new inclusive policy was introduced within the legislative framework in the form of the new Law on Education in Primary and Secondary School (Official Gazette, 87/08, 86/09, 92/10, 105/10, 90/11, 5/12, 16/12). Compared with earlier legal solutions, this legislation introduces numerous improvements in the educational process of children with special educational needs (hereinafter: SEN). According to the new Law, all schools are obliged to care for the basic needs of all students, to develop conditions for their healthy psychological and physical development as well as social wellbeing, to prevent behavioural disorders in students, to care for the safety and success of every student, etc.

The intention of the legislator is to ensure that the educational needs of all children in primary and secondary schools are satisfied. An attempt is made to ensure the necessary assumptions for the adaptation of didactic and methodical ways of teaching students with SEN. For example, students with SEN have the right to delayed school attendance, to individualised and adapted programmes, to additional courses, to rehabilitation, to professional interventions, to teaching at home or in hospital, etc. Furthermore, the Law promotes collaboration between all participants of the educational process (including parents), as well as collaboration between schools and local medical and social institutions, especially regarding the rehabilitation of children with SEN. School counsellors in schools are pedagogues, psychologists, experts in the field of special education and rehabilitation (rehabilitators, speech therapists or social pedagogues) and librarians. Every school with 16 or more classes must have a pedagogue, a psychologist and a librarian in full-time employment. Given that there is an average of 30 students per class, one additional school counsellor can be employed for each 500 students. In smaller schools, either the relevant professionals are employed on a part-time basis or the services of mobile teams based in larger schools are sought. A rehabilitator, social pedagogue, speech therapist or other professional can be employed according to the needs

of the school, especially taking into account the number of students with SEN. Although the Law does not specify the obligations of counsellors in detail, it is stressed at a general level that they are responsible for educational work with students, as well as for coordination and professional developmental activities.

National Pedagogical Standards for Elementary Education (Official Gazette, 63/2008, 90/2010) have also been adopted. These standards reduce the number of students in classes that include students with SEN, as well as establishing a maximum three students with SEN per class. Generally, the number of students in each class is reduced by two students for each student with SEN included in the class. The Standards also foresee new actors in the inclusive education process, such as mobile teams, teaching assistants, sign language interpreters, etc. Mobile teams are made up of professionals of various profiles. They are active on the local level and are established where the need for such a team exists, subject to approval from the Ministry of Education. Teaching assistants are professionals who are qualified to work with children with SEN, including students with behavioural disorders and other minority students. A school with more than 20 students with SEN in regular classrooms can either employ an assistant or obtain the assistance of professionals from the local community. The assistant can be a person who has only completed secondary education, on the condition that he or she has attended a special educational programme for working with students with SEN. The role of the assistant is to provide individual help to students according to the instructions of teachers or school counsellors. In practice, assistants are employed if the local community is able to finance them.

As is evident, the Law respects the contemporary approach to students in inclusive educational situations by promoting conditions that ensure that children with SEN can attain the required standards of knowledge, abilities and skills. This approach also includes various kinds of collaborative work on the part of school counsellors and professionals from local communities.

A question arises, however, regarding the level at which the Law is implemented in educational practice, due to the fact that it is unknown whether the conditions for its proper implementation exist in all schools. Earlier research conducted in Croatia provides an insight into the quality of inclusive education in Croatia. For example, Stančić et al. (2011) emphasise that the main obstacles in inclusive education in Croatia are inadequate material conditions and lack of professional support to teachers (school counsellors, assistants etc.), as well as insufficient education of teachers to work in inclusive conditions. Ljubić and Kiš-Glavaš (2003) indicate that attitudes of teachers in Croatian schools towards inclusive practice need to be improved. Other research shows that although teachers have positive attitudes towards the process of inclusion,

they are less positive about the conditions of work and the implementation of educational inclusion (Dulčić & Bakota, 2008).

Conditions for inclusive education in Croatian schools vary considerably between schools, due to the fact that the statutory provisions have not yet been specified by relevant regulations. Thus, the number and quality of school counsellors in the inclusive education process depend on the willingness and ability of local communities to support the work of the various professionals. If the required number of experts does not exist in a particular school, school staff use the services of professionals in the local community, typically employees of social welfare centres, health centres or other public institutions. Although their collaboration is regulated by various laws, it depends primarily on the practices of the particular local community.

With this point of departure in mind, the main goal of the present article is to analyse certain aspects of collaboration in inclusive educational practice in Croatian schools by analysing teachers' experiences. Special attention is devoted to the professional support resources available to teachers, as well as to teachers' views regarding the content and usefulness of the professional support that they utilise. This goal is achieved by: (1) investigation of the availability of various professionals; (2) analysis of the types of professional support available to teachers; (3) analysis of the satisfactory and unsatisfactory aspects of collaboration in inclusive practice (according to the experiences of teachers); and (4) analysis of teachers' attitudes to inclusive education regarding the various characteristics of teachers and classes/schools. The article presents the partial results of a larger research project regarding the various components of inclusive practice in primary schools in Croatia, organised at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb.

Methodology Description

Participants

The participants of the research were 69 teachers in primary schools in Zagreb and Zagrebačka County. Teachers were selected on the basis of their consent to participate in the research. In order to protect the anonymity of participants of the research, original data about the schools are only available from the author.

Of the 69 participating teachers, 10 teach in the first grade, 15 in the second, 23 in the third, 17 in the fourth and 4 in combined classes. The schools in which they teach differ considerably in a number of ways: in terms of their size, the number of students in classes and the number of integrated students with SEN, as well as in terms of the level of cooperation developed among school staff. The average number of classes per school for the first four grades is 12.04,

with a high standard deviation (5,560) due to the fact that the smallest school has only 3 such classes, while the largest has 24. Accordingly, the research sample was drawn from schools with an average of 248.06 students aged 6–10 years. Here the standard deviation is even greater (128.792), due to the fact that only 31 students attend the smallest school, while 504 students attend the largest school. The number of students per class varies from 6 to 34, with an average value of 20.10 (standard deviation = 5,399). Teachers also vary considerably in terms of their professional experience. The youngest teacher has only 1 year of experience, while the oldest has taught for 39 years (mean = 20.45, standard deviation = 5,399).

Most of the teachers have one student with SEN in their classes (37 teachers), while 9 teachers have two such students. Unfortunately, 9 of the teachers have 3 or more students with SEN in their classes, while there are 14 teachers who do not currently teach children with SEN. It is, however, important to note that all of teachers who participated in the research have experience in the education of students with SEN.

Instruments

For the purposes of the present research, a protocol for interviewing teachers and a questionnaire were constructed. Both instruments were developed in collaboration with students of the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb and the professor of Inclusive Pedagogy,² based on the McGill Inclusive Questionnaire.³ The protocol contains general data about schools and teachers, about the experiences and competencies of teachers in the field of inclusive education, about the types of professional support available to teachers, and about teachers' opinions and assessments of the quality of inclusive educational practice. The analysis included questions related to the availability of various professionals to teachers (a pedagogue, a psychologist, a rehabilitator – special education teacher, a speech therapist, a social pedagogue, a special nongovernmental organisation – NGO), as well as about access to types of professional support that teachers receive in their everyday work. Teachers' responses describing their attitudes towards inclusion were also used.

After the interview, each teacher completed a short questionnaire about their opinion on elements that weaken inclusive practice in their school. The questionnaire contains 19 variables describing circumstances that can weaken the quality of inclusive practice in schools, according to the opinions of students.

2 The professor is author of the present article.

3 http://www.learnquebec.ca/export/sites/learn/en/content/pedagogy/insight/documents/bl_questionnaire.pdf

Each variable had four possible answers: “not at all”, “partially”, “mainly yes” and “fully yes”. Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of the Questionnaire is .815. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy for factor analysis of the questionnaire is .651. Bartlett’s test of sphericity is significant at the level of .000 (Chi-Square is 413.759). Principal Component Analysis of the questionnaire with varimax rotation extracts 7 interpretative components that explain 70.717% common variance. The rotated component matrix of the factor analysis is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Rotated component matrix of the Questionnaire on the Weaknesses of Inclusive Education

Variables	Components						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Lack of understanding of students' SEN by the school administration.	.79						
Lack of understanding of students' SEN by legislators.	.84						
Insufficient number of teachers with regard to the number of students with special needs in the school.	.42						
Inadequate physical conditions in schools.		.81					
Large number of students in classes.		.61			.55		
Unavailability of adapted didactic resources.		.60	.45				
Unavailability of professional support to teachers.			.78				
Inability to include students in the required intervention.			.69				
Lack of teacher competence to work with students with SEN.			.57				
Complexity of the procedure for determining difficulties.			.45			.45	
Negative attitudes of school staff towards inclusion.				.75			
Negative attitudes of regularly developed students towards students with SEN.				.84			
Inadequate financial compensation for the efforts of teachers.						.81	
Excessive expectations of legislators regarding teachers.		.47				.55	
Low socialisation skills of students with SEN.					.81		
Unwillingness of parents to accept teachers' advice.	.47				.61		
Inability to work with students with disabilities and other students simultaneously.					.45		.68
Negative attitudes of parents of regularly developed students towards students with SEN.				.48			.62
Lack of understanding of SEN of students in the community.	.44						.61

Based on the data presented in Table 1, it is possible to conclude that the Questionnaire on the Weaknesses of Inclusive Education covers the following areas: administrative obstacles (1st factor), organisational and technical obstacles (2nd factor), obstacles related to professional support to teachers and students (3rd factor), negative attitudes towards students with SEN in school (4th factor), lack of teachers' external motivation (5th factor), difficulties associated with the characteristics of students (6th factor), and negative attitudes towards students with SEN in the local community (7th factor).

Generally, the data collected in the research relate to the impressions of teachers on the quality of collaboration in inclusive education in their schools. Thus the data do not present objective reality, but rather the subjective perception of elements of collaborative and inclusive practice in Croatian schools.

Procedure

The analysis uses data from research regarding various components of inclusive practice in primary schools in Croatia. This research was organised at the Faculty of Teacher Education in Zagreb, within the framework of the subject "Inclusive Pedagogy". The purpose of the research was to analyse circumstances that affect the quality of inclusive education in primary schools. The interviewees were third year teacher education students of the Faculty of Teacher Education of the University of Zagreb. Following the aforementioned protocol, each student was assigned the task of interviewing one teacher from one primary school about his/her experiences regarding inclusive practices in his/her school. After the interview, which lasted approximately 45 minutes, the students had to make an accurate written record of their conversation. They were trained to conduct interviews within the framework of the subject Inclusive Pedagogy. Data were collected in the winter of 2012, with a total of 77 interviews being conducted. Some of the interviews were excluded from the analysis due to their low quality. These were interviews with missing data, with questions that were not foreseen in the research protocol, with answers that were not comprehensible, etc. A total of 69 interviews (90%) were included in the final analysis.

The collected data were analysed on the qualitative and quantitative levels. Firstly, certain quantitative data regarding the availability of various experts and expert's NGOs are presented, followed by the results of qualitative analysis of the interviews. Teachers' opinions on elements that weaken inclusive education practice are presented on the manifested level, through the averages of their answers. Linear regressions of the impact of different characteristics of teachers and classes/schools on the teachers' attitudes were performed on

the previously extracted factors of the questionnaire. These characteristics are: teachers' work experience, number of classes and students in school, number of students and students with SEN in classes, numbers of professionals employed in school, and teachers' attitudes regarding inclusive education.

The process of qualitative analysis in the research includes the following steps: (1) transcribing of the interviews, (2) determining units of coding, (3) compression, (4) assignment of related concepts of the categories, and (5) analysis and interpretation of the meanings of the defined categories. Some examples of this procedure are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. *Examples of editing concepts to the level of abstraction*

Statements of the Participants – Units of Coding	Compression	Categories
"The pedagogue calls the student at least once a week. The student stays there for one hour. There <i>they practice some educational theme</i> and he talks to the pedagogue so he can discover <i>which kind of methods are appropriate for this student</i> . This means that he tries to discover ways that will <i>help the student to develop his abilities as well as to satisfy his needs</i> ."	educational conversation with student support of student	work with students with SEN
He also <i>organises workshops for students</i> and he tries to <i>teach them how to help a student with disabilities</i> ." ... "The social pedagogue and I work together on <i>devising workshops for adopting better behaviour</i> . Together, we create flyers and posters for nonviolent conflict resolution."	support of peers education of students	workshops with students
"We collaborate in <i>the initial assessment of students</i> . In this processes, we define the <i>abilities, skills, interests and problems of a student</i> with SEN. He also helps me to <i>develop and implement an individual educational plan</i> . I can count on the pedagogue to help me if I have some difficulties in teaching some students.";	assessment of students with SEN developing individual educational plan (IEP) implementation of IEP	identification of students with SEN realisation of IEP
"My opinion is that <i>we do not collaborate enough</i> . I do not like the fact that experts are available to us <i>only if we request them</i> . They should educate our assistants because they are not able to do a quality job."	lack of collaboration	dissatisfaction with collaboration
"I think that <i>we should employ a social pedagogue</i> , due to the fact that we have more and more children with behavioural problems. These students cause a lot of problems for the whole school, especially for other students."	unavailability of social pedagogue in school	unavailability of professional help

Following the model described above, 9 categories of types of support offered to teachers by school counsellors were formed, along with 5 categories of satisfactory and 3 categories of unsatisfactory aspects of collaboration in inclusive

practice, as well as 3 categories of teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. All of the defined categories are discussed in the next section of the present article.

Results

Collaboration with professionals (school counsellors)

The main task of teachers in inclusive education is to educate students with SEN, as well as to help them with social integration in the school environment. The successful realisation of this task implies the availability of the professional support of various experts for teachers, parents and students, thus ensuring a range of support and services that provide all students with genuine access to general education. Table 3 presents data on the availability of such support to the teachers who participated in our research.

Table 3. *Availability of various professionals to teachers (n = 69)*

Source of professional support	Not at all	Just in school	Just in local community	In school, as well as in local community
Pedagogue	8	56	0	5
Psychologist	32	28	5	4
Rehabilitator (special education teacher)	37	24	8	0
Speech therapist	28	16	20	5
Social pedagogue	53	10	5	1
Special NGO	52	1	8	8

Based on the data presented in Table 3, it is possible to conclude that one pedagogue works in almost every school. Only schools in small communities lack a pedagogue, and these schools are connected with main schools in larger communities (so-called "regional schools"). All other professionals are less present in schools. In this regard, it is important to note that the relatively small number of special education teachers, psychologists and social pedagogues employed in schools is not adequately compensated for by a higher level of cooperation with such specialists in local communities. Teachers collaborate slightly more only with speech therapists who work in the local community. There is also a relatively small number of schools in which certain specialised programmes of non-governmental organisations are implemented. Moreover, 27 teachers stated that they would like to have the help of an assistant, while only 17 teachers reported having the support of assistants in teaching.

Table 4 shows information about types of support that teachers receive from school counsellors, especially in the process of education of students with SEN. Due to the fact that many professionals help teachers in various ways, the sum of possible responses is greater than the number of teachers participating in the research.

Table 4. Categories of types of support of school counsellors

Categories	Pedagogue (n = 61)	Psychologist (n = 37)	Rehabilitator (n = 32)	Speech therapist (n = 41)	Social pedagogue (n = 16)	Special NGO (n = 17)
Work with students with SEN	23	14	15	21	7	9
Work with parents	23	10	5	2	5	5
Consulting of teachers	22	18	13	5	5	3
Realisation of IEP	17	4	5	1	0	0
Workshops with students	16	14	1	0	6	1
Education of teachers	10	7	1	1	3	5
Collaboration with the local community	6	2	1	2	1	0
Identification of students with SEN	7	6	3	0	0	0
Dissatisfaction with the collaboration	6	4	1	4	0	0

An analysis of the responses of the teachers interviewed shows that teachers have very different experiences of collaboration with *pedagogues*. Most teachers say that pedagogues help them through individual work with parents and students, as well as through consulting, support and conversations with teachers. Another important role of pedagogues is holding pedagogical workshops in classes. Significantly fewer teachers said that pedagogues educate them. Collaboration with the local community is recognised just in 6 cases. Unfortunately, some teachers said that the pedagogue does not help them at all, while other teachers report that pedagogues have just a supervisory role in school.

Many of the teachers interviewed think that a *psychologist* helps them through consulting and support, as well as through concrete assistance in their everyday work. Most teachers recognise the psychologist's role in the processes of identification of students with various difficulties. A relatively large number of teachers also recognise that the individual work of the psychologist with students and parents is helpful, while education of teachers is less present. Some

teachers state that it is helpful when the psychologist presents workshops in their classes and participates in the assessment of students with SEN. Only a few responses reveal aspects of the collaboration of psychologists with the local community, as well as aspects of the collaboration of teachers with psychologists in the local community. There are also some teachers who are not at all satisfied with the level of collaboration with the psychologist.

The main aspects of collaboration between teachers and *special educator teachers (rehabilitators)* are individual work with students and concrete assistance to teachers. Some teachers also stressed that rehabilitators help them when they work with parents of students with SEN, and in the development of individual educational curricula. Other aspects of collaboration (education of teachers, collaboration with the local community and direct work with whole classes) are rarely present in the teachers' responses. Three teachers also stressed that special educator teachers help them by working in special classes with students with SEN.

The main type of support of *speech therapists* is individual work with students. All other aspects of collaboration are less present. Interestingly, some teachers enjoy good collaboration with speech therapists from the local community, while other teachers initiate collaboration between parents, students and the speech therapist. Speech therapists also support teachers by giving them advice. However, some teachers believe that speech therapists do not collaborate enough.

The attention of *social pedagogues* who work in schools is also mostly directed towards individual work with students, but they are also involved in working with parents, teachers, and entire classes. A similar situation is evident regarding the activities of *special NGOs* that implement their programmes in schools. These organisations are also very active in individual work with students, as well as in work with parents, in the education of teachers, and in providing direct assistance to teachers. The aforementioned analysis is illustrated by the quotes presented in Table 5.

Generally, based on the data presented in the above analysis, it is possible to conclude that professional support to teachers by various professionals depends primarily on the availability and breadth of the expert team in the particular school. Professionals are therefore often called upon to undertake a job that does not normally fall within their area of expertise, especially if there is no rehabilitator (special education teacher) in the school. Furthermore, it is evident that most professionals spend the majority of their working time in direct contact with children, while significantly less energy is directed towards educating teachers.

Table 5. Illustrative quotes regarding types of support of school counsellors

Categories	Quote
Work with students with SEN	<p>"The rehabilitator helps me a great deal to work with students with developmental difficulties; he gives me advice, and he works individually with these students because, unfortunately, I do not have enough time for them."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 30 years of work experience (3rd grade, 25 students, one student has ADHD)</i></p>
Work with parents	<p>"I find collaboration with an NGO to be the most useful. The members of the NGO work with students and parents individually, according to their specific needs."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 20 years of work experience (3rd grade, 20 students, one student has cerebral palsy)</i></p>
Consulting of teachers	<p>"He helps me through conversation, with advice, as well as through professional intervention."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 21 years of work experience (4th grade, 26 students, one student has dyslexia and dysgraphia, and another student has ADHD)</i></p>
Realisation of IEP	<p>"The rehabilitator helps me to work with a student who has visual impairment. He prepares educational materials for the student in Braille, and he controls the student's work in Braille."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 20 years of work experience (3rd grade, 20 students, one student is blind)</i></p>
Workshops with students	<p>"Members of an NGO have come to school with guide dogs several times. They have also educated our students about the life of people with visual impairment. Then the children wrote greeting cards for them in Braille."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 17 years of work experience (2nd grade, 14 students, one student has dyslexia and dysgraphia)</i></p>
Education of teachers	<p>"The social pedagogue consults us and intervenes in the case of violent behaviour by some students."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 38 years of work experience (2nd grade, 25 students, one student has Down Syndrome)</i></p>
Collaboration with the local community	<p>"... He also collaborates with professionals from the local community when they have to observe our students due to the special treatment that some students need. The pedagogue is often our guest in the class and he helps me a lot."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 30 years of work experience (1st grade, 25 students, one student has intellectual difficulties)</i></p>
Identification of students with SEN	<p>"The psychologist participates in the identification and diagnosis of difficulties and plans interventions for such problems."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 15 years of work experience (1st grade, 22 students, one student has multiple developmental disorders)</i></p>
Dissatisfaction with collaboration	<p>"I do not feel that the pedagogue helps me or other teachers. He does not have time and he only cares about his job."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 9 years of work experience (1st grade, 14 students, one has dyslexia and dysgraphia)</i></p>

The categories of satisfactory and unsatisfactory aspects of collaboration, in the opinion of teachers, are presented in Table 6.

Table 6. *Categories of satisfactory and unsatisfactory aspects of collaboration*

Categories of satisfactory aspects of collaboration	Number of responses from teachers (n = 67)
Individual help to students	31
Team work (advising, exchanging information, consulting)	15
Availability of school counsellors	14
Help in collaboration with parents	7
Education of teachers	6
Categories of unsatisfactory aspects of collaboration	Number of responses from teachers (n = 67)
Unavailability of experts in school	34
Low level of activity of school counsellors	23
Low level of communication between teachers and school counsellors	22

As is evident from Table 6, teachers find that direct work with students is the best aspect of their collaboration with school counsellors. A significant number of teachers also recognise the value of team work involving teachers and various professionals. At the same time, some participants in the research stated that only one expert worked at their school, and were unable to elaborate a specific area of their collaboration. On the other hand, there are teachers who emphasise the importance of mutual respect and supplementing the competencies of teachers and other professionals. The following examples illustrate teachers' opinions (Table 7).

When teachers were asked about aspects of collaboration that they would like to improve, the responses were predominantly directed towards the lack of availability of professional support. Teachers also mentioned that they would like to receive more concrete help in working with students with SEN, to get more information about students' SEN, and to have a greater degree of collaboration with their school counsellors. Examples of teachers' responses are presented in Table 8.

Table 7. Illustrative quotes regarding satisfactory aspects of collaboration

Category	Quote
Individual help to student	<p>"I think that the rehabilitator does the best job, because he works with students individually and helps those students learn throughout the school year."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 20 years of work experience (2nd grade, 23 students, one student has ADHD, one has behavioural disorders, and one has visual impairment)</i></p>
Team work	<p>"I enjoy collaborating with the speech therapist and psychologist because we exchange information about students and their difficulties and together try to find the best way to help them."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 20 years of work experience (1st grade, 28 students, one student has ADHD, and another has behavioural disorders)</i></p>
Availability of school counsellors	<p>"Only a pedagogue works in our school. Therefore, it is the only support that I can receive."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 26 years of work experience (1st grade, 27 students, one student has intellectual difficulties)</i></p>
Help in collaboration with parents	<p>"We collaborate with parents better if we are prepared and have a common attitude regarding some problems."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 20 years of work experience (1st grade, 28 students, one student has language difficulties, and one has Asperger's Syndrome)</i></p>
Education of teachers	<p>"I would single out the collaboration with a pedagogue who gives me advice about appropriate didactic approaches to students with SEN."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 29 years of work experience (4th grade, 22 students)</i></p>

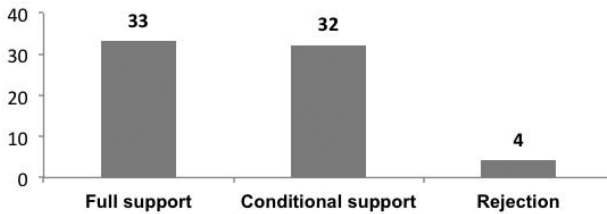
Table 8. Illustrative quotes regarding unsatisfactory aspects of collaboration

Category	Quote
Unavailability of experts in school	<p>"I would like to have more specialists in our school, such as psychologists, because we have a lot of students with psychological difficulties. It does not seem feasible for some other expert to work with them."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 20 years of work experience (3rd grade, 18 students, one student has ADHD)</i></p>
Low level of activities of school counsellors	<p>"It would be best for experts to work individually every day with a student with SEN. This would allow the teacher to work more with other students. Nowadays, without an expert's help, the teacher has to give more attention to the student with SEN, while others are ignored."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 18 years of work experience (4th grade, 19 students, one student has intellectual difficulties and language difficulties)</i></p>
Low level of communication between teachers and school counsellors	<p>"I would like to collaborate more with the speech therapists who work in the local community with my students. Some of them are not predisposed towards collaboration because they do not know what it means to work in a classroom."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 20 years of work experience (3rd grade, 22 students, one student has dyslexia and dysgraphia)</i></p>

In view of teachers' opinions, there appears to be significant room for improving collaboration in inclusive education. Firstly, it is clear that teachers would like to have more professionals in their schools. At the same time, they would like to improve the level of collaboration, both between professionals who work in schools and between professionals and teachers. Generally, our data show that teachers prefer direct work with students and concrete assistance provided to teachers, as well as concrete advice for teaching students with SEN. The analysis also shows that collaboration between schools and the local community in the field of inclusive education appears to be on a very low level. We therefore need better conceptualisation of inclusive education, as well as better conceptualisation of collaboration between the various actors in this process. This is confirmed by the attitudes of teachers on inclusive education, as shown in the next section.

Opinions of teachers about inclusive education

Teachers' responses to the question "In general, what do you think about inclusive education?" can be divided into three groups. The smallest group of teachers does not support inclusive education at all, while the groups of teachers who support inclusion conditionally or fully are equally large (Graph 1).



Graph 1. Teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education

In the majority of cases, the point of departure of the teachers who support inclusive education fully is children's rights, while teachers who support inclusive education conditionally typically believe that schools are not ready for the diversity that inclusion brings to classes. Table 9 presents some examples of teachers' opinions regarding inclusive education.

Table 9. *Illustrative quotes of teachers' opinions regarding inclusive education*

Category	Quote
Full support	<p>"I think that living together is good for all of us. Gifted children, regularly developed children, as well as children with disabilities will build a future together. So, I do not see any reason for them not to be together in school. Such life and work encourages tolerance and assertive behaviour, which is the only right way towards a better future."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 29 years of work experience (4th grade, 22 students)</i></p>
Conditional support	<p>"My opinion is not 'yes' or 'no'. It depends on the type of disability. We are not able to deal with some disabilities in our school because we do not have the necessary equipment, we have too many students in classes and parents have unrealistic expectations. At the same time, some difficulties require the teacher's full attention and concentration, so the other students are automatically deprived. Not to mention children who, due to their difficulties and behaviour, are dangerous for the rest of the school."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 24 years of work experience (3rd grade, 18 students, one student has ADHD)</i></p>
Rejection	<p>"I think that students with dyslexia and dysgraphia can attend school with others, but students with a high level of problems (like ADHD) should go to a special institution."</p> <p><i>Teacher with 30 years of work experience (3rd grade, 25 students, one student has ADHD)</i></p>

Table 10 shows the average values of teachers' opinions regarding the weaknesses of inclusive education.

Table 10. *Weaknesses of inclusive education, in the opinion of teachers (arithmetic means – M; standard deviations – SD)*

Weaknesses	M	SD
Unavailability of professional support to teachers.	3.20	.797
Large number of students in classes.	3.00	.924
Unavailability of adapted didactic resources.	2.96	.812
Inability to include students in the required intervention.	2.96	.812
Lack of teacher competence to work with students with SEN.	2.94	.784
Complexity of the procedure for determining difficulties.	2.91	.870
Inability to work with students with disabilities and other students simultaneously.	2.88	.890
Inadequate physical conditions in schools.	2.75	.976
Unwillingness of parents to accept teachers' advice.	2.74	.869
Insufficient number of teachers with regard to the number of students with SEN in the school.	2.72	1.013

Excessive expectations of legislators regarding teachers.	2.62	.972
Inadequate financial compensation for the efforts of teachers.	2.61	1.101
Lack of understanding of SEN of students in the community.	2.51	.797
Low socialisation skills of students with SEN.	2.41	.792
Negative attitudes of school staff regarding inclusion.	2.32	.947
Negative attitudes of regularly developed students regarding students with SEN.	2.31	.885
Negative attitudes of parents of regularly developed students regarding students with SEN.	2.28	.765
Lack of understanding of students' SEN by legislators.	2.26	.934
Lack of understanding of students' SEN by the school administration.	1.94	.873

From the data shown in the Table 10, we can conclude that the factor most responsible for the relatively low level of inclusion quality, in the opinion of teachers, is “the lack of professional support to teachers”. A significant number of teachers are also unhappy with the opportunities for involving students with SEN in early professional interventions, as well as with the number of students in each class, and with the lack of adapted didactic materials. The data also show that there are a considerable number of teachers who believe that they are not able to work both with students with SEN and other students at the same time. Some teachers also believe that it would be useful for there to be a larger number of employed teachers, that the space in schools is not adapted, etc.

According to the results of linear regressions, the aforementioned teachers' attitudes are statistically significantly dependent on the teachers' work experience, as well as on the number of classes and students in the school. Interestingly, they are not dependent on the numbers of students and students with SEN in classes, the number of school counsellors, or teachers' attitudes towards inclusive education. Linear regressions are made on the factors of the questionnaire regarding the weaknesses of inclusive education. Table 11 presents the statistically significant results of linear regressions.

Table 11. *Weaknesses of inclusive education according to teachers' work experience and school size*

Factors	Teachers' experience ¹			Number of students in school ²			Number of classes in school ³		
	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.	Beta	t	Sig.
Administrative obstacles	.086	.741	.462	-.090	-.781	.438	-.229	-2.041	.046
Organisational and technical obstacles	-.135	-1.168	.248	.298	2.568	.013	.195	1.744	.087

Obstacles related to professional support to teachers and students	-.189	-1.641	.106	-.046	-.396	.693	-.020	-.180	.858
Negative attitudes towards students with SEN in school	-.106	-.917	.363	-.237	-2.049	.045	-.259	-2.314	.024
Lack of teachers' external motivation	.004	.037	.971	-.116	-.989	.327	-.113	-1.010	.317
Difficulties associated with the characteristics of students	.365	3.162	.002	.320	2.759	.008	.267	2.383	.020
Negative attitudes towards students with SEN in the local community	-.088	-.759	.451	-.142	-1.220	.228	-.163	-1.455	.151

Notes:

- 1 Sum of squares = 1136.72; df = 7; Mean Square = 162.388; F = 2.289; Sig. = .039
- 2 Sum of squares = 286180.750; df = 7; Mean Square = 40882; F = 2.255; Sig. = .011
- 3 Sum of squares = 564.146; df = 7; Mean Square = 80.592; F = 3.106; Sig. = .007

As is evident, teachers with more work experience are more likely to emphasise difficulties associated with the characteristics of the students. These characteristics, as well as organisational and technical obstacles, are seen as a greater problem in schools with a larger numbers of students. At the same time, administrative, organisational and technical obstacles are more evident in schools with a larger number of classes. Such results suggest that experienced teachers and smaller schools have more capacity for better inclusive education, especially regarding respect for student diversity and the organisation of the required collaboration.

Concluding remarks

The main goal of the present article was to analyse some aspects of collaboration in inclusive educational practice in Croatian schools, according to teachers' experiences. Teachers stressed their own opinions about various aspects of collaboration that they practice in their everyday work in an inclusive setting.

The data suggest that, at the present time, collaboration in Croatian schools is neither well organised nor well defined. Firstly, it is shown that a relatively small number of school counsellors, who could support teachers and students in the process of inclusion, work in schools. Furthermore, it is established that schools do not compensate for this problem with stronger collaboration between schools and professionals in local communities. Instead, in

most schools, the professionals employed attempt to undertake all of the jobs arising from the SEN of students. It seems that collaboration between schools and the local community in the inclusive education process is based on the individual collaboration of some parents of students, especially regarding the rehabilitation required by particular students. Teachers are also sometimes involved in collaboration, but not frequently enough. The analysis also shows that nowadays in schools there is a higher level of tolerance, with significantly fewer teachers rejecting inclusion due to the students' characteristics and to unfavourable attitudes towards inclusion. However, some teachers still do not believe that all children, regardless of their ability or disability, are valued members of the school and classroom community. Earlier research also suggests that there are teachers working in Croatian schools who do not support inclusive education, and that such attitudes depend on various factors. Among them, the most important factors are attitudes towards the learning process, the quality of support that teachers receive in the inclusive process, and additional education on the needs of students with SEN (Kiš Glavaš & Wagner Jakob, 2001).

Based on the results of our study, it is possible to conclude that teachers expect more support in their work with students with SEN. They would like to receive more specific advice, as well as more concrete help in the education of students with disabilities. This stems from their evaluation of the best aspects of collaboration, as well as from an analysis of their attitudes regarding circumstances that diminish the quality of inclusive education in Croatian schools. Generally, teachers would like to participate in team work, which would benefit all of the participants in the process of inclusive education. The value of team work in inclusive education has been pointed out by other researchers; for example, research conducted by Vučković (1997, reported by Stančić & Kudek Mirošević, 2001) demonstrates that team work of school counsellors (such as rehabilitators) and teachers with parents of children with SEN has an important role in the quality of inclusive education. This team work includes thematic parent meetings, counselling for parents, instructions for working at home, etc. Unfortunately, such team work is inadequately developed and presented in Croatian schools.

At the present time, many teachers, children and parents do not have access to adequate support, nor to early psychosocial and rehabilitative interventions. Deficiencies in collaboration are recognised in other Croatian research. Lukaš and Gazibara (2010) conducted a survey on the sample of 183 parents from eight Croatian primary schools, in which more than half of the parents reported that they did not know whether a certain model of cooperation with a pedagogue was offered in the school.

It is reasonable to assume that a higher level of cooperation between schools and local communities would reduce this discrepancy. However, according to the results of our analysis, such collaboration will not arise without additional incentives and regulations.

In this sense, we agree with Anderson-Butchler et al. (2008, p. 169), who stress that “community partnerships and collaboration include formal arrangements schools can make with individuals, associations, private sector organisations, or public instructions to provide a program, service, or resource that will help support student achievement. These community partnerships are used to enhance both the programs and services offered at the school and to increase resources for both the school and the community partners.” However, “collaborative cultures do not just arise by a kind of emotional spontaneous combustion; they have to be created and sustained” (Thornton, 2006, p. 193).

Of course, there are limitations to the present study, such as the appropriateness of the sample, the investigation of the subjective opinions of teachers, the lack of a control group of professionals, etc. It would, therefore, not be justified to unreservedly generalise the results. Nevertheless, the findings of our research clearly indicate that teachers expect more support in the process of inclusion, both in a qualitative and a quantitative sense. Such support is essential to teachers due to their insufficient competence to work with students with disabilities, but also because of the unified educational and rehabilitation interventions often required by these students. Improved conceptualisation of collaboration between schools and local communities would certainly contribute to the quality of inclusive education in Croatian schools, in particular the promotion of team work in every school and local community.

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Biographical note

DEJANA BOUILLET, PhD, is a full professor at the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Zagreb. She teaches inclusive and social pedagogy. During her carrier, she has been working in different public and scientific institutions, researching and lecturing a wide range of etiological, phenomenological and intervention's aspects of social exclusion. At the present time her main interest is in the field of inclusion of children and youth with different special educational needs in regular schools and kindergartens. She has participated in more than 14 scientific researches and published more than 70 scientific and expert articles and books.

The Establishment of School Social Work in Austria – From a Project to a Regular Offer

ARNO HEIMGARTNER*¹ AND STEPHAN STING²

∞ The contribution introduces the present situation and the basic challenges of school social work in Austria. Starting with the perception of a developing “knowledge society” (Höhne, 2004), school is seen as a life place at which social subjects and problems occur and are made manifest. The analyses are based in particular on empirical studies by the University of Klagenfurt (Sting & Leitner, 2011) and the University of Graz (Gspurning, Heimgartner, Pieber, & Sing, 2011), which were carried out in school social work facilities of Carinthia and Styria, but they also include Austrian-wide research projects. A methodical view is presented along the main target groups “pupils”, “teachers” and “parents”, and the basic orientations are discussed. The thematic analysis characterises school social work as a multi-thematic service (e.g., conflicts, love, problems at school, problems of the family) that needs to oppose the reduction to single problem areas such as drug abuse or violence. The structural analyses render visible the meaning of spatial conditions, personnel competence and the social-spatial network. Finally, the possibilities of a lasting implementation of empirical research in school social work are discussed.

Keywords: School social work; Austria; Social pedagogy; Evaluation

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Vzpostavitev socialnega svetovalnega³ dela v avstrijskih šolah – od projekta do redne ponudbe

ARNO HEIMGARTNER AND STEPHAN STING

☞ V prispevku so predstavljeni trenutno stanje in izzivi socialnega dela v avstrijskih šolah. Če za izhodišče vzamemo razvijanje »družbe znanja« (Höhne, 2004), je šola življenjski prostor, v katerem se socialni problemi pojavljajo in postanejo vidni. Analiza temelji na empiričnih raziskavah, ki sta jih v šolskih svetovalnih službah na območju avstrijske Koroške in Štajerske izvedli Univerza v Celovcu (Sting & Leitner 2011) in Univerza v Gradcu (Gspurning, Heimgartner, Pieber, & Sing 2011). Poleg teh raziskav so vključeni tudi drugi večji avstrijski raziskovalni projekti. Metodološki pristop je zajel vidik treh glavnih ciljnih skupin – »učenci«, »učitelji« in »starši« – ter analizo temeljnih usmeritev socialnega dela. Tako so v prispevku analizirani posegi te nove storitve v šolskem kontekstu (na primer razreševanje konfliktov, ljubezen, težave učencev v šoli, njihove težave doma). Šolsko socialno delo se ne ukvarja samo s problemi, kot je zloraba drog ali nasilje. Prek strukturne analize so prikazani pomen prostorskih pogojev za izvajanje tega dela, osebne kompetence izvajalcev in socialno-prostorska mreža te nove storitve. Na koncu so obravnavane možnosti trajne implementacije empiričnega raziskovanja na področju šolskega socialnega dela.

Ključne besede: šolsko socialno (svetovalno) delo; Avstrija; socialna pedagogika; evalvacija

3 V nemškem govornem področju se v zadnjih letih kot nadredni izraz, ki zajema širše področje vzgojnega, svetovalnega in socialnega dela, uveljavlja izraz socialno delo. V kontekstu tega prispevka je treba izraz socialno delo razumeti v smislu pri nas uveljavljenega šolskega svetovalnega dela, ki pa se v Avstriji šele razvija.

Introduction

During the past two decades, we have seen a massive expansion of school social work in German-speaking countries in Europe. Following earlier developments in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, social work has been established in German-speaking countries as an additional indispensable element of the school system (Huxtable & Blyth, 2002).

The transformation to a “knowledge society” (Höhne, 2004) leads to an increase in societal demands with regard to school and education. The general increase of the level of education, as well as the growing importance of educational certificates and cultural capital, implies that most adolescents consider “going to school” as a stage on the route to adulthood as an unavoidable fact (Hackauf & Winzen, 2004, p. 41). The increasing number of all-day offers and school-affiliated care models is associated with an expansion of school attendance time during the day. The share of time and everyday activities that adolescences spend in school and school-affiliated educational establishments has increased noticeably, elevating such places to the level of relevant “social living places” (Gspurning, Heimgartner, Leitner, & Sting, 2010).

Thus, school is not only a place of cognitive education, but also a location where children and adolescences go through social experiences with peers and adults, a place where processes of personality development and identity formation take place, where social competences and social recognition are acquired, and where social problems develop and are made manifest (Coelen, 2002).

In confronting the altered status of educational establishments in sciences, school needs “social pedagogical reflexivity”: it must reflect on its societal functionality, its societal conditions and its contribution regarding the opening up and inhibiting of social participation and opportunities in life (Sting, 2010). Numerous tasks consequently emerge for social work and social pedagogy in the school context. The political legitimatisation of school social work is primarily a result of working with the social problems and crises that either develop at school or become subject matter in the school setting (Speck, 2007). A further key concept is participation in educational work (e.g., by encouraging social and personal competences), as well as the pursuit of the defined goals that are characteristic of social work and social pedagogy, but that are making specific accesses necessary at school: regarding the preservation of life and participation opportunities for all pupils, the facilitation of inclusion at school, and the support of a democratic and open school culture.

School social work responds to these concerns using various concepts.⁴ During a relatively short time span, a plural project scene has developed that involves heterogenic approaches and goal definitions. In Germany, school social work has undergone rapid expansion since the 1990s due to the expansion of all-day schools, resulting in approximately 5,000 school social workers currently being employed at schools (Speck, 2012). During the 2000s in Switzerland, a decentralised, widespread network of initiatives arose, including attempts to implement unified “frame recommendations” and “quality criteria” (SSAV, 2010). There are currently about 700 school social workers active in Switzerland, although the stage of expansion varies enormously depending on the region (Kaufmann, 2012). The situation in Austria somewhat lags behind developments in Germany and Switzerland. Although there were various initiatives aimed at the establishment of school social work in Austria during the second part of the 1990s (Vyslouzil & Weißensteiner, 2001), there was no startup linked to these initiatives. With a few exceptions (e.g., X-point in Lower Austria), most of the projects ceased during the 2000s. It is only in the last few years that we find new, intensified efforts towards the establishment of school social work in all provinces, based on a broad political will at various levels.

The Situation of School Social Work in Austria

The development of school social work in Austria is very heterogenic. In the nine provinces, various initiatives and projects have emerged. Although an overview has been developed by Bugram and Hofschwaiger (2010), and evaluations exist concerning specific projects (e.g., Gspurning et al., 2011; Sting & Leitner 2011; Wetzel, Braun, & Hönig, 2010), there is no clear and accepted documentation of the situation. The last evaluation throughout Austria took place in the 2010/11 school year. At that time, school social work was positioned in 256 schools, which means that approximately 4% of all schools throughout Austria had school social work (Adamowitsch, Lehner, & Felder-Puig, 2011).

The expansion of school social work varies enormously in the different regions. Whereas in some provinces there are only isolated, temporary projects, the provinces of Upper Austria, Vorarlberg and Vienna are aiming to achieve region-wide expansion of school social work as a permanent regular offer. A total of 131 school social workers were employed at Austrian schools during the 2010/11 school year. The ratio of the service quantity ranges from one school social worker per 320 pupils in Burgenland to one school social worker per 1,953

4 In German-speaking countries, the English term “school social work” comprises a variety of tasks and offers, including aspects of social work and social pedagogy.

pupils in Lower Austria. Finally, the forms of organisation also vary. In Vienna, school social work is assigned to the school board, whereas in Upper Austria implementation takes place in the context of youth welfare. In other provinces, school social work is financed by public funds but carried out by free associations and civil society organisations (Adamowitsch et al., 2011).

One reason for the heterogeneity of the development is that there is not yet a precise, legal basis for school social work. In the Youth Welfare Laws of the provinces, cooperation with schools is voluntary and has no obligatory dimension. Due to the nationwide School Organisation Law, school social workers are considered as “school external persons” (except in Vienna, where they are subjected directly to the school board), which causes numerous uncertainties concerning their authorisations and competences, as well as their role in the school system (Bugram & Hofschwaiger, 2010; Gspurning et al., 2011; Sting & Leitner, 2011).

Due to the historically separate development of school and social pedagogy (respectively defined as social work) in German-speaking countries, cooperation between school social workers and teachers is not uncomplicated. Speck points out differences in professional culture, based on the separate development of the professions, that establish mutual preconceptions and stereotypes in each of the professions regarding the other professional category. At the same time, the cooperation relationship is characterised by a hierarchic imbalance in power, resulting from the fact that school is the central place for teachers to practise their profession, whereas school social workers have to function in a location that is not equipped for them in the first place (Speck, 2007). Scheipl states that, in Austria, the institution of school and the institution of school social work have different goals: while school addresses the factual level and defines itself through knowledge transfer and learning content, school social work focuses on the individual with his/her needs, talents, problems and requirements for coping with life, and in so doing follows a holistic, personality-related approach. However, school seems to be increasingly unable to cope: it neglects the personal level and concentrates only on the factual level. It can “perform its main business of teaching and transferring knowledge less and less under these aggravated conditions” (Scheipl, 2007, p. 710). School social work can take over a large part of facilitating education, if it creates the framework that empowers children and youth to realise educational achievements (Scheipl, 2007).

Research Methods

The present article incorporates evaluation studies from Carinthia (Sting & Leitner, 2011) and Styria (Gspurning et al., 2011). In Styria, quantitative questionnaires (teachers (n=72) and pupils (n=80)), semi-standardised interviews (school social workers (n=7), div. professionals (n=12)), group discussions (teacher (n=2 group discussions), pupils (n=5 group discussions), parents (n=2 group discussions)), as well as documentation analysis (n=325 interventions) were carried out. The enquiry dates were distributed over a period of two years (2010 to 2011), so that developments can be perceived. The analysis of the quantitative data was supported by the software SPSS, while the qualitative content analysis was undertaken using MAXQDA.

In Carinthia, qualitative questionings of users (pupils, teachers, principals and parents) was carried out. The enquiry included six schools representing different school types and various regions of Carinthia. The data collection was undertaken in two stages in order to recognise developments in the implementation process of school social work: the first stage lasted from October 2009 to January 2010, and the second from December 2010 to February 2011. A total of 123 guided interviews were conducted (66 with pupils, 24 with teachers, 12 with principals, 14 with parents and 7 with school social workers). The data analysis followed the principles of grounded theory by using the computer-based data analysis programme MAXQDA (Sting & Leitner, 2011).

Results

The evaluations show that school social work can establish itself successfully in schools in the most cases, in spite of the aforementioned problems. Gspurning et al. (2011) determined that school social work is consistently accepted and appreciated. The number of interventions in the projects they evaluated has increased considerably since the beginning of school social work. This can be interpreted as an indicator of the increasing involvement of school social work in the school system.

The questioning of users in Carinthia showed a predominantly positive appraisal and a high level of satisfaction regarding school social work. During the course of the present project, school social work was accepted as a useful and necessary offer in all of the evaluated locations, and was integrated into the normal operation of the school (Sting & Leitner, 2011).

Services of School Social Work

The services of school social work were mainly observed in the following fields (Sting & Leitner, 2011):

(1) Support and counselling regarding specific problems: support refers to various issues and fields, such as teaching-related problems, family problems, orientation concerning future occupation and arbitration in pupil-teacher conflicts. "Networking with school external partners" – cooperation with other institutions such as youth welfare services, counselling services or therapeutic services – is mentioned as a special achievement. One principal emphasised the following aspect: *"This occurs rapidly and is unbureaucratic, and this is the main point. I have the information in a short period of time (...) so each case or each matter can be dealt with much more rapidly"*.

(2) Encouragement of class cohesion and integration of specific pupils: in new classes or school classes that are constituted differently – classes with difficult group dynamics – activities are carried out to improve class cohesion and the class climate. Furthermore, specific pupils affected by exclusion or bullying are supported in their integration into the class. These activities have a playful or experiential-educational character. Pupils report experiences that are fun and enjoyable, while teachers experience the resulting building of trust and improvement of the class climate, partly in a way *"that the children don't even recognise"* (teacher).

(3) Attachment figure and contact partner: school social workers were able to establish themselves as onsite contact partners for a wide range concerns, particularly for pupils. Their "neutrality" in the school system seems to give them a special position of trust, which the pupils sometimes rank more highly than their trust in parents or friends: *"(...) so if I really had a problem that I didn't know how to solve, then that would be my first choice, because sometimes there is something that you don't want to tell your parents at the time, or maybe it even has to do with them, or maybe with your friend or friends, and so you can't just tell anybody. Because the school social worker is neutral, I think he tries to step into your shoes and into the shoes of the others, which is something that I regard as very positive about him"* (pupil).

(4) School social work as an external perspective: school social work seems to have an intermediate position. On the one hand, it is part of the school system and therefore familiar with everyday routines and events. On the other hand, because it is provided by an external institution it is considered to have an external perspective, and this "foreignness" leads to specific advantages. For instance, one parent emphasises, that children *"talk more easily with strangers"*

about some things”, while one pupil clearly draws a line between the school social worker and the teachers, as the former are not included in school sanction mechanisms: *“we don’t have such a pupil-teacher relationship, but rather relationships of friendship with them”*. One principal refers to them as *“great dialogue partners for the staff, and also for me. So I have to admit that I sometimes make use of them if I have to talk about something”*. As noted several times by teachers, the other “external” perspective of school social workers results from their differing professionalism, in line with their specific training and the resulting professional competences: *“because I don’t have the qualifications to deal with problematic pupils. I mean, I try to look up quite a lot, but how one can really deal with it or know which possibilities one has. This I don’t know, and they have a high level of professional expertise”* (teacher).

Methodical Repertoire – Between Crisis-Oriented and Cultural

A key issue for establishing extensive, low-threshold school social work is the preference for its regular and continuous presence in specific schools. The evaluation in Carinthia determined the desire for a daily presence; in praxis, however, in most cases it is confined to a few hours on one or two days per week (Adamowitsch et al., 2011). In addition, it is necessary to develop a sophisticated methodical repertoire that refers not only to work with pupils, but also opens up possibilities for work with teachers, principals, parents and other social actors, as well as with the overall population.

Direct Work with Pupils

Gspurning et al. (2011) presented a distinctive method for direct work with pupils, distinguishing between “open operation”, “counselling respective individual-case intervention”, “intervention during recess”, “interventions when pupils are send out of class”, “groups and class operations”, “issue-specific projects”, and “recreation offers”. With “open operation”, the authors mean that pupils can be in the culturally based room of school social workers, where the school social workers act as co-creators. From a professional point of view, this can be compared with the operating of a youth centre. “Issue-specific projects” have a specific duration and a continual orientation, for example “a getting-to-know-each-other phase” at the beginning of the school year including close cooperation with teachers, but also “prevention of violence projects” or “community-oriented projects”.

It is extremely important that a restriction to individual-case work leads to sometimes stigmatised, and always less co-creating, school social work. Sting

and Leitner (2011) refer to this as the “*risk of narrowing the offer to short-term problem solving*”. Culturally oriented school social work needs “open operation”, “group operations” and “issue-specific projects” in which the pupils are involved without the occurrence of a problem. Wetzel et al. (2011) point out that more than half of parents express a desire for out-of-school offers. This also shows that the task of school development can only be pursued with a complex methodical approach.

Methods with Teachers

Gspurning et al. (2011) distinguish between case-specific and case-unspecific methods: case reviews and helper conferences are case-specific methods, whereas conferences, workgroups or informal contacts are case-unspecific options.

Methods with Parents

With parents, a mobility component is evident. Due to the fact that some parents are difficult to reach through invitations from the school (Sting & Leitner, 2011), the question arises as to who is in charge of mobile work with parents. If, due to its resource capacities, school social work is unable to meet this requirement in a flexible way on a low-threshold level, youth welfare could be a possible provider, although its activities are usually more extensive. The analysis of Wetzel et al. (2011) makes it clear that the desire for specific offers is based on the individual perspective. Pupils, teachers and parents differ concerning their demands of school social work.

Multi-Thematic Alignment

Sometimes school social work is associated only with specific problems (e.g., violence, dropout). Analysis of documentation shows that school social work covers a broad thematic field. Gspurning et al. (2011) analysed 325 individual-case interventions at one location (NMS Algersdorf), enabling the variety of themes to become apparent (see Table 1). The most frequent areas of intervention are: resolution of disputes between pupils, counselling on family problems (e.g., financial problems), standing up against physical violence of schoolmates, and reducing disturbances during lessons. Interventions are also often necessary in cases of foster care, verbal abuse of schoolmates, self-harm and violence in the family. Love, sexuality, truancy or bullying are examples of other problems.

Table 1. *Issues of single-case interventions*

Issues	Cases	Percentage
disputes with schoolmates or friends	50	15.4
diverse family problems	38	11.7
physical violence by schoolmates	25	7.7
disruption of lessons	23	7.1
foster care	19	5.8
verbal abuse by schoolmates	18	5.5
self-harm	18	5.5
violence in the family	16	4.9
diverse personal problems	14	4.3
conflicts between teacher and pupil	14	4.3
love and sexuality	13	4.0
truancy	10	3.1
change of school or class	10	3.1
bullying by schoolmates	8	2.5
theft or missing items	8	2.5
grades and exams	7	2.2
molesting, grabbing or spitting of schoolmates	7	2.2
internet	6	1.8
future, qualifications	5	1.5
suspension	4	1.2
wellbeing	3	.9
damage to property	3	.9
smoking	2	.6
worry about other persons	2	.6
uncategorised	2	.6
Total	325	100

Due to a lack of alignment of categories, comparison of issues between different schools is only possible to a limited extent. In a similar table of issues determined by X-point (2010), the leading topics were those of emotions, school problems, violence and family problems. Friendship, conflict solving, class cohesion, life planning and recreation are other common issues in this listing, followed by multiculturalism, love, divorce and splitting up, bullying, psychological and medical afflictions, as well as sexuality. In order to make statements about school social work in Austria overall, it would be a useful to harmonise the thematic categories.

Locational Requirements of School Social Work

It is considered necessary for school social work to at least have a room of its own (Speck, 2007), while multi-room concepts provide opportunities for the realisation of a broad methodical repertoire. Burgram and Hofschwaiger (2010) found that not all school social work facilities have a room of their own: some have joint users and in one case they have no room at all. Furthermore, the joint use of school rooms (e.g., classrooms, gymnasium and break rooms) should be considered, so that more activities typically take place than the location of the school social work itself provides. A suitable location is essential, particularly with regard to open operation. Furthermore, it is often impossible to combine counselling and other activities in a small room. The question therefore arises as to how culturally preventive aligned school social work can be realised in constricted locations.

The question of the joint usage of locations for afterschool care should also be considered. Multi-room concepts should be continuously developed at least for afterschool care (Gspurning et al., 2010), from which school social work could benefit in the mornings.

Another important aspect is the quality of the location. Interventional and preventive offers, as well as class activities, can only be put into practice if inviting locations exist. Locations must provide space for withdrawal, as well as for (confidential) conversations and meetings; therefore, a pleasant atmosphere for conversations is required, but also spaces for group work and games. Furthermore, locations must be clearly visible and easily accessible in the school building. Appropriate locations influence the possibilities of access for the users: “a neutral room, where pupils and teachers (...) have no fear of entering, to overcome inhibitions in order to be free, and to articulate the simple problems that burden them. (...) Other important points to be considered are free access, trust, atmosphere and comfort” (L9) (Sting & Leitner, 2011).

Staff and Qualifications

In the field of action of school social work, social work and social pedagogical perspectives overlap, so both qualifications are essentially compatible regarding employment. The professions are applied differently in some concepts (e.g., Grottenthaler et al., 2011), but they can be considered equal in terms of the skills they provide for school social work. Related disciplines are also relevant (e.g., pedagogy, sociology and psychology). Establishing quality assurance is an important issue, in order to ensure reflection and continuous

development. This develops, for example, through inter- and supervision, and requires appropriate opportunities for additional training.

One of the main tasks is the realisation of specific principles in ongoing praxis. Principles such as relationship orientation, low-thresholds, participation, reflecting on gender issues, resource orientation or voluntariness have not yet been determined with regard to their dimension of application. A great deal of scope therefore exists for the implementation and design of the specific work in each school, which can be addressed autonomously by the actors involved. Various examples show that the realisation is sometimes complicated by the circumstances. The actors are then caught between the poles of professional understanding and the infrastructure of implementation; for example, for many pupils from several schools, relationship work represents an unmanageable burden, and low-thresholds cannot be implemented if the location or opening hours are inadequate (Gspurning et al., 2011). From an evaluation by Sting and Leitner in Carinthia, it is evident that acceptance by the specific principal is crucial to the successful formation of praxis (Sting & Leitner, 2012). Various providers also aim to strengthen the presence of men in school social work, but this is only achievable in a limited way within an educational field that is a women's domain (Heimgartner, 2009).

Cooperation and Networking

An important goal of all of the actors involved in school activities should be that the various professions that have committed themselves to school education and support cooperate constructively. Teachers, doctors, psychologists, integration teachers, afterschool caregivers and other professional groups contribute, together with school social workers, to the success of school life. Currently, the question is how the joint and cooperative taking of responsibility can be accelerated by building local teams. In contrast, Sting and Leitner (2011) detect "competition between the professions" in some places.

Overall, school social work is characterised by intensive cooperation between various actors. Both case-related and topic-related school social work seems to have a strongly demanded mediation role between various groups of actors. This is true for cooperation in school as well as for cooperation external to school. Adamowitsch et al. (2011) found that the density of cooperation is developed to various extents. Whereas cooperation between school administrations and teachers is very intense, cooperation between school doctors and school psychologists is at a rather low-level. Regarding school's external partners, cooperation with youth welfare, counselling facilities, youth centres and street work ranks at the front line.

A special feature of Austrian school social work is a rather high share of “detached work” (Speck, 2012). About 13.5% of the total work takes place outside school, e.g., through counselling and supporting pupils outside school or by visiting parents. School social work could contribute overall to an expansion of school’s radius of operation into the social environment; for example, through contact with clubs and businesses, or through public relations activities. However, this requires significant time and staff resources. It would be desirable for the cultural, artistic or economical resources of the social environment of the school to be increasingly available through school social work. In Graz, social environmental youth welfare is currently being tested (Krammer, 2012; Sixt, 2012). A regional approach towards schools could also occur in this regard, and an expansion of joint case-specific activities can be expected. In Styria, a complete village has been defined as the school environment, so pupils can move freely and, among other things, benefit from offers of bound and open youth work (e.g., music lessons), thus opening up possibilities for cooperation with various forms of community work (Sing & Heimgartner, 2009).

Research and School Social Work

The heterogenic and province-related development of school social work makes it difficult to gain an overview of its actual expansion, and of its associated opportunities and problems. Systematic documentation and research on school social work is vital for its future development. On the one hand, the established broad spectrum of forms of knowledge and research methods in social pedagogy can be used for this purpose (Heimgartner, 2011), while, on the other hand, uniform models of knowledge acquisition and scientific observation must be enforced in each specific region, thus enabling a concerted documentation and analysis of school social work in Austria. The promotion of exchanges of attending-evaluation studies and longitudinal surveys, the appropriate integration of the involved parties (e.g., pupils) in research and development, and the presentation of publication and conference activity, could increase the tolerance and safety of school social work in Austrian society altogether.

Conclusion

Several key preconditions must be satisfied for school social work to render positive accomplishments. Firstly, school social work must maintain its independent role in the school system, which can be achieved with free providers. Incorporation in the school organisation is only useful if sufficient provisions

are made to ensure that it is not used for school and instructional purposes. Secondly, school social work needs low-threshold access, i.e., access to school social work must be guaranteed. The care relationship between school social workers and pupils, in particular, is responsible for the reality of how much time is available for relationship work. Thirdly, a widespread understanding of themes needs to be established. The implementation of school social work is often justified by a tight focus on problem shooting, which could lead to the point where school social work is only involved as a short-range rescue service in the case of a crisis. The deficit-oriented approach – implemented as crisis-oriented counselling, and with a rather high-threshold character – must be distinguished from the cultural preventive approach, which understands school social work as a low-threshold, diverse offer with a broad methodical spectrum that, besides supporting individuals, also keeps an eye on the development of the social climate at the school (Gspurning et al., 2011; Leitner & Sting, 2011; Heimgartner, 2012).

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Towards a Concept of Parental Authority in Adolescence

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☞ The notion of authority is common in the literature on parent-child relationships. However, the notion of 'parental authority' remains largely unspecified. The present article first critically reviews conceptualisations of parental authority in selected developmental-psychological approaches. We find the absence of an explicit and integrated theoretical and empirical conceptualisation of parental authority, as well as a certain lack of consistency in the application of the concept. Against the background of this review, we suggest initial steps towards a concept of parental authority as relational, dynamic and co-constituted in the sense of a joint product and outcome of family relationships.

Keywords: Parental authority; Control; Power; Recognition; Parent-child relationship; Adolescence

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O konceptu starševske avtoritete v adolescenci

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≈ Ideja avtoritete je v literaturi o odnosih med starši in otroki pogosto prisotna, a pojem »starševska avtoriteta« po večini ostaja neopredeljen. V članku najprej kritično pregledamo različne konceptualizacije starševske avtoritete v izbranih razvojnopsiholoških pristopih. Pri tem pokažemo na primanjkljaj jasne in celovite teoretične in empirične konceptualizacije tega pojma pa tudi na pomanjkanje doslednosti pri njegovi uporabi. Na podlagi pregleda predlagamo nekaj mogočih zasnov za konceptualizacijo starševske avtoritete kot relacijske, dinamične in sodoločene v pomenu skupnega rezultata družinskih odnosov.

Ključne besede: starševska avtoriteta; nadzor; moč; priznavanje; odnos med starši in otroki; adolescenca

Introduction

There are at least two reasons for the importance of the question of parental authority today. On the one hand, both parents and children increasingly adhere to democratic ideals and negotiated communication within the family context (du Bois-Reymond, Büchner, & Krüger, 1993; du Bois-Reymond, Poel, & Ravesloot, 1998; Solomon, Warin, Langford, & Lewis, 2002). This is, on the other hand, contrasted by the persistence of more indirect, covert and invisible power asymmetries between parents and children (Brannen, Dodd, Oakley, & Storey 1994; Solomon et al., 2002). As a consequence of this contradiction, parents may, for instance, wonder in what manner and how often authority should be 'used' in parenting practices (Schneewind, 1999). On the whole, the picture is ambiguous (cf. Ashbourne, 2009). Parents' formal status alone no longer guarantees that their suggestions are followed; they are no longer taken for granted as leading figures by their children. Instead, parents have to defend and often reclaim their authority anew by, for instance, offering principled justifications of their decisions and guidelines (Giddens, 1992).

In general terms, authority, like power, is an essentially relational category. Authority involves the relationship between at least two parties that "exists when one individual, prompted by his or her circumstances, does as indicated by another individual what he or she would not do in the absence of such indication" (Zambrano, 2001, p. 978). Unlike power, which can involve the overcoming of explicit resistance and which is equally relevant to family, parenting and communication research (e.g., Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Cromwell & Olson, 1975; Dunbar, 2004; Hallenbeck, 1966; Rollins & Bahr, 1976; Safilios-Rothschild, 1970; Scanzoni, 1979), authority requires legitimacy (Ule, 1977; Kroflič, 1997). It is "linked to the idea of legitimization, the right to make particular decisions, and to command obedience" (Perelberg, 1990; emphasis added). In contrast to power, authority is stabilised and 'institutionalised' by legitimacy, which is "what keeps the relationship from breaking down", as Zambrano (2001, p. 978) notes.

In the present article, we seek to develop a more comprehensive concept of parental authority on the basis of a critical review of selected parenting paradigms that offer valuable starting points to understanding the dimensions of the phenomenon. We have chosen influential contemporary frameworks of developmental psychology, in which notions of parental authority are rather explicitly relevant in negotiations between parents and children: parenting style theory, the parental control paradigm, social domain theory, and research on

power and authority in parent-adolescent relationships.³ These approaches have been chosen for two main reasons. First, they were not developed in isolation from each other, but rather in a process of mutual exchange of key proponents. Second, with this selection we narrow the focus of our exploration to the life course phase of adolescence, rather than childhood or young adulthood.⁴ We believe that adolescence is particularly suitable for illustrating the basic paradoxes of parental authority, especially its contribution to the gradual increase in autonomy of action and independence of thinking.

The paper begins with a review of notions of parental authority within the selected influential approaches from developmental psychology, and a search for conceptualisations. In order to facilitate the comparison, and to make it feasible within the framework of the present article, we restrict the discussion to a few key aspects and questions. We look at how authority is legitimised, and at the manner of its assertion in these approaches that is related to the development and texture of rules and their implementation. Questions concerning the status of aspects such as parental control and sanctions, as well as dialogic negotiation or children's participation, are relevant here. The consideration of the child's perspective is crucial for an assessment of the dimension of legitimacy in these approaches. The possible transformation of parental authority as the adolescent matures is associated with this. Other aspects that can shape parental authority include the overall quality of the relationship between parents and children, the cultural and ethnic background, the child's gender and temperament, or special needs. Building on the review of these approaches, we suggest and outline a conceptual proposition of parental authority that considers its essentially relational and dynamic character: parental authority is constantly communicatively constructed and reproduced in an intergenerational exchange process. The paper concludes with a few suggestions about how research could benefit from an elaborated conceptualisation and more consistent use of the concept of parental authority.

Reviewing notions of parental authority

The parenting style approach

With its central concept of "parental authority styles" (Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 1971, 1991, 2012; Baumrind, Larzelere, & Owens, 2010), this approach raises

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- 3 We have had to omit others, such as Hoffman's information processing theory with its typology of parental discipline measures (e.g., Hoffman, 1970, 1983), because the significance of parental authority is to a large extent only implicit in this case.
 - 4 The parenting style paradigm was initially developed with preschoolers (Baumrind, 1966, 1967, 1971), but in more recent works parenting of adolescents has been examined (Baumrind, 1991; Baumrind et al., 2010).

the expectation of an elaborate conceptualisation of parental authority. However, the term refers rather vaguely to the notion of expertness, associating authority with a person's expert power, as recognised by a subordinate person. In an earlier publication, Baumrind (1966, p. 887) describes an "authority" as "a person whose expertness befits him to designate a behavioral alternative for another where the alternatives are perceived by both". One of the reasons for this cautious definition could be related to Baumrind's observation that the use of the authority concept involves the risk of being associated in a prejudiced way with the renowned authoritarian-personality syndrome (Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswik, Levinson, & Sanford, 1950; Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). She later explains the concept's unpopularity with the significant influence of the educational philosophy of permissive and child-centred pedagogical attitudes and approaches (Baumrind, 1996).

Notwithstanding the unspecific definition of authority in this approach, some of its aspects become evident from the three original basic parenting styles that are distinguished: authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive (Baumrind, 1967, 1971; Buri, 1991). These styles represent configurations of several inter-related parenting aspects: parental control and disciplinary efforts; nurturing skills; communication style; parental consideration of demands depending on the child's level of maturity; and their general supportiveness and emotional attunement (Baumrind, 1971).

Baumrind's original contribution was revised by Maccoby and Martin (1983), who define parenting styles by distinguishing two underlying dimensions: parental demandingness (i.e., control, supervision, maturity demands) and parental responsiveness (i.e., warmth, acceptance, involvement). The interaction between the two dimensions has produced four, not three, distinct parenting styles. In her later work, Baumrind (1989, 1991) picked up on these two orthogonal factors (called by her "control" and "warmth"), and even more styles have been identified in subjects in her longitudinal study: disengaged in addition to the original three, as well as three other styles (directive, good-enough, democratic). In a recent contribution, the patterns were even further and more complexly differentiated by adding the intrusiveness/psychological control dimension (Baumrind et al., 2010). We refer here only to the original three parenting styles distinguished by Baumrind (1967, 1971).

The definitions of the main parenting styles emphasise different ways of using power, control and discipline. In the case of *authoritarian parenting*, coercive, unilateral forms of power assertion are applied in order to "maintain family hierarchy in which children are subordinate" (Baumrind et al., 2010, p. 184). *Permissive parenting* is characterised by parental reluctance to assert

confrontive power, at the risk of failing to provide authority, order, and regimen where it may be necessary (Baumrind et al., 2010, p. 184). These two parenting styles are criticised for their idealisation of (positive or negative) control, and are considered inappropriate compared to the third approach of *authoritative parenting*, which supports autonomy and responsible agency among children (Baumrind, 2005). The authoritative ideal combines high behavioural control and confrontive (i.e., firm, direct, forceful and consistent) discipline with opportunities for reciprocal communication, 'moderately open' negotiation and autonomous choice (especially during adolescence); authoritative parents also avoid verbal hostility and psychological control (Baumrind et al., 2010; Baumrind, 2012). This parenting style emphasises the importance of parental demands being just, and parental authority being reasoned and legitimate; if this is not achieved, the child may resist and defy parental authority, or even distance him/herself emotionally (Baumrind, 2005; Baumrind et al., 2010).

Authoritative parenting does not completely abandon the ideas of parental authority, power and control. However, the relatively high level of parental control originally promoted in this parenting style (e.g., Baumrind, 1983) has been criticised (Grolnick, 2003). In the meantime, the emphasis on (the short-term goal of) the maintenance of family order through parental authority (Baumrind, 1991) has shifted to the long-term project of promoting sustainable initiative, self-determination, social responsibility and moral competence (Baumrind, 2005; Baumrind et al., 2010).

This parenting style approach suggests that parents (should) argue their demands increasingly thoroughly as the child's maturity progresses (Baumrind, 1996). Toddlerhood and especially adolescence are conceived as periods during which children contest and subvert parental authority in order to broaden their personal freedom (Baumrind et al., 2010). Parental authority should be transformed as the child gets older (Baumrind, 2012). Together with the ideal of balancing parental demands for behavioural compliance (which may require power-assertive confrontation) with opportunities for negotiation, fair reasoning and increasing autonomy, this age sensitivity testifies to the approach's consideration of the child's perspective. The age-sensitivity of this approach is complemented by studies differentiating the effects of authority in various cultural and social contexts. Findings are ambiguous: for instance, proponents of the cultural equivalence model claim that the effects of authority are consistent across cultures (e.g., Lamborn & Felbab, 2003; Sorkhabi, 2005; Steinberg et al., 1991, 1994), while others claim that context mediates the effects (e.g., Florsheim, Tolan, & Gorman-Smith, 1996; Mason, Cauce, Gonzales, & Hiraga, 1996; Mandara, 2006). Nevertheless, while relations between parental regulation and

certain developmental outcomes (e.g., problem behaviour, competence) have been studied extensively (e.g., Baumrind, 1991; Baumrind et al., 2010), an in-depth discussion of how power is actually negotiated between children and parents, and how parental authority is legitimated from the perspective of the child, is missing (cf. Maccoby, 2007).

The parental control paradigm

Again in the second approach, which we will call the 'parental control paradigm', authority is obviously important but conceptually underdeveloped. Numerous contributions deal extensively with the conceptualisation (and operationalisation) of parental control and autonomy support, as well as associations between these constructs (e.g., Barber, 1996; Barber, Olsen, & Shagle, 1994; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2009; Schaefer, 1965; Soenens & Beyers, 2012; Steinberg, 1990). However, their connection to the concept of authority is not established. In fact, the term is hardly used, although one would expect it from the many ongoing conceptual debates, especially with regard to the notion of control (Soenens & Beyens, 2012). One of the most important distinctions of this approach is the difference between behaviour control and psychological control. *Behaviour control* typically includes parental regulating strategies, such as setting expectations (Barber, 1996), monitoring activities outside home (Barber, 1996; Gray & Steinberg, 1999; Stattin & Kerr, 2000), limit-setting (Barber, Maughan, & Olsen, 2005), or the parents' involvement in making decisions for children (Fletcher, Steinberg, & Williams-Wheeler, 2004). *Psychological control*, on the other hand, usually refers to intrusive and manipulative activities of parents, such as guilt-induction, shaming or love-withdrawal (Barber, 1996; Schaefer, 1965); unlike behaviour control, this it is associated with negative outcomes for youth (e.g., Barber & Hamon, 2002; Conger, Conger, & Scaramella, 1997; Galambos, Barker, & Almeida, 2003; Gray & Steinberg, 1999).

Recent contributions to the debate challenge this distinction. For instance, Grolnick and Pomerantz (2009) suggest replacing the two dimensions of behavioural and psychological parental control. Instead, the notion of 'structure' (or 'guidance'), which refers to parental practices dealing with discipline and the setting of rules and expectations, should be used together with the notion of 'control' referring to parental pressure, intrusiveness or dominance. The original outline of this reconceptualisation does not clarify the parental status as figures of authority and the manner of its assertion in either of the two dimensions of structure or control. However, in their response to critics such as Conger (2009) or Grusec (2009), who point to various problematic aspects of their contribution, Pomerantz and Grolnick (2009) maintain that, in the end,

parents are in charge in both structure and control. They acknowledge that the existence of structure in their model “entails parents as the *ultimate authority*” – parents define the degree of the child’s autonomy – but “*the manner of implementing structure by authority figures* determines the outcome, which may either be autonomy supporting or controlling” (Pomerantz & Grolnick, 2009, p. 177; emphasis added).

Elsewhere, authority is explicitly counted among the six components of structure that are “relevant to children’s motivation and adjustment” (Farkas & Grolnick, 2008 quoted in Grolnick, 2009, p. 167), with the others being: (1) clear and consistent rules, guidelines and expectations; (2) opportunities to meet or exceed expectations; (3) predictability; (4) informational feedback; and (5) provision of rationales. Nevertheless, exactly how this way of exercising parental rules/demands is related to parents as authority figures remains unclear. Furthermore, the manner of asserting rules/demands is not distinguished from their scope.

In this context, Steinberg’s (2005) challenging stance on psychological control is relevant. He suggests that it is not clear whether psychological control refers to certain ways of parental authority assertion in the sense of *styles*, or rather to the (extent of) issues (social domains) over which parents attempt to exercise their authority, in the sense of *substance*. In line with this distinction of style and substance, we would suggest that the key difference between structuring and controlling, or between behavioural vs. psychological control, seems to reflect the distinction between a more deliberative and overt way of parental authority assertion in contrast to a more coercive and covert one. Only the former is open to the child’s participation.

Although studies following this approach empirically observe adolescents’ subjective experiences of control together with parental support of the child’s autonomy (which is considered relevant especially vis-à-vis parental psychological control), there is – with the exception of the theoretical mention of the provision of rationales in Grolnick, 2009 – no emphasis on parent-child negotiation. In the end, the parental control approach essentially operates on the basis of a non-interactionist concept of authority, in which the child’s role is only implicit.

The social domains approach

The social domains approach addresses the development of children’s social knowledge within the three distinct conceptual domains of the moral, the conventional and the psychological (Smetana, 2011). Furthermore, it analyses the coordination of parental demands and regulations, on the one hand, and

children's zones of autonomy and self-determination in various contexts and situations, on the other. The focus is on the scope and content of parental rules and the reasoning behind them, as well as on the child's perception of the legitimacy of parental authority and the obligation to obey. The key advantage of this approach lies in the fact that it considers the dialogic background of parental authority within the complexity of the parent-child relationship.

This approach employs parental authority as a key term without explicit definition. Sometimes the term is even used as a synonym for "control over the child's behaviour", as, for example, in Cumsille, Darling, Flaherty, and Martinez (2009, p. 418): "As adolescents move from childhood dependence to adult autonomy, they claim ownership of their decision-making processes. One aspect of this transformation is a change in the aspects of adolescents' lives that they and their parents consider to be legitimately within the sphere of *parent control or authority*" (emphasis added).

The implicit key point of 'legitimacy of parental authority' refers to the extent to which the parental regulation of the respective conceptual domains is perceived as legitimate by both parents and adolescents. Therefore, parental authority appears to be functionally equated with being 'the vehicle' for asserting the parental will.⁵ Despite the child's involvement, the *locus* of rule-setting power is on the parental side. This is regarded as "a natural or appropriate extension of their role as parents" (Darling, Cumsille, & Martinez, 2007, p. 299); or "parents typically decide how much, and what types of, autonomy to grant to their children", as Daddis and Smetana (2005) write. However, the role of children in this approach is not passive; they are recognised as the party that has to legitimise authority, and that is eager to expand its own autonomy.

Findings from research distinguishing gender, cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic features indicate that parents of preadolescents and younger adolescents tend to consider all sorts of issues as depending on parental decision-making (e.g., Smetana, 1995; Yau & Smetana, 1996). As adolescents grow up, parents generally reduce their (behavioural) control only with regard to personal (e.g., the use of free time or watching videos) and friendship issues. Moral, conventional and prudential (e.g., smoking, drinking, and drug use) issues, on the other hand, tend to remain under parental control. However, examples of considerations in the moral domain highlight the importance of children's experiences and inductive argumentation for recognition of the legitimacy of (moral) norms; therefore, unlike the conventional domain, (continuous) adult

5 Some other approaches similarly equate parental authority with the locus of decision-making power being on the side of parents (as in Bosma, Jackson, Zijsling et al., 1996; Dornbusch, Ritter, Mont-Reynaud, & Chen, 1990).

authority (after the child's age of 4 or 5) is not required to legitimise moral norms (Nucci, 2001). Progressive flexibilisation of rules and of children's duties is thought to lead to more self-regulation and autonomy during the later phase of adolescence. Studies indicate that continued parental involvement in the child's choices and joint decision making in early and middle adolescence are optimal for healthy adjustment (Smetana, 2011). By the end of adolescence, previously asymmetrical relationships between parents and their children are supposed to become more equal and reciprocal (Smetana, 1995; Smetana, Crean, & Campione-Barr, 2005).

In addition to varying depending on the respective domain and the specific age, the boundaries of parental authority in adolescence vary according to gender (of both child and parent), social contexts, social classes, and cultures (for an overview, see Smetana, 2011). Furthermore, many interpersonal and intrapersonal factors are relevant, including: "parents' beliefs about the appropriate timing for granting autonomy, their assessment of their adolescent's abilities and competence to assume more privileges and responsibilities, their parenting styles, and their appraisal of the environmental risks of allowing their teens more freedom" (Smetana et al., 2005, p. 42); the quality of the parent-child relationship; the (mis)match of temperaments (Smetana, 2011, p. 177); and even parental mood (Smetana, 2011, p. 206). The perceived legitimacy of parental authority and the adolescent's obligation to obey (also in the case of disagreement) are related to the level of the adolescents' general agreement with their parents and global beliefs about their obligation to obey (Darling et al., 2007); the coherence of parental rules in combination with their strict enforcement (i.e., level of parental supportiveness and monitoring); the presence/absence of the child's problem behaviour; and the adolescent's self-efficacy level (Cumsille et al., 2009). These findings indicate the complexity and negotiation-based preconditions of being recognised as an authority.

This approach considers the supportive attitude of parents towards the child's autonomy as indispensable for the development of the child's competences (Nucci & Smetana, 1996; Smetana & Chuang, 2001). Open, reciprocal communication and negotiations are described as universally benefiting the child's development; coercion is considered as developmentally harmful. According to this approach, the boundaries of parental authority are transformed by the parents' self-limitation, as well as by the (continuous) negotiation of their capacity to regulate different aspects of their children's lives and their emerging desires for more autonomy and personal freedom (Smetana, 2011). Already during early childhood – and, with regard to more complex issues, during adolescence – children often disagree with parents about which issues (especially prudential and

contextually conventional) fall under legitimate parental regulation and which are personal (Smetana, 2011). Adolescents typically demand autonomy earlier than their parents are ready to grant it (Smetana, 1988). These differences in perception can lead to parent-child conflicts; however, they are explicitly seen as an important opportunity to renegotiate – and gradually and subtly shift – the boundaries of parental authority (Smetana, 1989; Smetana et al., 1991).

In other words, the process involves typical roles: parents are presented as constantly balancing the pros and cons of asserting their authority, or of granting children autonomy with regard to specific issues, while children are presented as accepting or rejecting parental authority and constantly pushing for greater personal discretion and choice. Conceptually, children are the weaker party; they do, however, have the option of avoiding conflict – by means of non-disclosure, for instance – in cases when they believe they are not obliged to obey parental restrictions (Smetana, Metzger, Gettman, & Campione-Barr, 2006; Yau, Tasopoulos-Chan, & Smetana, 2009). Moreover, resistance and challenges to parental authority are recognised as normative, adaptive and in the service of attaining greater autonomy. When parental authority is generally recognised as supportive, the child's resistance to the particular parental rules will only slow down the process of the adolescent's emancipation. However, some forms of adolescent self-assertion that entail defiance and rebellion are labelled as destructive or dysfunctional (Smetana, 2011).

The attributive theory of authority

A fourth approach considered is one we will call the 'attributive theory of authority'. Rather than being an established theory, this approach is represented by a group of researchers who explicitly consider parental authority as an important theoretical and empirical dimension when exploring various aspects of parenting and their outcomes in children (e.g., Bush et al., 2004; Peterson, 1986; Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson, Bush, & Supple, 1999; Peterson, Rollins, & Thomas, 1985; Peterson, Bush, Wilson, & Hennon, 2005). Some of these researchers have even suggested using the notion of authority regularly in addition to established dimensions such as parental support/connection, parental monitoring and coercive parenting (Bush, Peterson, Cobas, & Supple, 2002). This would lead to a greater generalisability of results, and especially to a more accurate assessment of the potential universality of parental socialisation processes.

Parental authority has been defined as the "subjective perception that parents have abilities or competencies to exercise influence but may or may not actually enact this potential" (Peterson & Hann, 1999, p. 338). Importantly for our discussion, this definition explicitly includes the children's perspective: parental

authority refers to the features that young people attribute to their parents' influence in the sense of perceived abilities, resources, legitimacy, credibility, etc.

Furthermore, this approach emphasises the importance of children's developing competences, and how they influence the power dynamics of parent-child relationships during adolescence (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson et al., 1999). This approach applies a double perspective: while parental authority is investigated through the perceptions of teenagers, the authority of adolescents is observed from mothers' and fathers' viewpoints. The acknowledgement of adolescent authority in addition to parental authority has the advantage of enabling the investigation of parent-child relationships as a process of mutual perceptions of each other's abilities to influence situations and each other's re/actions. At the same time, it is possible to conceptualise the exchange and confrontation of authority such that it develops towards greater mutuality as the child grows older.

Peterson et al. (2005) distinguish parental authority analytically from parental socialisation behaviours and emotional attachment relationships to children. They underline the importance of the influence of the evolving history of relationships between parents and adolescents on the child's perception of parents as authority. Children learn to assess the capability of parents and turn it into anticipation. More than gender or age, this approach emphasises the role of culture: findings suggest that authority is a particularly important dimension of parental behaviour in collectivist cultures, such as Chinese, Mexican, etc. (Bush et al., 2002, 2004).

Another useful contribution of this approach to the debate is the distinction of parental authority types according to social bases of authority (Peterson & Hann, 1999; Peterson et al., 1999), which draws on French and Raven's (1959) classification of different forms of power. Peterson and Hann (1999, p. 338) distinguish between parental reward, coercive, legitimate, expert and referent forms of authority. Parental reward authority is defined as the perceived ability to provide gratifications as a means of influencing the child's behaviour. Parental coercive authority refers to the parents' perceived ability to bring about punishment or adverse consequences. Legitimate authority is defined as the perceived parental 'right' to exercise influence or to control circumstances based on social norms. Expert authority refers to the adolescents' perception of their parents as knowledgeable and reliable sources of information. Finally, referent authority indicates the perceived parental potential to serve as an identification object or significant other.

In our view, the use of the term authority in this classification seems most appropriate with regard to the last two categories: expert and reference

authority refer to a consolidated status that parents acquire for a certain practice over a certain time. For coercive authority and reward authority, which are more narrowly focused on specific situations, the term authority could be replaced by that of power. These two types refer to the perceived parental capacity to provide (negative and positive) sanctions as means of exerting influence; it is the parents' power to do this that is recognised, rather than their (stable) authority. The somewhat ambiguous use of the term authority becomes evident from the tautological notion of 'legitimate authority': parental authority is by definition legitimate if it is acknowledged by the child.

Despite the recognition of the importance of the child's perspective, this approach can be criticised for neglecting the dialogic dimension that parental authority can have. The importance of negotiation and reciprocity – in the sense of listening to each other and considering each other's positions – is not directly addressed. For instance, Peterson et al. (1985; Bush et al., 2004) actually distinguish between compliance as a more superficial form of following rules and the internalisation of parental values, beliefs and expectations. However, they do not discuss related behaviour and social actions of communication and negotiation. Rather than reconstructing the dynamics of parental authority, the discussion emphasises its 'outcome', presenting empirical evidence about effects such as the child's social competence (Henry, Wilson, & Peterson, 1989; Peterson et al., 1999) or self-esteem (Bush et al., 2004; Peterson et al., 1985).

Parental authority: a tentative conceptual proposition

Our review of four contemporary approaches from developmental psychology discussing issues of parenting indicates that despite the general trend towards more democratic family relationships, especially in Western societies, the relevance of parental authority has not disappeared. In our concluding remarks, we seek to synthesise some of the key features of parental authority indicated in these approaches into a tentative conceptual proposition.

First of all, parental authority is a product of family communication that is constantly *co-constructed* in the process of *interaction* between parents and children in a given socioeconomic context. Unlike power, which is associated with one-sided and situative demonstrations of assertiveness, parental authority is *relational* and requires the active participation of the child in order to become a legitimate and institutionalised aspect of everyday family life.

Although parental power is ultimately rooted in public regulations of family relations, its micro-social relevance is established through its reproduction and ratification in the *everyday practice* of family life by both parents and

children. Conceptually, parental *power* is little more than the promise inherent, for instance, in a trained muscle that *can* be activated. Parental *authority*, on the other hand, is more dynamic and refers to the shared family history. It is the *joint product of a coordination process* within the family, and it corresponds to common experiences that underline the mutual acknowledgement of each other's expectations, priorities and abilities to influence situations. While power is unilateral, authority requires mutuality.

Importantly, from the child's perspective, recognising authority does not automatically mean following it, and challenging authority – by testing limits, for example – does not mean denying it. The quality of parental authority always reflects the recognition of *filial authority* and the child's role in the formation of family relationships. In this way, the child's resistance to parental preferences is not understood as a threat to authority that needs to be overcome, but as a contribution to its ongoing development and revision. In order for parental authority to survive the early years of childhood dependence and into adolescence as a legitimate dimension of family relations, it needs to become part of the family routine of negotiating rules and contributions. The fact that the formally and legally subordinate party participates in the practice of parental authority indicates that parental authority refers to coagulated shared experience; it is the result of a process gradually consolidating out of the flow of family interactions. The social domains approach, in particular, emphasises the fact that features of social background and class translate differently into the way this internal dimension of legitimisation of parental authority is realised. Typical differences also exist with regard to parenting philosophies and approaches, or typical roles and behavioural patterns of parents and children.

Such a notion of parental authority is a key aspect of successful parenting, because education needs dialogue and a sense of each other's importance. At the same time, parental authority is *not an end in itself*. Ideally, its purpose is to increase the child's autonomy, which grows as authority matures and gradually fades into the background. Understood in this way, parental authority corresponds with contemporary parenting practices, as well as being closely connected with conceptual shifts in the communications and pedagogical literature. One example from communications literature is the widely recognised shift from the rather simplistic sender-receiver model towards a hermeneutic, relational, dialogic model of communication (e.g., Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2004). Similarly, in the pedagogical literature, the essentialist view of authority has been replaced by a relational one: while the former view tried to identify, for instance, the root of the teacher's authority (e.g., in his or her personality or greater intellectual or social power), the latter finds pedagogical authority

in the interconnectedness of the educator, the child and the wider social circumstances (Bingham, 2006; Pace & Hemmings, 2007; Harjunen, 2009, 2011; Kroflič, 2010).

Based on our review of selected developmental-psychological approaches, we suggest that parental authority is a complex, over-used and under-theorised concept. Although a tentative conceptualisation is possible, further conceptual work, and perhaps a review of additional approaches, is necessary in order to establish a general notion of parental authority. Against the background of our review, we believe that, in order to be useful for family, parenting and communication studies and to resolve conceptual contradictions and ambiguities, such a comprehensive concept of parental authority should not fall back behind the dimensions distinguished in the present study: its interactive co-construction and essentially relational character, its rootedness in everyday practice, and its internal and external legitimisation are key features for further theorising of parental authority, as well as for its empirical study.

Findings from research could be integrated into the revision and development of the concept, in turn improving its usefulness for research. A revised concept of parental authority would help to contextualise the significance of otherwise particularistic empirical findings for the assessment of the development of children and their relations with parents. Further research is also necessary to determine how to best use the concept. Such research could, for instance, indicate whether it could be measured explicitly in the sense of a construct, as Bush et al. (2004) suggest, as well as being used to differentiate collectivist and individualist countries, or to determine whether such a comprehensive concept of parental authority requires a fresh approach to research that involves new operationalisation.

In terms of practical work with families, a deeper understanding of the ambivalent facets and dynamics of parental authority would improve suitable forms of family counselling, prevention and therapy. Finally, the emphasis on mutually recognised authority, rather than one-sided power, in relationships between parents and children is transferable to other societal spheres where adults interact with young people. Further research needs to determine how dialogic competence rooted within the private sphere of the family could be addressed and further developed in the public sphere of schooling, or, in cases where it is lacking or underdeveloped, how its establishment could be facilitated. In the sense of self-evaluation, critical pedagogy will also ask how dialogic (or not) classroom authority of teachers is or should be in order to appropriately reflect trends towards democratisation within the family.

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Life-Cycle Thinking in Inquiry-Based Sustainability Education – Effects on Students’ Attitudes towards Chemistry and Environmental Literacy

MARIANNE JUNTUNEN*¹ AND MAIJA AKSELA²

∞ The aim of the present study is to improve the quality of students’ environmental literacy and sustainability education in chemistry teaching by combining the socio-scientific issue of life-cycle thinking with inquiry-based learning approaches. This case study presents results from an inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project: an interdisciplinary teaching model designed by chemistry teachers. The strength of the project is that upper-secondary students (N=105) are allowed to investigate the life cycle of an optional product based on their own interest. Student-centred teaching methods are suggested to promote the students’ interest in studying. The research question was: How does an inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project in chemistry education affect students’ chemistry attitudes and environmental literacy? The research methods used included surveys and semi-structured interviews. The study shows that the project positively affected students’ attitudes towards chemistry learning: they valued the independent and collaborative learning setting. The changes in the students’ environmental literacy were evident in their new realisations: they emphasised the importance of environmental protection and recycling, but perceived that changing their own behaviour is still difficult. The inquiry-based teaching of life-cycle thinking can be seen as an effective approach to more motivating and sustainable chemistry education. Further research should address the kinds of knowledge outcomes that this type of inquiry-based life-cycle teaching creates in students. Furthermore, other useful approaches to teaching sustainable development in chemistry lessons should be shared.

Keywords: Attitudes; Chemistry learning; Environmental literacy; Inquiry-based learning; Life-cycle thinking

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Življenjski krog izdelkov in učenje z raziskovanjem za trajnostni razvoj – vpliv na odnos učencev do kemije in okoljska pismenost

MARIANNE JUNTUNEN* AND MAIJA AKSELA

~ Cilj raziskave je izboljšanje kakovosti odnosa dijakov do kemije, njihove okoljske pismenosti in do trajnega izobraževanja s pomočjo združevanja socionaravoslovnih vsebin, tj. razmišljanja o življenjskem krogu izdelkov, in pristopov učenja z raziskovanjem. V tej študiji primera so predstavljeni izsledki projekta o učenju z raziskovanjem pri uporabi konteksta, povezanega z življenjskim krogom izdelkov. Projekt so kot interdisciplinarni model poučevanja oblikovali učitelji kemije. Njegova prednost je, da lahko srednješolci (N = 105) raziskujejo življenjski krog poljubnega predmeta oz. izdelka glede na želje ali interes, saj naj bi metode poučevanja, ki v središče postavljajo učenceve interese, spodbujale njihovo zanimanje za učenje neke vsebine. Raziskovalno vprašanje je bilo, kako pristop učenja z raziskovanjem z uporabo konteksta o življenjskem krogu izdelkov pri pouku kemije vpliva na odnos učencev do kemije in na njihovo okoljsko pismenost. Podatki so bili pridobljeni z anketiranjem in s polstrukturiranimi intervjuji. Študija je pokazala, da je učni pristop, uporabljen v projektu, pozitivno vplival na odnos dijakov do učenja kemije; pozitivno so ocenili individualno in sodelovalno učenje. Spremembe v okoljski pismenosti učencev so se kazale v tem, da so učenci poudarjali pomembnost varovanja okolja in recikliranja, vendar pa vplivi na spremembe njihovega ravnanja niso bili zaznani. Učenje z raziskovanjem z uporabo konteksta o življenjskem krogu izdelkov lahko učinkovito vpliva na motiviranost učencev in učne pristope v kemijskem izobraževanju, ki temeljijo na trajnostnem razvoju. V prihodnje bi bilo treba raziskati še vrste oblikovanega znanja, ki ga s tovrstnim izobraževanjem pridobijo dijaki ali učenci. Poleg tega pa bi morali uporabljati tudi druge pristope v poučevanju trajnostnega razvoja pri pouku kemije.

Ključne besede: odnosi; učenje kemije; okoljska pismenost; učenje z raziskovanjem; življenjski krog izdelka

Introduction

“I understood how much even a small thing, such as a simple newspaper, impacts on everything. It is simple to manufacture it but still it consumes a lot. So the importance of recycling is huge. I mean, you need to recycle, otherwise nothing makes sense.”

(a 15-year-old girl expressing her attitudes after the life-cycle project)

The rationale of the present design research is to improve Finnish students' attitudes and skills related to chemistry, sustainability and the materials of various products. The study addresses two separate concepts: chemistry attitudes and environmental literacy. The conclusion and discussion aim to determine the connection between these two concepts.

The research problem arises from the fact that throughout Europe the interest in key science subjects among young people has declined (Hofstein, Eilks, & Bybee, 2010; the Inter Academy Panel, 2010; Krapp & Prenzel, 2011; Osborne, 2003; Rocard, Csermely, Jorde, Lenzen, Walberg-Henriksson, & Hemmo, 2007; Vassiliou, 2011). As in other European countries, national studies in Finland have revealed that Finnish students particularly dislike chemistry (Kärnä, Hakonen, & Kuusela, 2012). The selection of topics and teaching methods are of key importance in supporting students' interest in studying science (Juuti, Lavonen, Uitto, & Byman, 2009; Mandler, Mamlok-Naaman, Blonder, Yayon, & Hofstein, 2012; Van Aalsvoort, 2004). Environmental and societal issues related to the daily lives of students can support their perception of the relevance of studying a certain subject (Mandler et al., 2012; Marks & Eilks, 2009; Van Aalsvoort, 2004; Yager, Lim, & Yager, 2006). In chemistry, Finnish students struggle the most with applied tasks related to various everyday materials (Kärnä, Hakonen, & Kuusela, 2012). In response to this challenge, the present study applies inquiry-based chemistry teaching of life-cycle thinking to the upper-secondary school level.

From an educational point of view, life-cycle thinking is a socio-scientific teaching approach, as it is an interdisciplinary science issue that is complex, contradictory and relevant to the daily lives of students (Kolsto, 2001; Oulton, Dillon, & Grace, 2004; Sadler, 2011). In terms of chemistry, it encompasses green chemistry and engineering (Anastas, & Lankey, 2000; Askham, 2011). Analysing the comprehensive life cycle of a product is in itself an advanced field of science that evaluates the environmental burden of a product, investigating a process or activity by quantifying the net flows of different chemicals, materials and energy (Blackburn & Payne, 2004). The assessment of resource use and

emissions, as well as their health impacts, enables improvements to be made in product life-cycle processes from an environmental perspective (Anastas & Lankey, 2000). Life-cycle thinking is a chemistry topic in the national standards of education in Finland (Ministry of Education, 2003, 2004).

Recently, the United Nations declared the years 2005–2014 the world decade on “Education for Sustainable Development” (UNESCO, 2009). The aim of this decade is to extend the ideal of sustainable development in all areas of education. Definitions of sustainability are widely discussed globally (Jerneck et al., 2011; Johnston, Everard, Santillo, & Robèrt, 2007). In Finland, however, it is a worrying and problematic fact that boys have more negative attitudes towards environmental protection than girls (Asunta, 2003; Kärnä et al., 2012; Saloranta & Uitto, 2010; Uitto et al., 2011). There is no doubt that future citizens must have the willingness and skills to act sustainably, whether in the role of a chemist, a consumer, a parent, a voter or a decision maker. Chemistry teaching can foster students’ views on science-based sustainability issues. By using relevant and contradictory socio-scientific issues, it is possible to support students’ understanding of how chemistry topics also reflect the moral, social and physical world around them (Holbrook, 2005; Zeidler, Sadler, Simmons, & Howes, 2005; Wilmes & Howarth, 2009).

The term ‘environmental literacy’ refers to the skills and motivation to work towards the resolution of environmental problems, and active involvement in working towards the maintenance of a dynamic equilibrium between the quality of life and the quality of the environment (Hsu & Roth, 1998). It is related to knowledge, affect, skills and behaviour on three levels: nominal, functional and operational competences (Roth, 1992). UNESCO includes knowledge, understanding, attitudes and active involvement in their environmental literacy-related statements (Marcinkowski, 1991). The applications and objectives of environmental literacy are cross-curricular and closely related to the objectives of ‘scientific literacy’ (Holbrook & Rannikmae, 2009; Simmons, 1989). In the present study, changes in students’ environmental literacy are assessed in terms of environmentally responsible attitudes and pro-environmental behaviour (Yavez, Goldman, & Peer, 2009; see also Erdogan, Marcinkowski, & Ok, 2009). The intention to act – in other words, pro-environmental behaviour – is a powerful predictor of responsible environmental behaviour (Hsu & Roth, 1998).

Combining life-cycle thinking and inquiry-based learning is a new approach to teaching chemistry. An inquiry-based learning setting was used because it had been shown to generate positive attitudes towards chemistry in students (Aksela, 2005; Gibson & Chase, 2002; Juuti et al., 2009; Minner, Levy, & Century, 2010; Rocard et al., 2007). Inquiry approaches place more of

the responsibility for the task on students (Colburn, 2000). They can support individual decision-making processes and provoke socio-scientific discussion about topics such as consumer products (Marks & Eilks, 2009). This learning setting is a new example of how to involve aspects of sustainability (Tundo et al., 2000) and ethics (Dondi, 2011; Zeidler et al., 2005) in chemistry lessons. Furthermore, this approach meets the goals of “education through science” thinking, as opposed to “education in science” thinking (see Holbrook & Ranikmae, 2007).

The research problem and the research question

Chemistry textbooks in Finland lack tasks related to life-cycle thinking and inquiry (Juntunen & Aksela, 2011). In order to support the work of teachers, in-service training courses about life-cycle thinking, inquiry-based teaching methods and sustainable development were arranged in Finland from 2010 to 2012. At these courses, a total of 20 chemistry teachers collaboratively developed new inquiry-based, life-cycle thinking teaching models for their own needs (Joyce & Weil, 1986; Juntunen & Aksela, in review). The present case study, which is part of a larger cyclic design research project (Edelson, 2002), investigates students’ perspectives on this novel teaching approach. In particular, the study investigates whether inquiry-based life-cycle teaching affects students’ attitudes to studying chemistry and to behaving in an environmentally sustainable way. The research question was: How does an inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project in chemistry education affect students’ chemistry attitudes and environmental literacy?

Method

Participants

The empirical research was conducted during the 2011–2012 school year in three schools in Southern Finland. The participants were 105 upper-secondary school students in the 9th year (14–15 years), 58 of whom were girls and 47 boys. Their chemistry teachers (N=3) tested the novel approach to teaching life-cycle thinking. A researcher visited the three schools before and after the life-cycle project work and collected and analysed all of the data used in this study. Among the volunteers, 27 students were randomly chosen for interviews, which were documented on audio recordings. All of the other data collected was in a written form in surveys. The language used in the intervention was Finnish, but all of the answers presented in the present paper have been translated into English.

Intervention

The intervention was a project work based on the inquiry-based, student-centred, social teaching model (see Colburn, 2000; Joyce & Weil, 1986). The aim of the project was for students in small teams to consider the pros and cons of the life-cycle of a product. The students chose the product according to their own interest. During the project, the students were involved in setting their own research questions, searching for information, discussing their findings in teams, reviewing the work of other teams, and presenting the results. After the project, the students had an opportunity to engage in debate about their views regarding the usefulness of products, responsibility and the individual's possibilities for action. The students collected data about raw materials, manufacturing processes and usage, as well as recycling and waste management. In cases where the team of students was particularly capable, their investigations also included elements such as precise information or estimates about the product's lifespan, footprints, health effects and environmental impacts. Depending on the teacher, the student group and the product of interest, the intervention took about 10–15 hours over a period of 2–3 weeks. The content of the work was up to the students themselves; thus they learned to take responsibility of their own learning. Throughout the project, the role of a teacher was that of a facilitator, supporting the students with ideas whenever they needed help or encouragement.

Research instruments

A summary of the research instruments of the study is presented in Table 1 and explained in more detail below. On order to improve the validity of the results, mixed-methods and researcher-triangulation were used. Here, researcher-triangulation means that another researcher independently conducted a similar analysis of all of the data in order to validate the same results.

Table 1. *Research Instruments*

	Chemistry Attitudes	Environmental Literacy
Before the intervention (pre)	Semi-structured interviews (Marks, Bertram, & Eilks, 2008)	A survey (Yavez et al., 2009), semi-structured interviews (Marks, Bertram, & Eilks, 2008)
After the intervention (post)	An open questionnaire (Eilks, 2005; Marks et al., 2008), a survey (Marks et al., 2008), semi-structured interviews (Marks, Bertram, & Eilks, 2008)	An open questionnaire (Eilks, 2005; Marks et al., 2008), a survey (Yavez et al., 2009), semi-structured interviews (Marks, Bertram, & Eilks, 2008)

The students' **chemistry attitudes** were measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative methods included pre-post semi-structured interviews (Marks, Bertram, & Eilks, 2008) and an open post-questionnaire (Eilks, 2005). A quarter of the students (N=27) were interviewed in groups of 4–5 students directly before and after the intervention. Semi-structured questions were modified from Marks et al. (2008) and are presented in Table 2. The analysis of the discussions was content driven (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2006), with students' answers being quantified according to their explicit expressions. The answers were classified in terms of:

- (1) the students' reflective expressions about the usefulness or non-usefulness of studying chemistry,
- (2) chemistry content.

Table 2. *Semi-structured questions in the interviews*

Pre-Discussions	Post-Discussions
(1) What is the main content you learned in your previous chemistry lessons?	(6) Why do you think all students must learn chemistry in school?
(2) What kind of working methods have you used in chemistry lessons before?	(7) How did this project work differ from the usual lessons?
(3) How does an average chemistry lesson take place?	(8) In your opinion, what are the main things you have learned?
(4) Did you learn something in your chemistry lessons that you can use at home or in your free time?	(9) In the last few weeks, you have learned a lot about life-cycle thinking. Does this make you think about products' life-cycles in your free time as well?
(5) What do you want from chemistry lessons?	(10) In the last few weeks, you have learned a lot about life-cycle thinking. Does this make you think about your behaviour as a consumer?
	(11) Do you think your behaviour could change due to life-cycle thinking and the project?

The four open written questions used after the intervention are presented in Table 3. The first three questions were the same as those of Eilks (2005), while the fourth question was added based on the pre-interviews (Marks et al., 2008). The answers (N=105) were content-analysed regarding how the students reflect the inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project overall, and whether they mention improvement in their communication abilities, cooperative skills and independent work (Eilks, 2005; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2006). The answers were classified as positive, neutral or negative. Positive expressions included statements such as "I liked it", "I loved the freedom and studying like this", "It was

fun”, “*Interesting to learn important things*” or “*Nice to be creative*”. Typical neutral answers included statements such as “*It was just a different method of studying*” or “*No opinion*”, while negative expressions were those such as “*The topic was boring*”, “*I prefer the ordinary lessons*”, “*Useless*” or “*Too much homework*”.

Table 3. *The written open post-questionnaire (Eilks, 2005; Marks et al., 2008)*

(1) What are the most important differences between this project and the chemistry lessons you normally have?
(2) What is your opinion on the approach based on your own questions and interest? What did you like the most about it, and what could be improved?
(3) Why do you think the teacher chose to use this approach for the last few lessons?
(4) What were the main things that you learned in this project?

The quantitative method to measure the students’ chemistry attitudes was a 5-point Likert survey (Marks et al., 2008) administered after the intervention. The questionnaire asked students for their opinions about the content (questions 39-42) and methods (questions 37, 38, 43) of the life-cycle project, as well as their reflections on it (questions 34, 35, 36 and 44). The answers (N=105) were analysed using basic statistical analysis. The questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1.

The students’ **environmental literacy** was measured both qualitatively and quantitatively. Qualitative methods included pre-post semi-structured interviews (Marks et al., 2008) and an open post-questionnaire (Eilks, 2005; Marks et al., 2008). A quarter of the students (N=27) were interviewed in groups of 4–5 students directly before and after the intervention. The interview questions are presented in Table 2. The analysis of the discussions was content driven (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2006). The students’ answers were quantified according to their explicit expressions. Statements expressing environmental literacy were searched for in the analysis, and responses were classified in terms of their reflective expressions about:

- (1) environmental and societal awareness,
- (2) contradictory and confusing aspects,
- (3) development of students’ life-cycle thinking skills, consumer behaviour and environmentally responsible behaviour.

The four open written questions – asked only after the project work – are presented in Table 3. The open answers (N=105) from the questionnaire regarding the students’ environmental literacy were reflected in the analysis of Eilks (2005) and Marks et al. (2008), as well as being content analysed (Tuomi

& Sarajärvi, 2006). The answers' content-driven categories related to environmental literacy were new thoughts and the importance of environmental protection and recycling.

Environmental literacy, in terms of environmental attitudes and pro-environmental behaviour, was studied quantitatively with a pre-post 5-point Likert survey (Yavez et al., 2009). The original questionnaire from Yavez, Goldman, and Peer (2009) was a 4-point survey with 43 questions. Of these, 32 were modified to meet the goals of the present study. The environmental knowledge section was not considered as a suitable measurement instrument of environmental literacy for the present rather unstructured inquiry-based life-cycle project. For this reason, and in order to limit the amount of data, this section was omitted. A question about eating vegetarian food was included because the topics of environmental activism were broadened from housing and consumption to include food consumption as well. The main components that make up an individual's environmental footprint can be divided into four areas: housing, food, transport and the consumables we buy (Calcott & Bull, 2007). Transportation was omitted from the present study. The environmental literacy survey used is presented in Appendix 2.

The quantitative answers of the students ($N=96$, because 9 of the 105 answers could not be used) were analysed with SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science, PASW Statistics 18) using basic statistical analysis, factor analysis and three-way ANOVA. It could have included three main effects, three two-way interactions and one three-way interaction, but here only the main effects (gender, pre/post, school) and the two-way interactions (between pre/post and gender or school) are of interest. Due to the fact that the reliabilities of the factor scores of the sum variables used by Yavez, Goldman, and Peer (2009) were weak (Cronbach's alpha between 0.49–0.82), factor analysis was used to obtain new factor scores, while the correlations of these scores to gender, school and pre/post-answers were investigated with three-way ANOVA. The extraction method was Principal Axis Factoring and the rotation method was Promax with Kaiser Normalisation. The pattern matrixes are shown in Tables 4 and 5. Questions 1–21 were iterated nine times. In order to create meaningful and reliable sum variables, a factor score limit of 0.4 was agreed upon amongst the researchers. Thus questions 1, 3, 4, 5 and 7 did not reliably fit into any sum variables and were omitted from subsequent analysis. New combinations of behaviour factor scores were named to measure *environmentally responsible behaviour in daily life* (questions 15, 18, 19, 20 and 21), *citizenship actions in nature* (questions 8, 11, 12, 16 and 17), *resource conserving actions for personal financial benefit* (questions 6, 9, 10 and 14) and *recycling efforts* (questions 2 and 13). The

attitude questions from 22 to 36 were iterated three times. Here, only question 22 was omitted, as its factor score was less than 0.4. The new sum variables were named as *importance of environmental education, legislation and enforcement as a tool for environmental management* (questions 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31 and 32) and *locus of control and value of the natural environment* (questions 23, 26, 29 and 33).

Table 4. *The pattern matrix^a of the factor scores for pre-environmental action questions from 1 to 21, of which the new factors were created using a limit of value 0.4*

	Factor				
	1	2	3	4	5
15	.618				
20	.551				
18	.549				
21	.486				
19	.481				
7	.360				
1	-.339		-.309		
16		.574			
17		.537			
11		.512			
8		.495			
12		-.476			
3		.381			
5		.293			
9			.678		
14			-.605		
10			.489		
6			-.406		
13				.734	
2				.667	
4					.703

Table 5. *The pattern matrix^a of the factor scores for the attitude questions from 22 to 33, of which the new factors were created using a limit of value 0.4*

	Factor	
	1	2
27	.667	
25	.653	
28	.635	
32	.630	
24	.593	
31	.568	
30	.524	
26		.714
33		.614
29		.436
23		.403
22	.302	-.303

Results

Chemistry attitudes

The students' chemistry attitudes developed in a positive direction. In the interviews conducted after the intervention, every single one of the students reflected the usefulness of studying chemistry by expressing how they learn beneficial things in chemistry. More than a third of them (N=11/27) mentioned the common knowledge role of chemistry literacy as being important to them. The content students described learning in chemistry switched from chemical presentations to substances in various products. In the four open written questions, students mentioned the improvement in their communicative abilities (half of the students, N=53/105), independent working (a third of the students, N=36/105) and cooperative skills (a seventh of the students, N=15/105). Overall, they reflected the inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project in a very positive way. Similarly, the survey showed that the study methods of the project appealed to both girls and boys, with girls rating the content of the project and the concept of life-cycle thinking more positively than boys.

A more detailed examination of the interviews' content analysis reveals that the students' reflective expressions about studying chemistry turned from non-usefulness to usefulness. Prior to the project, many students expressed cautious thoughts in the interviews: *"I've learned to be careful with substances"*, *"I'm afraid to apply chemistry in my free time"*, *"You can make holes in your skin"*. After the project, more than a third of the interviewed students (N=11/27) mentioned the common knowledge role of chemistry literacy. They again described a few dangers, such as toxics at home or unhealthy, nature-harming substances; however, all of them started to describe how they also learn beneficial things in chemistry: *"What you use... What the products include... So that you will not use it the wrong way... How it is produced... What saves the environment and what does not... Important for your future plans..."*. The content knowledge in the project was clearly more interesting to them because it was related to their daily-life and sustainability issues. Prior to the project, the students described the chemistry content knowledge they had learned as atoms, ions, molecular presentations, reactions or chemical symbols, and substances and their combination in their chemistry lessons. The only experimental work they remembered was *"elephant's toothpaste and liquorice"*. According to all of the students, the typical working method was writing and reading or doing assignments from books. They reported that a typical chemistry lesson involved *"doing some theory first"* and *"listening to your teachers rant"*, followed by talking, doing experiments and writing *"like crazy"* in a notebook. The students wanted

to have more experiments and less writing in their chemistry lessons. After the project, the content knowledge they mentioned was substances in various products. The students explained that they had learned about plastics in a computer mouse, substances of a circuit board, substances of an anti-ageing face cream, carbon fibres in an ice hockey stick, and chemicals in a lipstick. In comparison to ordinary chemistry lessons, the students described the life-cycle project as: *“More meaningful and free, nicer, and funnier”* and *“you could influence the methods of how to study, you learned better, it was not so boring”*. This was mainly because they had a chance to *“share opinions, cooperate, search the Internet and books, make phone calls”*. Students said: *“When you search for the information yourself... You choose... You find more diverse knowledge... You are responsible for your own actions... You do not need to only listen to ranting... You can do something yourself... You get straight feedback”*. One of the students described the project work: *“You yourself see the result of what you’ve managed to do... I mean, the ordinary weekly lessons don’t tell us everything. As you have to do everything yourself from the beginning to the end, you really see the result and how much you know about it after all – in comparison to only answering some questions in your notebook...”*. Thus the inquiry-based, independent and social learning setting undoubtedly motivated the students in studying chemistry.

The answers to the four open written questions in the survey are presented in Table 6. Content analysis of the answers shows that the students (N=105) reflected the inquiry-based life-cycle thinking project in a generally positive way (N=85/105), with girls being more positive than boys. Only a few students (N=7/105) had negative attitudes towards the project. They would have liked to have more time for their investigations. Also, open-ended assignment instruction caused some confusion, and students asked for more explicit guidelines. The improvement in communication abilities in environmental discourse was reflected by almost half of the students (N=53/105). They perceived improvements in their critical thinking skills: *“We can criticise the facts”*, *“Most of the information about the product manufacturing was hidden”*, *“We had a chance to state our opinion and hear those of others”*. Independent learning or working was mentioned in a positive way by about a third of the students (N=36/105): *“More free”*, *“Encouraged to search for information independently”*, *“You can investigate what you want”*, *“It is good to look at a subject from different perspectives and angles”*, *“Own work”*, *“You took responsibility for yourself”*, *“You could search for the information creatively”*. Cooperative skills were positively discussed by about every seventh student (N=15/105): *“The best thing was to work with a friend”*, *“You learned to cooperate”*, *“As you study together, you discuss your work and get different opinions about it”*, *“It was interesting to learn what other groups had*

learned". The inquiry-based, independent and social learning setting encouraged improvements in the students' communicative abilities, critical thinking skills and cooperative skills.

Table 6. *The results of the content analysis of written open answers*

Category, where an answer was classified	girls (N=58)	boys (N=47)
Independent learning	27	9
Cooperative learning	10	5
Communication abilities	31	22
Positive attitude in general towards the project	53	32
Neutral attitude in general towards the project	2	11
Negative attitude in general towards the project	3	4

The results of the quantitative survey (Appendix 1) are in line with the results from the interviews and open written questions. The students' opinions about life-cycle thinking, the content of the project and the study methods were statistically evaluated after the intervention. The means and standard deviations of the girls and boys are shown in Table 7. A response with the value 1 corresponds to "strongly disagree", while 5 means "strongly agree". The girls positively reflected product life-cycle thinking (questions 1, 2, 3 and 11, mean = 3.6) and the content of the project (questions 5, 6 and 10, mean 3.9), whereas the boys were neutral (both means = 3.0). The study methods appealed to both girls (questions 6, 7, 8 and 9, mean = 4.1) and boys (mean = 3.8).

Table 7. *The means and standard deviations of the girls and boys studied*

Project evaluation	Girls (N=58)		Boys (N=47)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Reflection	3.6	0.9	3.0	1.0
Content	3.9	0.9	3.0	1.1
Study methods	4.1	0.9	3.8	1.0

Environmental literacy

In the interviews held prior to the intervention, the students did not mention anything related to environmental literacy aspects. After the intervention, they positively reflected the development of their life-cycle thinking skills (N=13/27) and consumer behaviour (N=9/27). Nonetheless, almost half

of the students (N=12/27) did not think that the project had affected their own environmentally responsible behaviour. The majority of them did, however, think that this type of project could influence other young peoples' behaviour (N=17/27). In the four open written questions, almost every student (N=82/105) mentioned that the most important outcome for them was new ideas and realisations. In responding to the survey, they extensively expressed the importance of environmental protection or recycling. In the quantitative survey results, no significant ($p < 0.01$) differences in students' environmental attitudes or behaviour were noticed.

A more detailed examination of the interview answers reveals that students' environmental and societal awareness increased clearly, as the most important things the students said they had learned were societal: *"It is not just that the product is manufactured and used, but that it includes all forms and everything, transportation, paper work and cultivation... It made me think about what to buy and how you affect this system."* A third of the students (N=9/27) thought that the project influenced the depth of their life-cycle thinking and consumption habits to some extent: *"I try to save energy... I've started to think about my water consumption... You think what you waste and what you save."* Almost all of the students described the importance of recycling: *"If you do not recycle, what happens, it can take decades before it combusts... So the main point must have been that you have to recycle... We looked at the two ways – either to recycle or not – and there was a huge difference!"* The contradictory aspects that the students observed were in the limited openness of information, in health claims, or in the pros and cons of manufacturing processes in the countries of production. In terms of the development of life-cycle thinking skills, consumer behaviour and environmentally responsible behaviour, the results show that almost half of the students (N=12/27) stated that the life-cycle project did not make them think about their consumption habits or products' life-cycles during their free time: *"Not much... If you just buy from a shop you don't think about how it has affected the Earth or ended up here."* Mostly students were confused about the extensiveness of life-cycle thinking: *"I started to think about other products at home too, but then I couldn't. I didn't know what had really happened, so I let it be..."* Still, the majority of the students (N=17/27) believed that in general their behaviour, or that of other young people, could change because of school projects: *"If students discuss it themselves, it will matter... If parents tell their children to recycle they won't do it, but if it's their friend it affects them more... So the clever ones will learn it... If the project continued long enough, people would start to care more and more, even though there are always people who won't care"*. Some of the students were also sceptical: *"We are being raised to*

this easiness... It all comes from a shop, if you started to study it more, you would end up cultivating your own garden, its seeds and a cow to get fertilisers". The intervention caused reflective thinking about the individual's action skills and the life-cycles of products. A third of the students had positive thoughts about their own environmentally responsible behaviour. Almost half of them could not see any change in their own behaviour, but thought that this type of project could influence the behaviour of others.

The answers to the four open written questions in the survey supported the results of the interviews. Most students (N=82/105) wrote that the most important outcome for them was somehow new scientific thoughts about the world: *"Simple things are more complex than they look", "You need many things to manufacture even a small product" "I started to think about Earth issues."* The importance of environmental protection and recycling was extensively reflected: *"We discussed raw materials more than usual", "How many chemicals and how much hidden water the manufacturing of products consumes", "The life cycles of different products look alike", "I know better now how the birth of a product oppresses nature", "Too many things are being used, so we overload"*.

The quantitative survey results did not show any changes in students' environmental literacy in terms of attitudes or pro-environmental behaviour. Furthermore, the life-cycle project did not cause any significant ($p < 0.01$) pre/post differences in the results of the 5-point Likert survey (Appendix 2). In order to analyse the correlations of gender, school and pre/post answers to the environmental literacy sum factors, three-way ANOVA was used. The main effects (gender =sp, pre/post and school = koulu) and two of the two-way interactions (between pre/post and gender or school) were analysed. In factor 1 (questions 15, 18, 19, 20, 21), factor 2 (questions 8, 11, 12, 16, 17) and factor 5 (questions 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 31, 32), gender and school both had a significant main effect. In factor 6 (questions 23, 26, 29, 33), only gender had a significant main effect. In factor 3 (questions 6, 9, 10, 14) and factor 4 (questions 2, 13), there were no significant main effects. There were no significant two-way interaction effects in any of the factors, meaning there were no pre/post-effects related to gender or school. Along with gender, school culture and practice seemed to strongly influence the students' environmental literacy. The girls' behaviour and attitude scores in the survey were more environmentally responsible than those of the boys, both before and after the intervention. Furthermore, the students' environmental attitude scores were generally more positive than their pro-environmental behaviour scores. The reliabilities of the sum factors as Cronbach's alphas are shown in Table 8, which also shows the reliabilities for all behaviour questions (1–21) and for all attitude questions (22–33). The values are good enough to conclude

that the survey was consistent. This means that the differences appeared due to the students being different, not because of confusing or unclear questions.

Table 8. *The Cronbach's alphas for the sum factors*

factor 1 = Environmentally responsible behaviour in daily life	0.703
factor 2 = Citizenship action in nature	0.674
factor 3 = Resource conserving actions with personal financial benefit	0.091 *
factor 4 = Recycling efforts	0.651
factor 5 = Importance of environmental education, legislation and enforcement as a tool for environmental management	0.799
factor 6 = Locus of control and value of the natural environment	0.624
All behaviour questions	0.828
All attitude questions	0.789

* If question 6 is omitted, the Cronbach's alpha is 0.643.

Discussion and conclusions

The results indicate that inquiry-based life-cycle study has positive effects on students' attitudes towards chemistry and environmental literacy. The students valued the novel chemistry learning setting, which was very independent but still collaborative. The approach is a clear example of more motivating and sustainable chemistry education.

The results are in line with previous evidence. The low interest in studying chemistry (Kärnä et al., 2012) could be transformed into interest by using more relevant topics and teaching methods (see also Juuti et al., 2009 and Van Aalsvoort, 2004). According to the students, the sustainability aspects in the project motivated them to study. The environmental and societal issues related to the daily lives of the students increased their sense of the relevance of chemistry (see Mandler et al., 2012; Marks & Eilks, 2009; Van Aalsvoort, 2004; Yager et al., 2006). After the life-cycle project, many of the students started to see chemistry as a subject that supports general knowledge or general literacy. All of the students interviewed stated that they had learned beneficial things about substances and products in the chemistry lessons. They described the project as more meaningful and diverse than their ordinary chemistry lessons, which most often include only writing and listening to the teacher's lectures. Their previously cautious thoughts regarding using chemistry in their daily life became more environmentally orientated.

The inquiry-based learning methods employed generated positive chemistry attitudes in students, as was expected and previously observed (e.g., Aksela, 2005; Gibson & Chase, 2002; Juuti et al., 2009; Minner et al., 2010; Rocard et al., 2007). As in the findings of Juuti et al. (2009), girls liked the inquiry-based methods more than boys. Most students noticed improvement, especially in their communication abilities or critical thinking skills.

This type of studying clearly generates socio-scientific thinking and student-driven discussions in the classroom. The most important outcome of the project for the students was the new perspectives and realisations. A third of the students stated that the project had had an influence on the depth of their life-cycle thinking and consumption. However, many students were confused about the extensiveness of life-cycle thinking and saw contradictory aspects in the quality of information from different stakeholders. Although there was some scepticism, the majority of the students interviewed believed that in general their own behaviour, or that of other young people, could change due to this type of project. Almost all of the students addressed the importance of environmental protection, especially recycling. This is understandable, as recycling is generally the sustainability theme that students are the most familiar with (Asunta, 2003; Tung, Huang, & Kawata, 2002).

Even though expressions of environmental awareness and societal views increased significantly, quantitatively significant changes in environmentally oriented behaviour or attitudes were not induced. This may be due to the fact that changes in attitudes and behaviour are a personal, and often slow, process (Dwyer, Leeming, Cobern, Porter, & Jackson, 1993). Gender seemed to affect the students' environmental literacy significantly, as found in previous research (e.g., Bogner & Wiseman, 1999; Tikka, Kuitunen, & Tynys, 2000; Uitto, Juuti, Lavonen, Byman, & Meisalo, 2011), with girls scoring better than boys in this area. Generally, the students' environmental attitudes appeared to be more positive than their pro-environmental behaviour, which is also in line with earlier research (e.g., Erdogan & Ok, 2011).

The results are encouraging. The project was short, but it positively affected the students' chemistry attitudes and successfully planted the important seeds of environmental literacy. The students' new realisations indicate that their personal process of attitude and behavioural change has started. There were also significant differences between schools. For the teacher, it is motivating to know that school culture can affect students' environmental literacy (see Erdogan, Marcinkowski, & Ok, 2009).

To conclude, the results support the evidence that teaching life-cycle thinking using inquiry-based methods is a sound option for improving students'

chemistry attitudes and environmental literacy. It is an example of how to create a necessary, meaningful and interdisciplinary link between chemistry lessons, sustainability issues, ethics and the daily lives of students. More research is needed to investigate the kind of knowledge outcomes this type of teaching creates. In order to achieve the goals of sustainable development (UNESCO, 2009; Johnston, Everard, Santillo, & Robèrt, 2007), further research should also investigate the range of other advisable approaches that chemistry teachers use when teaching sustainable development. To change the world, education that genuinely changes behaviour should be found.

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Appendix 1. The attitude survey given to students after the intervention

How did you like the life-cycle project? (Mark the column that best describes your opinion with an “x”: strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree, strongly disagree)

1. The project made me think about my consumption habits.
2. I now consider products differently than before the project.
3. I understood what the discussion about increasing sustainability is about.
4. I liked the project because it did not only deal with ‘chemical content’.
5. I liked the project because it dealt with things that are interesting to me personally.
6. I liked the project because I got to work together with my classmates.
7. By using a range of methods, chemistry lessons become more interesting.
8. I did not like the project because I learned nothing from it.
9. I did not like the project because I had to read too much.
10. I did not like the project because it dealt too little with chemical content and experiments.
11. My view on products’ life-cycles did not change.

Appendix 2. The environmental literacy survey given to students before and after the intervention

How often do you conduct the following activities? (Mark the column that best describes your opinion with an “x”: always, very often, sometimes, very seldom, never)

1. Stay silent and indifferent with regard to environmental problems.
2. Bring newspapers, cans, etc. to recycling collection points.
3. Write messages to (social) media on environmental problems.
4. Throw beverage cans and bottles into mixed waste.
5. Re-use used writing paper as draft paper.
6. Use plastic bags only once.
7. Purchase ‘environmentally friendly’ products (such as: ecologically farmed food, products with recyclable packaging, economy size products).
8. Collect things that people have thrown away in public areas and dispose of them in rubbish bins.
9. Conserve energy by turning off lights and electric appliances when not in use.
10. Conserve water at home (close faucet when brushing teeth, washing dishes, etc.).

11. Comment to people who throw rubbish in a public place or damage the environment in any manner.
12. Leave rubbish (that people have thrown away) in the natural environment.
13. Dispose of used batteries in a proper collection container instead of a wastebasket.
14. Leave the TV on when I leave the room.
15. When I'm outside I notice the birds singing, animals and flowers.
16. Take part in campaigns for prevention of environmental damage (money collections, petitions, demonstrations, etc.).
17. I (or somebody in my family) belong to an environmental organisation.
18. Read articles on environmental issues in magazines and social media.
19. Watch programmes on nature and the environment on TV.
20. Make walks and trips in natural environments.
21. Eat vegetarian food.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements? (Mark the column that best describes your opinion with an "x": strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree, strongly disagree)

22. I can contribute to the quality of the environment through my personal behaviour.
23. There is no use in trying to influence my family or friends regarding environmental issues.
24. If I had more knowledge I would integrate environmental considerations into my daily habits.
25. It is everyone's responsibility to take care of the environment.
26. Even if I save water or energy or purchase environmentally friendly products, it won't make any difference because the influence of other people is too great.
27. It is important to study environmental subjects and values in school.
28. Environmental topics should get higher priority in teaching than they do at present.
29. It is humankind's right to exploit natural resources (wood, oil, minerals, etc.) according to their needs without restrictions.
30. Factories should be penalised for environmental damage.
31. Private people should be penalised for environmental damage.
32. Industry should be forced to reduce pollutant emissions, even if this entails higher consumer prices.
33. The value of living creatures in nature is determined solely by their use for humanity.

Biographical note

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Dewey, J. (2012). *The School and Society* [Šola in družba]. Afterword studies by Slavko Gaber and Ana Pešikan. Ljubljana: University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Education. 140 pp., ISBN 978-961-253-060-0.

Reviewed by BLAŽ ZABEL¹

Philosopher, psychologist and educator John Dewey (1859-1952) was one of the historically most influential figures in the philosophy and theory of education. Despite this fact, only three books of his large opus have been translated into Slovenian, with *The School and Society* being the only work from the field of educational sciences (the other two translated books are *A Common Faith* and *The Public and its Problems*). Consequently, the Slovenian edition of *The School and Society* does not strictly follow Dewey's original from 1900. The selection of texts and essays has been altered slightly in order to present his theoretical aspects of educational philosophy in a more complex and complete manner. For this purpose, the essays *My Pedagogic Creed* and *The Child and the Curriculum* have been added, as well as the first three chapters from the book *Experience and Education*. With this particular selection, the editor has brought together Dewey's early and later work, in order to present two major possible ways of understanding his writing, both of which are clearly presented in two afterword studies by Slavko Gaber and Ana Pešikan.

The most common understanding of Dewey's statements on educational philosophy is centred on his strong opposition to what he calls "traditional education" or "old education". In his opinion, the typical characteristics of such education, and consequently of the traditional school, are "passivity of attitude", "mechanical massing of children" and "uniformity of curriculum and method", all of which result from the fact that "the center of gravity is outside the child. It is in the teacher, the textbook, anywhere and everywhere you please except in the immediate instincts and activities of the child himself" (p. 30). What Dewey proposes is so-called "new education", writing: "It [new education] is a change, a revolution, not unlike that introduced by Copernicus when the astronomical center shifted from the earth to the sun. In this case the child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the center about which they are organized" (p. 31). It was this belief that mostly influenced later researchers and theorists of education, as Dewey's demand for a shift from the school to the child was, at that time, new and radical. This historical reception

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of his work was also influential for later interpretations.

However, it is possible to read Dewey's texts from a different perspective, taking into account his pragmatism and his philosophical analyses of experience. Although in the original work from 1900 this particular point might not be so clear, the Slovenian translation emphasises it with the three additional chapters from the book *Experience and Education*. In these chapters, Dewey clearly presents his pragmatist understanding of the experience on which his educational assertions are based. His argument derives from the traditional subject-object dichotomy. However, the relation between subject and object is, in his opinion, always an "interaction" (p. 93). "An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment" (p. 94). In other words, the subject and object are always in a dynamical relation: when the subject experiences an outside object, he/she perceives different information and (also through reflecting on this information) knowledge that changes him/her. In this way, the subject him/herself is changed by his/her experience of an object, since he/she has perceived knowledge by experiencing the object. But that is not all. Since the subject has changed, i.e., has learned something, he/she now possesses a new view of the object. Ergo, the experience is a reciprocal interaction between subject and object or, if we talk about school, between the child and his/her educational environment.

If we attempt to read Dewey's texts in this manner, the previous opposition between "old education", where the focus is outside the child, and "new education", where the focus is on the child, becomes much less of an opposition. This is also stressed by Dewey himself in the following words:

"Mankind likes to think in terms of extreme opposites. It is given to formulating its beliefs in terms of Either-Or, between which it recognizes no intermediate possibilities. [...] Educational philosophy is no exception. The history of educational theory is marked by opposition between the idea that education is development from within and that it is formation from without; [...] At present, the opposition, so far as practical affairs of the school are concerned, tends to take the form of contrast between traditional and progressive education" (p.79).

In his writing, Dewey attempts to reconcile the two extremes of this Either-Or opposition of traditional and progressive education. One attempt to achieve such unification is his philosophical theory of experience. As we have seen, every experience is a reciprocal interaction between a subject and an object. Absolute focus on the child is just as misleading as the idea that "the center

of gravity is [only] outside the child". Dewey is clear in this regard: "Too often it is assumed that attention can be given directly to any subject-matter, if only the proper will or disposition be at hand, failure being regarded as a sign of unwillingness or indocility" (p. 61). A teacher who focuses only on the child's motivation and attention, neglecting the importance of subject-matter, i.e., the curriculum, will fail in his/her attempt to educate. Experience always exists in a relation between the subject/child and the object/curriculum, which is why the process of education must be based on both poles: on the one hand, the child and, on the other, the subject-matter. This possible reading of Dewey's work is well illustrated in the afterword study by Slavko Gaber.

The translation of John Dewey's *The School and Society* represents the first book by this author in the field of educational science translated into Slovenian. This work is important for the study of the history of educational sciences – a field greatly influenced by the author – since the historical importance of John Dewey, with his critique of "old education" and his emphasis on the necessity of a shift in focus to the child, is well presented. Despite a gap of more than a century, many of the arguments used by Dewey are relevant and still in use today, a fact that is well illustrated by Ana Pešikan in the second afterword of the book. In this regard, this work fills a large deficit of educational science books available in Slovenian.

Furthermore, the texts and essays have been carefully selected to emphasise at least one other major possible reading, as is well presented in the afterword by Slavko Gaber. This view attempts to abandon the influences of the later historical reception of John Dewey, that is, the idea of "new education" and of the child as a centre of focus. Instead, it attempts to grasp the educational argument by reflecting on Dewey's pragmatism. The result is a more unified understanding of Either-Or positions that focus *either* on the child *or* on the curriculum. Following Dewey, the question "the child or the curriculum?" is misleading, as the child and the curriculum are not mutually exclusive. Educational science must thus take into consideration both the child and the curriculum. In this respect, John Dewey and his work *The School and Society* still tackle many of the questions most frequently present in contemporary theoretical disputes.

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