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Editorial

Preschool and elementary education constitutes a fundamental and propaedeutic stage of education within the whole structure of the school system. Children in early and middle childhood demonstrate particular flexibility and intensity of development in different spheres, susceptibility to personality changes and an enormous potential for acquiring and processing knowledge. The experiences gained in childhood are consolidated and generalized and also determine the course of development for many subsequent years. This constitutive “chapter” of individual’s life requires high quality education, competent teachers, optimal organizational, methodological and curricular solutions, systematic preparation for active participation in the real socio – cultural – informative world.

Elementary education is also a significant challenge from an individual and social perspective. Its current shape is determined on the one hand by the development of science, especially psychology, pedagogy and didactics, on the other hand, by the changing socio-cultural and political-economic reality. Therefore, elementary education should be now perceived in a multilevel, complex, multi-functional manner, taking into account many factors merging. On account of these dynamic changes and new knowledge, the rapid spread of technology and digitalization of society, it has to be assumed that the metamorphosis of ways of upbringing, learning and teaching in preschool and school is needed. A number of new opportunities offered by many fields of science should be considered. Effective learning can be ensured if modern education systems take into account innovative child developmental trends, transform their previous activities by restructuring diagnosis, objectives, methods, educational space and preparation of teachers to work with children, thus seizing new educational opportunities. The eight articles presented in this issue of our journal present the views of the scientific community on this matter.

Ewa Jagiełło, in her article *"A Pre-school Child of Initiative"*, covers issues concerning economic education. In the contemporary world, in which the ideas of promoting wise consumer attitude and financial education since the early age are gaining popularity, parents and teachers are responsible for promotion of economic ideas. However, according to the author, parents rarely communicate economic knowledge to their children, discuss financial instruments or teach responsibility for one's own actions. The author concludes that it is undoubtedly necessary to shape enterprising attitudes among children and teach them how to manage finance in a clever way.

The intention of Jolanta Karbowniczek, Beata Kucharska and Augustyn Okoński was to show the place of Sustainable Development in Polish education. In their article, *"Axiology and Moral Education for Sustainable Development in the Context of Surveys and Workshops Conducted in a Group of Students of Early and Pre-school Pedagogy in the State Higher Vocational School (PWSZ) in Chelm"*, the axiological and moral education perspective of Sustainable Development was underlined. The results of research and observations during the workshop activities and after them indicate the need to change the approach in the current teaching strategies at all levels of education. The authors state that the actual effects of this education will not be possible to achieve by focusing solely on the transfer of knowledge. They suggest that the effectiveness of the Education for Sustainable Development can be achieved through the development of curricula and the use of methods tackling specific problems and searching for possible solutions.

Elżbieta Płóciennik in the article *"The Development of Wisdom in the Context of the Polish Core Curriculum of Pre-school Education"* addresses issues concerning teaching for wisdom, which is still new and scientifically unexamined topic in the field of pedagogy. According to the author, in contemporary Polish schools teachers still focus mostly on the development of memory and the analytical skills necessary to remember and repeat information, which does not create conditions for the development of wisdom. The author states that teachers should be familiar with the principles of teaching for wisdom, and give the pupils the opportunity

to develop not only their knowledge and analytical intelligence, but also creative and practical intelligence, reflectiveness, ability to deal with various life and social situations, decision-making habits and ability to act in both their own and other people's best interests.

Anna Klim-Klimaszewska and Ewa Jagiełło in the article "*The Change in Approach to Preparing Children to Learn to Read and Write*" examine issues concerning innovative methods of teaching pre-school children. Due to the fact that one of the most important educational tasks of the kindergarten is preparing children for school, a readiness to learn to read and write must be shaped at the level of pre-school education. The authors present the natural language teaching method developed by Wenda Pye, in which learning process is accompanied by children's creative activity. In the conclusion of the precise description of the method, the authors underline that preschool literacy learning may be nice and easy and children can find a lot of joy in it, if the process is supported with children's activity and a passion for knowing.

Anna Szkolak in her article "*The Innovative Early Childhood Education Teacher – A Summary of Own Research*" addresses issues concerning the creative competences of the early childhood education teacher. The results obtained by the author showed that teachers are aware of the fact that creative competences are indispensable in their everyday work and significantly increase its effectiveness. The majority of respondents declared being engaged in searching, examining and experimenting, thus going off the beaten track when it comes to improving their teaching and training skills. But on the other hand, the teachers are not always ready to design their own curriculum or write individual educational projects. The author postulates that teachers will need to continue to experiment and test alternatives to see what is effective in the situation in which there is no one right way for helping young children achieve their creative potential.

Martin Kaleja and Eva Zezulková in their article "*Preparedness of Czech Primary School Teachers for Inclusive Primary Education*" describe current transformations in the Czech education system and the (un)preparedness of primary school teachers for designing school inclusion in a practical

sense. The authors outline the barriers in the education of children with special educational needs within the environment, family and school (with emphasis on the teachers) and educational and upbringing process. According to the authors, the preparedness of the teacher in terms of formal requirements is usually fulfilled by necessary qualifications, but subjectively perceived preparedness of teachers for the inclusive education is low.

For readers from the circle of Western culture, two articles by authors from Ethiopia may prove to be especially interesting. In the first one, *"The Practices and Challenges of Kindergarten Education in Addis Ababa City Administration: Ethiopia"* Sisay Awgichew Wondemetegge describes the educational reality in this African country. The author precisely details the deficiencies of kindergarten education in his country and their effects on children's interest towards learning and schooling, mental developmental needs, physical development and social development. The author is also trying to formulate recommendations for potential improvement, based on the collaborative work of parents, investors, colleges, government, non-governmental organizations, educational experts and the media.

In the article by Sisay Awgichew, Anwar Ahmed and Tamrat Zelalem *"The Role of the 'Post Graduate Diploma in Secondary School Teaching' Program in Improving the Quality of Teaching in Eastern Ethiopian Secondary Schools"* the authors assess the quality of teaching in Ethiopian schools. The results of the research showed that teachers, in their own opinions, were implementing several classroom activities into their work in order to make use of pupils' knowledge and skills and their subject matter knowledge was good. The observations conducted by the researchers showed instead that teaching was dominated by traditional methods, in which students were passive, less confident, unreflective and poorly motivated to enjoy learning. Therefore, the researchers suggest that continuous training to secondary school teachers about active and constructivist methods of teaching should be provided.

A brief overview of all of the articles in this issue shows the variety of exploration directions within the field of preschool and elementary school education. The authors of these articles take up and analyze different aspects of the subject matter focusing on the child, teacher, orga-

nizational settings, or cultural specificity of the early education. What they have in common, however, is that all are in the pursuit of better knowledge as to how to make early education more effective, meaningful and better adapted to the challenges of the contemporary world.

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Articles

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A Pre-School Child of Initiative

Abstract: In the 21st century such words as saving money, financing and electronic money are very popular. It is difficult to discuss about functioning in the society without the ability to efficient movement in the field of finances. The need to propagate financial education since the early age is gaining popularity. This is strictly connected with the development of a wise consumer's attitude and the ability to manage in various financial situations, as well as passing respect towards money among small children. Both parents and teachers are responsible for promotion of economic ideas. Knowledge gained by children within every day's life is the source of information for forming financial programs. Children accompany their parents during visits at a bank, shop, post office and other institutions offering financial services. A pre- school child should not only know where such places are and how they look like, but also their duties and the basic rules of functioning.

The following article has been devoted to such subject matter. It presents the list of words which are commonly used by children at the age of four or five. To collect the base of the words the method of brainstorm was used and the map of thoughts was created. Finally, the list of the subject matters within financial education for children of the pre-school age has been elaborated.

Keywords: children, economic education, financial program, financial education, financial traps, financial language

Introduction

Every man can spend money and buy the things he needs, or he does not need, from a very young age. No sophisticated training or courses are required. One day, he discovers that he cannot buy everything and has to choose from the things he would like to have. He finds the obligation to choose every day. The perfect first teachers are the parents, grandparents, and older siblings – their behavioural patterns shape the enterprising attitude in children. If an older brother or sister has their own bank account, even a 4-year-old brother knows what it is, what purpose it serves and how to use it. In the case of the parents who save, either out of habit or tradition, they communicate their skills and experience to their offspring, e.g. by opening a deposit account with the money collected at the child's first birthday. Undoubtedly, the theoretical and practical preparation of young people to take accurate economic decisions is a way to cope with difficulties at the job market and offers an opportunity to achieve financial success, which affects one's personal life. When creating enterprising attitudes and behaviours one should be driven by more than just an individual aspect – it should have an all-social dimension.

Here, it is worth giving some thought to the competence of the coordinators of the little citizen. Can they plan and control their spending, save, or use financial tools offered by financial institutions themselves? In fact, economics is commonly considered boring and incomprehensible, or science reserved for the chosen ones. Those who do know it are able to "put others under a spell" to come up with wicked plans, something of the "abracadabra", "hocus-pocus" or "hey presto" sort. And only an outstanding event, such as no financial means to pay off a debt or a court enforcement officer knocking at the door, would free one from this world of illusion and magic.

In order to present the wisdom and state of consciousness of the mentors who shape economic attitudes and behaviours in children, it is worth referring to research studies conducted in July and August of 2013 and February 2014 by TNS Polska. Two independent reports which were

to obtain opinions regarding financial competence of the Poles revealed that the opinions issued by bankers and those of a sample of Poles were contradictory. To the question: "In your opinion, what do Poles know about finances?", more than half of the respondents (57%) replied that they know how to manage household budget, and 30% – where to seek financial advice. Furthermore, 28% of the polled know when taking out a loan is beneficial, whereas 27% know what to do when they have difficulties paying the bills or repaying debts. Further 26% admit they are familiar with reading the provisions of a financial-type agreement, while 24% of the studied subjects confirm they analyse the terms and costs of the loans. 16% declare they lack the ability to read their level of knowledge, and 4% claim their knowledge is either insignificant or none. The remaining 1% submitted other answers (TNS Polska, 2013).

The actual state of competence of adult Poles was not reflected in the opinions of bankers. When answering the question: "How would you evaluate financial competence (i.e. knowledge and skills with regards to personal finances) of bank services users?", 14% of the bankers stated their customers' competence was at a high level. The majority of the polled, i.e. 62%, evaluated the level of customers' knowledge as average. Almost every fifth employee said that the level of knowledge is rather low. Merely 1% of the subjects described people coming to the bank as laymen in the field of finance.

And what about saving up by Poles? The issue became the object of research of the Kronenberg Foundation in 2013.

The majority of the respondents expressed their approval of the need to save on a regular basis, and at the same time more than half declared that they spend all their income on day-to-day needs.

Planning one's expenses and saving up are closely related to what one is saving for. Typically, the Poles save up for small pleasures or holidays, then the third in the list is securing one's future or the future of one's children. Next come those who do not have a specific aim in mind. Unfortunately, in 2013 only 6% of the Poles invested their financial surplus. The percentage shrank in comparison with the year before, which is a source of apprehension in the financial sphere. It appears that more

and more adults do not have any surplus funds as they are not able to generate them / www.citibank.pl/. Therefore, the habit of saving does not become a tradition and thus is not communicated to the young. Banks meet us halfway by offering various forms of savings to younger and younger citizens, such as PKO Junior – an interesting proposition for children under the age of 13.

As stated previously, an essential factor affecting the state of knowledge of the young generation is the aptitude of the adults around them to use financial instruments. Economic socialisation begins very early in life. At first, it has a primary nature, then – a secondary one. At the beginning, we learn from the older ones, we copy their actions, and next, we do so empirically, from our own experience. Research shows that Poles are not really interested in professional advice but rather trust their own intuition and experience or information obtained from friends (family). Approximately 15% of the respondent use the television, radio, Internet or press advice. There are also those who avail of knowledge gained at universities or other educational institutions /www.citibank.pl/. Thus, one may conclude that the majority of the Polish society models their economic attitude in an infantile manner, regardless of one's profession.

Methodology of research

The reason behind choosing the issue was the desire to present the essential knowledge of the little child with regard to economic terms, and to demonstrate the richness and abundance of vocabulary in the field gained from everyday life experience.

When commencing research into the financial language of pre-school children, the theoretical assumption was that pre-school children enrich their range of vocabulary in a spontaneous way, unaware, using everyday observations and knowledge communicated to them by the people they coexist with.

In the study, the brainstorming technique originating from heuristic methods was used. As a result of the employed method, brain maps

could be created. The technique applied is an accepted and popular way of gathering information for analyses and allows one to engage in a casual discussion with respondents. It activates intuition thanks to the employment of synergistic cooperation between both cerebral hemispheres. It served as a means of ordering knowledge, defining terms and colloquial expressions. The brainstorming technique was used for 9 topics, as a result of which 9 mind maps were drafted.

Analysis of study outcomes

The research sample comprised pre-school children: four and five-year-olds from the Siedlce city area. Here, it is worth to note that the period of intellectual and social development of the study subjects, according to Piaget's theory, is in the second stage, i.e. preoperative. At the beginning, when thinking and communicating the child uses symbols only. Only later is it able to avail of logic and see something from the point of view of another.

The research was carried out in the early morning hours in the kindergartens.

Hereinbelow, the words – associations – used by children are presented in a table format. On the basis of these we can see how children perceive and understand basic economic issues and interpret everyday economic behaviour.

Table 1. Money

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	piggy bank, adults, toys, small change, pile, bag, treasure, shop, sweets, parents, shopping, wallet, rich, poor, find, lose, job, gold, thief, grosz, Biedronka
2.	5-year-olds	round money, paper money, cash, from: mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, bank, ATM, luck, phone, fortune, rich, happiness, health, shopping, wallet, holidays, poor, sickness (lack of money), tickets, swimming-pool, shop, market, toys, card, presents, TIR, job, 10 zlotys, clothes, Lotto, euro, "Time is money", gaming machines, piggy bank, science, a dream come true, present, coins, banknotes, rich, poor, change, bills, shop, supermarket

The polled 4-year-olds can differentiate between the coins and banknotes – the former are “small change”, and the latter are a “pile”. They understand that money has its position, hence, it should be put in a wallet, inside a bag, and protected from thieves. Children associate money with an adult person because they receive them on their birthdays, holidays etc. or as a gratification (e.g. when they behave well, help).

The analysed 5-year-olds use the following terms: a coin and a banknote. They know that in addition to cash there is also electronic money used in transactions: “My parents pay with a card”. They begin to distinguish between the value of coins and understand that money is a means of exchange in sale/purchase transactions. The analysed children know that euro is used in the neighbouring states. They specify the source of money in the following fashion: mom, dad, grandma, grandpa, bank, ATM, phone, fortune, TIR, job, 10 zlotys, Lotto, gaming machines. One example would be short statements issued by the children: “Money is in the bank”, “You need to insert the card into ATM and press”, “Money can be won in Lotto”, “Money is from the gaming machines”.

Table 2. Shop

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	shopping, shopping bag, table, scales, weighing, baker, tractor, TIR lorry, toy, products: vegetables, fruit and candies, stores, money: paper, small and big, shopping basket, conveyor belt, shop assistant, delivery van, ladder, loyalty card, bag, special offer/promotion, shopping bag
2.	5-year-olds	camera, toys, food, clothes, car park, line, cash register, wallet, shopping trolley, shopping basket (to carry, with wheels, big), car, scales, shopping bag, shop assistant, conveyor belt, counter, shelves, receipt, product price, amount to pay, small shop, self-service store, packing the bags, greeting: good morning, good bye, Biedronka, Topaz, Kaufland, Carrefour, goods, wholesale outlet, grocery, greengrocery, credit cards, paper money, coins, change, line, shopping list, car park, shopping bag

The children in both age groups are able to specify the purpose of the shop. Some of them know the equipment in stores; they associate a shop assistant with a female. They know that one needs to pay for

goods and in return s/he receives a receipt. They distinguish basic types of shops. Five-year-olds use the names of supermarkets, they begin to understand correctly the system of supplying goods to the shop. They see that products feature various prices. In addition, they have much insight into how to behave in a shop; they can use polite phrases.

Table 3. Wholesale outlet

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	5-year-olds	packages, warehouseman, camera, security guard, large building, money, forklift truck, many different products, large car, bodyguard, delivery van, baskets, debit card, goods, cash register, forklift track (to carry heavy stuff), ladder, high shelves, a lot of various things, man putting the goods, shopping, large store, warehouse

The analysed children do not know what a wholesale outlet is and what role it plays in the economic structure. Only three out of all children had some limited knowledge in the field. The respondents have never been to a wholesale outlet, have not seen any movies or picture of it. In the case of the three children (ca. 0.03% of the total number of the study group), their parents work in a wholesale outlet (two children) or are the owners (one child). It can be assumed, that only those 5-year-olds empirically accumulated a rich vocabulary and they can see a relation between the wholesale outlet and the shop. They know the principles of wholesale system operation, which for the remaining subjects was not obvious.

Table 4. Special offer/Promotion

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	toys, commercial, Biedronka, sweets, leaflet, TV, flipping through channels, cheating people, in the letter box instead of bills, advertisement, people on TV talking about sweets and beer, at dad's work, computer, on the radio, in the posters, in promotional magazines
2.	5-year-olds	between cartoons, cool stuff, something colourful, toys, you have to work hard to get a toy, sweets, TV, billboards at the side of the road, nice ladies, models, leaflets, promotional magazines, radio, computer, Internet, channels, sales, price reduction, actors

Having analysed the results, we can state that four- and five-year-old children know the mechanisms of promotional tools operation. The basic source of information are commercials and advertisements. Older children are aware of the fact that a special offer or promotion is connected with a price reduction. The information in question is communication by various visual and verbal techniques: promotional magazines, posters, moving pictures, puns.

Table 5. Bank

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	building, saving, thief, ATM, money, bank counter, lady working in the bank, job, the machine money come out of, plants, you cannot take somebody's money, you cannot throw toys, you cannot eat, you cannot buy toys, toys are not rented, money are rented, many ladies, exchanging money, card
2.	5-year-olds	building, ATM, cash register, phone, play corner, game, ATM card, computer, money, safe, commercial, drawer, job, policeman, counter, code, alarm, debit card, credit card, line, bank's building has a name on it, lots of computers and desks, you need to fill in a form, submit one's PIN number and a card, money withdrawal, PIN, you may pay for various things, insurance, camera, per cent, cheque, account, accounts, loan, transfers, coins, banknotes, cashier, overdraft, deposit account, credit, gold, security guard, interest

Four-year-olds know that there is such an institution as a bank. They go to banks together with their parents and can partly specify its purpose and functions. Whereas, five-year-olds begin to use a more complex vocabulary, such as: loan, insurance, transfers, overdraft, but they are not 100% sure what they are and what they are used for.

Table 6. Where do adults get money from?

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	from work, mom makes clothes, dad sells pipes, dad drives a car, you tap on a machine and there are coins, people take money from ATMs, from a wallet, from a bank
2.	5-year-olds	work, dad goes abroad, dad puts goods on the shelves, mom sells furniture, dad has a fishing store, dad works in a garden plot, dad drives a tractor, inheritance, credit, loan, present, scholarship, winnings, account

Not all four-year-olds can see the usual sources of money; some of them claim that “people take it from ATMs”, others that “from a wallet”. It is similar to the polled five-year-olds, in some children we can notice a full comprehension of the money-work sources. Besides, they indicate other sources: inheritance, scholarship, winnings.

Table 7. How can children earn money?

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	mom will give me, I will go to grandma, help grandma, have a birthday party, clear off the snow, water the plants, to dust, to vacuum, wash the floor, give dad a kiss, give mom a flower, hug your mom, when a parent loses a coin and a child find it, I can put hard money into the piggy bank and then take it out
2.	5-year-olds	sell something unnecessary, help with housework, tooth fairy, fruit picking, taking care of younger sister or brother, collecting scattered money, birthday, helping adults e.g. with cooking dinner, fixing the tap, building an igloo, washing the car, planting flowers

The most frequent sources of income are parents and relatives. Younger children associate work with receiving. Older children, on the other hand, use words describing relations between performing an activity and receiving payment in return.

Table 8. Poor man

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	has no money, no job, no house, ugly clothes, has debts, collects trash, has a beard, is skinny, is alone, has no money, has no friends, tinned food, ugly toys, sad, cries, collects tins, has no parents, gold, bank at home, many friends, fly by plane, has a castle, has many houses, lady wearing a fur coat, with a dog
2.	5-year-olds	little money, unhappy, sad, ugly house, no house (homeless), ugly clothes, Cinderella, "a person who cannot buy anything", "goes through the trash, smells bad", "has a pot you put money in", drunk, has nothing to eat, sleeps on a bench, dirty, begs in the street, cold, in need, skinny, has no teeth, poor family, theft, hunger, rags, skinny

Table 9. Rich man

Item	AGE OF CHILDREN	WORDS AND EXPRESSIONS USED BY CHILDREN
1.	4-year-olds	lots of money, fast car, big house, swimming-pool, works all the time, lacks time, nice toys, nice clothes, nice garden, fat, treasure
2.	5-year-olds	lots of money, happy, large house, swimming-pool, food, buys a lot of things, nice car, buys expensive things, jolly, puts money into tins and gets a heart, clean, lots of toys, nice clothes, villa, limousine, many friends, has a good job, has a factory

The interpretation of poverty and wealth by both age groups is connected with one's external image and financial condition. In the eyes of the polled, a poor man is a person without money, sad, with bad habits, and badly clothed. In the case of poverty, the children indicate lack of job and low income. The rich people display contrasting features. The children do not relate social status to deeper values, such as knowledge.

Conclusions

To conclude the above, we may say that children do not speak a high level financial language. The words they apply are limited to everyday use vocabulary. If the same terms are found in the theory of economics, typically, they are seen quite differently and in a simpler way. Children's knowledge is not systematised but rather constructed on the basis of overheard popular information. The list of words presented in the tables above allow us to state that it becomes longer, year by year. The dynamic nature of the economy requires constant analysis. Current research proves that it is a window on the world; one cannot separate from it. It gives us an opportunity to have a better job and avoid financial traps.

The duty to shape enterprising attitudes and to manage finance in a clever way is primarily that of the parents. Nevertheless, few of them communicate economic knowledge to their children, discuss financial instruments or teach responsibility for one's own actions on a regular basis.

The countering of financial exclusion has become a challenge for numerous state institutions and non-governmental organisations which implement long-term economic policies with regards to the Polish society, for instance *Narodowy Bank Polski* (National Bank of Poland) <www.nbp.pl/edukacja/> or *Forum Obywatelskiego Rozwoju* (Civic Development Forum). The coordination of concepts in the area of financial education is, in turn, the task of the Ministry of Finance.

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Axiology and Moral Education for Sustainable Development in the Context of Surveys and Workshops Conducted in a Group of Students of Early and Pre-School Pedagogy in the State Higher Vocational School (PWSZ) in Chełm

Abstract: This article aims at examining to what extent Macer's theory "sustainable development chair" (where cultural education, and the axiology and moral education within it comprises one of four fundamentals of education for sustainable development) is reflected in the capacity of knowledge and skills obtained by pedagogy students PWSZ in Chełm. The starting point for consideration is to present and analyse the questionnaire results carried out by students of the 1st and 3rd year of pedagogy PWSZ in Chełm. These results became the basis for the following workshop activities performed with the drama method application (covering those such as improvisation with the literary text, body movement and voice performance, role play).

The authors intended, first of all, to assess students' integrated order concept understanding (and within this concept: axiology and moral education) implemented with traditional instructional methods, and then innovative (drama and staging ones); secondly, to obtain materials enabling the most effective methods of education for balanced development implementation to be defined. An additive element of conducted activities was the analysis of potential students' engagement into a new idea implementation.

Key words: sustainable development, education towards change, axiology, moral education

Introduction

The intention of the authors of this article is to show the place of Sustainable Development (SD) in Polish education. It is also an attempt to examine the extent to which this subject is close to the students of early and preschool education of the PWSZ School in Chelm. For this purpose, a survey and evaluation research were conducted during drama workshops basing on the texts of children's literature, representative to the particular areas of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Practical verification through bibliotherapy and drama of the knowledge and skills of students as future teachers of the 1st level of education was an important element of research for the authors, revealing not only the interpretation of Sustainable Development issues, but mainly the level of expectations as to the place of axiology and moral education in the context of Education for Sustainable Development.

Education for Sustainable Development in Poland in years 1996–2014

The conference in Rio de Janeiro "Environment and Development" in 1992 can be considered as the beginning of the interest of the world in the idea of Sustainable Development. The event, due to the presence of representatives of up to 179 countries, gained the title of "Earth Summit". The message from the Rio Conference was that both rich and poor countries have their different environmental problems and that in many cases unsustainable development is a result of people's ideas about lifestyles. Problems and conflicts are not always locally visible but are often based on a combination of local and global agreements and requirements (*Education For Change*, Mendel and others, 2006).

Sustainable Development (SD) is aimed at improving the quality of life of society and economic development while fostering the protection of the environment and natural resources of the Earth. This concept involves international cooperation within the major areas of human life, the society, economy and ecology (Karbowiczek, 2013).

As a result of this conference, the participating countries have accepted documents, recommending the implementation of the concept of Sustainable Development (SD). For example – in Poland, such recommendations have appeared in most of the documents relating to the protection of the environment and the Polish Constitution (Ch. I, Article 5: “The Republic of Poland (...) ensure the protection of the environment, guided by the principle of sustainable development”) [Constitution of the Republic of Poland]. The years 2004–2014 were referred to as the “Decade of Sustainable Development” (Borys, 2006; Tuszyńska, 2006; Kalinowska, 2011).

The UNESCO report, summarising the first five years of the progress and implementation of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) (2005–2014), drew attention to the fact that a variety of approaches to this concept is determined by the conditions and challenges of a country or region. Education for Sustainable Development is defined according to the UNESCO report as a realisation of the following teaching objectives:

1. Raising awareness on the relationship of cultural, social, economic and environmental issues.
2. Developing the skills necessary to improve the environment at local and global levels.
3. Shaping the attitude of care and concern for the quality of the environment, understood as: nature, society, and the products of individuals, groups and societies (Delors, 1998).

The latest Polish state document on Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is the “National Strategy for Environmental Education through Education for Sustainable Development”, which in 2012, from

the initiative of the Ministry of the Environment (Department of Environmental Information) became the basis for the work on the expertise of the situation of Polish ESD (Niewinowski, 2012).

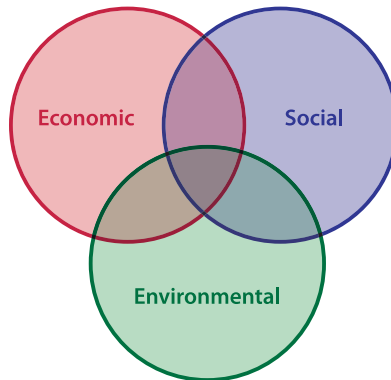
Poland's "Sustainable Development Strategy to 2025" relating to the curriculum assumes that:

1. Students at almost every level of education have the opportunity to learn about issues related to climate, biodiversity and water.
2. To a lesser extent questions concerning the condition and protection of the environment, ecology, agriculture and forestry are discussed.
3. The energy, disasters and sustainable urbanization issues are discussed to a small extent.

The most common model of Education for Sustainable Development is the separation of content into the economics, environment and society issues (Fig. 1).

There are also models available reflecting four dimensions, including the Culture one.

**Fig. 1. The sustainable development has three fundaments:
Environmental, Economy and Social**



The diagram shows that everything happens within the “ecosphere” – the common area of three fields – sustainable environment, economy and society. This way of presenting the SD issue turned out to be insufficient, especially when it comes to education within the field of society that was too broad and vague at the same time (Guzowska, Kucharska and others, 2014).

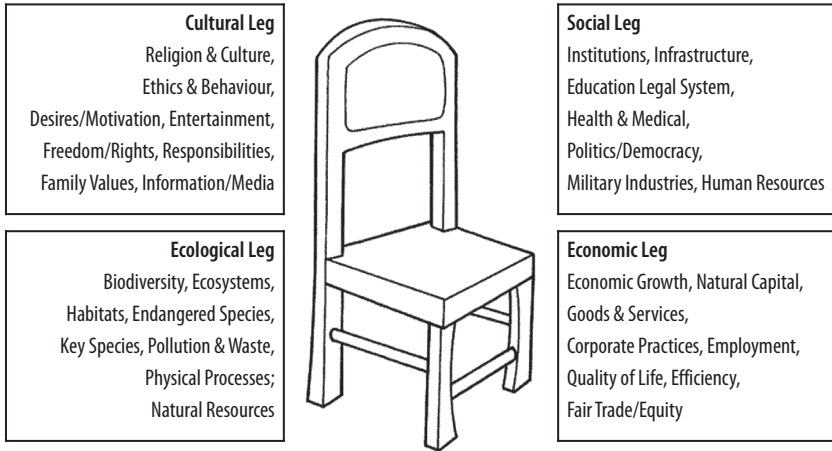
The Chair of Sustainable Development

Hence, the idea of the “chair of sustainable development” of Macer (in 2004 year) developed, according to which the contents have been included in the four areas, so-called, support: 1) economic – economic growth, natural capital, goods and services, business practices, employment, quality of life, productivity; 2) social – institutions, infrastructure, education, law, health policy, democracy, the arms industry, human resources; 3) cultural – religion and culture, ethics and behaviour, desires /motivation, entertainment, rights/freedoms, duties/responsibilities, family values, media; 4) organic – biodiversity, ecosystems and their inhabitants, endangered species, keystone species, pollution and waste, ecological processes, natural resources (Tuszyńska, 2006; Bator, 2010).

Sustainability has to be integrated, which means that it should be broad and all-inclusive. “The Chair of Sustainable Development” of Macer (in 2004) is a handy comparison that aids both memory and understanding.

This chair of sustainable development has four connected ‘legs’ of sustainability and all four legs have to be included in policy and management for sustainable development. If one leg is over-emphasised, such as the “economic leg” or “cultural leg”, the chair will be unstable and uncomfortable. The figure below indicates what the cultural, social, ecological and economic “legs” of the chair represent (Education For Change, 2006):

Fig. 2. The Chair of Sustainable Development, Macer (EduC, 2006)



What do pedagogy students of PWSZ in Chelm know about ESD?

Since the 1990s the attempts have been made to implement the principles of Sustainable Development to Polish education within the teaching content (mainly the ecology programs) and to involve students in a range of ecological and cultural activities. The students researched (mostly aged from 20 to 25 years) are already the next generation, which should be brought up in the spirit of Sustainable Development. Does it correspond with the reality?

Research participants and methodology – part one

The study was conducted in a group of 48 students of the first and third year of preschool and early education of PWSZ in Chelm – 46 women and 2 men with secondary education (only 1 person with higher), mainly from rural areas and small towns (36 people from villages and 12 from cities). The questionnaire was divided into four parts: the 1st – included understanding the concept of Education for Sustainable Development,

2nd – problem of the perception of sustainable development principles in public life and the desire to be involved in its implementation on the part of the respondents (PWSZ students), 3rd – axiology and moral education, and the 4th – the tasks for the drama workshops in the context of moral education as an important support of the “chair of sustainable development” according to Macer’s taxonomy.

With the first part of the questionnaire concerning the need for clarification of abbreviations and terms like: Education for Sustainable Development and ESD, Education towards changes and EduC, most students (85% of respondents) had a problem. Among the responses dominated such ideas as “it’s an education that will teach according to the needs of the labour market”, “introducing a man to the world of human values”, “education towards change involves the education of children, taking no only professional, but also moral sphere.” Among the most frequent responses (from 38 respondents) dominated generalisations, such as “education, which leads to the development” or “system of education that aims at comprehensive development”, but none of the respondents explained what is meant by this development and which area is affected by this development. What is interesting is that none of the respondents associated the issue of Sustainable Development with UNESCO or local institutions, like the Ministry of State Education, however, references to the “principles of the United Nations” appeared (at 20 respondents).

In the second part of the survey questions have arisen regarding the presence of sustainable development in public life and regarding whether the respondents are interested in this issue and willing to be involved in its implementation. Of course, beyond the declarations made by the respondents that are curious and eager to better recognise the problem of ESD and then to pursue teaching content in their future professional practice, it is difficult to consider the results to be meaningful. Indeed, as follows from the first part, the vast majority of respondents incorrectly or insufficiently understood the principle of Sustainable Development itself. The authors of the survey in the part about age included a general data as a range of 20 to 25 years, so it is not possible to tell whether the information obtained apply equally to students of the 1st and 3rd year. The

results indicate that almost 65% of respondents incorrectly explained the problems of Education for Sustainable Development, 50% of which have never encountered this subject. Assuming that this type of response occurred mainly among the 1st year students, one can hope that the knowledge of the respondents will be completed in the next stages of education as part of their studies. Among the explanations of ESD definitions synonymous with the education of the child also appeared, such as: "I understand sustainable development as dividing it into stages. In each of them, a child learns and develops the skills, it should not be accelerated" or "it is to maintain the balance between intellectual development and upbringing of a child".

It should be noted that even the properly provided responses on sustainable development lacked references to global education and understanding of ESD issues in the context of international cooperation. In the question about which area of social life is the easiest to introduce the assumptions of sustainable development, over 90% of respondents answered "in the field of education", "educational program", "the school from the beginning of education", and the rest formulated vague answers like "in every area of life" or "sustainable development is important at every stage of life".

Research participants and methodology – second part

Other parts of the survey, the third and fourth ones, were carried out immediately after the drama workshop, where the starting point was the work on a literary text.

Considering Education for Sustainable Development as teaching within the four areas – the environment, society, culture and economy – is beneficial from the point of view of arranging the teaching content of school programs. In preparing the literary texts and tasks of the workshop for the surveyed students, the authors accepted that the main objectives would be:

- 1) to verify how these texts will be helpful in Education for Sustainable Development,
and
2) to examine the cultural and axiological competence of students of PWSZ in Chelm participating in the activities.

After carrying out the first and second survey it appeared that the texts developed by the authors may also prove to be an additional source of knowledge on Sustainable Development, not only (as previously assumed) their methodical use in working with students in early school age.

The texts selected by the authors have been developed in the context of moral education and philosophy of children. The first group of texts concerned emotions, and the other principles of social life (as part of The Chair of Sustainable Development of Macer). All were addressed to the reader in the age group of 5 to 7 years, not vast (up to 32 pages with illustrations) and all related to an axiological problem.

First group	Second group
<i>Jedna chwilka uczuć kilka, czyli z uczuciem o uczuciach, [One Moment, a few Feelings, i.e. with a Feeling about Feelings]</i> Marcin Brykczyński, Lidia Głażewska-Dańko; Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Czarna Owca, 2010.	<i>Kosmita, [Alien]</i> Roksana Jędrzejewska – Wróbel; Warszawa: Wydawnictwo ING Bank Śląski, 2009.
<i>Can You Whistle, Johanna?</i> Ulf Stark; Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zakamarki, 2008.	<i>Śmierdzący ser, [Smelly Cheese]</i> Gilles Deleuze; Gdańsk: GWP, 2004.
<i>Kocha, lubi, szanuje, czyli jeszcze o uczuciach, [Loves, Likes, Respects]</i> / Grzegorz Kasdepke; Warszawa: Nasza Księgarnia, 2006.	<i>O Elku, złamanym skrzydełku i nauce języków, [About Elk, His Broken Wings and Language Learning]</i> Wojciech Prus; Poznań: Wydawnictwo W drodze, 2004.
<i>Dwa serca anioła, [Two Hearts of an Angel]</i> Wojciech Widłak; Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Media Rodzina, 2013.	<i>Samotny Jędrus, [Lonely Andrew]</i> Wojciech Widłak; Warszawa, 2012.
<i>Dobro i zło. Co to takiego?, [Good and Evil]</i> Oscar Brenifer; Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zakamarki, 2013.	<i>Marudek i Pogodek na wakacjach, czyli jak być szczęśliwym, [Marudek and Pogodek on Vacation, or How to Be Happy]</i> Ewa Zubrzycka; Gdańsk: GWP, 2008.
<i>Uczucia. Co to takiego?, [Feelings. What is that?]</i> Oscar Brenifer; Poznań: Wyd. Zakamarki, 2012	<i>Ja. Co to takiego?, [I. What is that?]</i> Oscar Brenifer; Poznań: Wyd. Zakamarki, 2014.

<i>Baśnie o szczęściu, nieszczęściu i o tym, co jest najważniejsze w życiu, [Fairy Tales about Happiness and Unhappiness – About What is Important in Human's Life]</i> Elżbieta Zarych; Kraków: Wyd. WAM, 2009.	<i>Piaskowy wilk i ćwiczenia z myślenia, [Sand Wolf and Exercise of Thinking]</i> Åsa Lind; Poznań: Wyd. Zakamarki, 2008.
<i>Jabłko Pana Peabody, [Mr. Peabody's Apples]</i> Madonna; Warszawa: Wyd. Zysk i Spółka 2012.	<i>Tajemnica Michasia, [The Mystery of Michael]</i> Ewa Zubrzycka; Gdańsk: GWP 2008.
<i>Draka Ekonieboraka, [Eco-Poor-Soul Trouble]</i> Emilia Dziubak, Eliza Saroma-Stępniewska; Poznań: Wydawnictwo Albus, 2012.	<i>W pogoni za życiem, [In pursuit of life]</i> Przemysław Wechterowicz and Emilia Dziubak; Warszawa: "Ezop", 2012

The students had the right to make a choice from 1 to 3 of the following texts from a given group to illustrate in a theatrical way the indicated scenes or to propose drama solutions. In the first group of texts they had a choice of various interpretation of emotions and their importance in the lives of adults and children, for example *Dwa serca anioła* [Two Hearts of an Angel] by Wojciech Widłak refers to the relationship between patients – a boy and an elderly man, who are angels to themselves in a hospital; both books of Oscar Brenifer place before the child a series of questions and stimulate them to seek answers, like: *Why do we love someone? What does it mean that we love someone? How does a mom love? And how do I love?* etc.

The second group of texts of children's literature refers to peer and social relations, often marked by various problems, such as: a new member of the family with autism, little brother – the titled "alien"; and violence between children at school [*Śmierdzący ser – Smelly Cheese*] and the need to respond in this situation. There are, however, also texts teaching curiosity in observing and recording the world [as in *Piaskowy wilk i ćwiczenia z myślenia – Sand Wolf and Exercise of Thinking*] and the balance between us and the world, as in books of Wojciech Widłak and Ewa Zubrzycka. Why such a subject? Because the theme of axiology and moral education is an important element of the Chair of Sustainable Development – its cultural legs (Religion & Culture, Ethics & Behaviour, Desires/Motivation, Entertainment, Freedom/Rights, Responsibilities, Family Values) and its social legs (Education Legal System, Health & Medical, Politics/Democracy, Military Industries, Human Resources).

This article does not include a full report of the workshop activities, it rather focuses on the presentation of the achieved results. As animators of drama workshops, our primary interests were the choices made by students, as well as their interpretations and the methodological approach of the texts. Most participants noticed the courage of the discussed problems (aggression, disability, illness and death, life and love, the complexity of human relationships, prejudice and alienation, etc.), stressing that in their existing practice they have not worked with students using this type of texts. Later, completing the evaluation part of the survey, the third and fourth part, they wondered whether all the proposed titles can be used in working with early school children (almost 85% said definitely yes, 10% – yes, but after selection, the rest needed time to think).

The most common choice of texts from the first group of children was the book of the famous singer, Madonna, entitled *Mr. Peabody's Apples* (2012). The main characters of this story are: Mr. Peabody, a history teacher and a pupil – Tommy. The starting point of the story is a misunderstanding – one Saturday Tommy noticed that Mr. Peabody, returning after the game, had gone to the store and chosen a most beautiful apple, which he threw into his bag and did not pay for. The following Saturday, Tommy saw the same situation and soon told many people that the teacher, liked by everyone, was a thief. As a result of these rumours, only one boy came to the weekly game organized by Mr. Peabody, and he explained to the teacher that people suspected him of stealing. The teacher took Tommy to the store and there it turned out that every Saturday morning he pays for the apple in advance, and collects it directly after the game. The boy apologises for the accusation, but the rumour is not so easy to reverse, and the harm caused is not so easy to fix. To help Tommy remember the difficult lesson better, Mr. Peabody tells him to rip open a feather pillow in the wind and then collect all the fluttering feathers. The boy explains that this task is impossible and then the teacher explains that, like the feathers would be blown all over the town, so does the rumour spread. It takes a lot of effort to change it and compensate for the harm done to the accused person.

These important problems of harm and compensation resulted in achieving interesting pedagogical solutions proposed by students, who, acting out the roles of the boy and the teacher, experienced these difficult emotions. It was also considered as the most emotional experience of the workshops.

In the evaluation, post workshop part, the students stressed that their main expectation is clearly a place of axiology and moral education in teaching: 40 respondents indicate the need for such changes at every level of education, as they felt the problems of axiology functions insignificantly. They propose changes to the existing contents of integrated teaching by introducing topics that almost 95% of students considered to be the most current and important in the education of a young child. Examples include: the topics of violence (42 persons), sex education (32), tolerance, acceptance, respect for self and others (48), racism (20 persons), ethics, rules of good behaviour or "cultures in all aspects of life" (48), the topics of philosophy for children: ethical considerations (20 respondents) and philosophical (25 responses).

Cultural and axiological competences of pedagogy students of PWSZ in Chelm, in the context of the workshops – conclusion

How to, in the context of the carried out activities, characterise cultural and axiological competences of students participating in the studies? According to the complex concept of cultural education, taking into account the generative model of linguistic competences and its sociological approach (complexity and specificity of a particular social group, region, or nation) the cultural competences are recognised as the capacity for understanding, interpreting and reinterpreting as well as creating and co-creating culture as a result of social life. It should be emphasised that the one-dimensional perception of cultural competences (as linguistic or sociological) usually leads to the later simplification of cultural content (i.e. reproductive and superficial interpretation of former and contemporary culture), and – what seems to be particularly harmful – to

the adaptive treatment of other cultures (i.e. always from the perspective of our own culture and narrow social group). Wiesław Rogalski adds: "The school is recorded as space-time in which culture appears before of the unit, as the outside world, subjective, multi-element, given by adults, largely incomprehensible, unfamiliar in the face of his earlier, children's release. After a period of primary socialisation in the family, the school is the first institution to assume the duties of introducing young generation into the culture" (Rogalski, 2004).

However, it should be noted that the achievement of cultural competence is the only element of cultural education, not its culmination – it is the beginning of a cultural development and active participation in culture. Thus, the beginning of the student's cultural education – as a structured process of teaching and learning – begins at the stage of integrated teaching. The axiological competences are associated with some kind of ethical sensitivity, which allows a person to safely navigate through the different values offered by the surrounding world (both good and bad ones).

It is important for us, as the authors, to show Sustainable Development in an axiological and moral education perspective, and not, as it is usually realised at school – in the area of economics (emphasising entrepreneurial attitude) and ecology (promoting healthy lifestyles and sustainable consumption). In planning our research and workshop activities we did not know that the main problem will be lack of knowledge (or minimal knowledge of) the principles of Sustainable Development and Education for Sustainable Development among students, which results from a survey carried out by us (Part I and II). Later in the conversation with the students during the workshop we initiated this problem, seeking first the reasons for such poor performance. It turns out that the most commonly reported explanation was a complete misunderstanding of the term – and as far as the respondents had participated in high school in environmental actions (such as "green schools" and other eco activities), and also had classes about economic education (business and economic), but did not linked these experiences with Sustainability. Their previous practice – as pupils and now as students – shows that school

experiences of ESD are episodic (limited to one-time, short-term action) and selective (i.e. relate to one of the areas of SD). These experiences were rarely accompanied by reflection or attempt to summarise.

The results of research and observations during the workshop activities and after them indicate the need to change the approach in the current teaching strategies at all levels of education. From the perspective of the just finished Decade for Sustainable Development 2004–2014 it is a pretty sad reflection, but the most expedient. Ewa Gajluś-Lankamer and Anna Maria Wójcik, have also written about this, having carried out a detailed analysis of General Education Foundations Program implemented in the Polish school of the school year 2009/2010 in the context of opportunities for ESD at all levels of education in accordance with the ESD Strategy of Europe Economic Commission. It should be agreed with researchers that the actual effects of this education will not be possible to achieve if in the process of education the teachers are focused solely on the transfer of knowledge.

We also agree with Ewa Gajluś-Lankamer and Anna Maria Wójcik, that “the effectiveness of the Education for Sustainable Development can be achieved through the development of curricula and through the use of methods by which it will be possible to deal with specific problems and searching for possible solutions” (Gajluś-Lankamer, Wójcik, 2015).

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The Development of Wisdom in the Context of the Polish Core Curriculum of Pre-school Education

Abstract: The goals of the teacher's work with students are described in the educational documents and priorities specified by the relevant authorities. These guidelines present the current understanding of social development, as well as the government's education policy. Thus, they should also constitute the basis for teachers' actions. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret the current core curriculum of general education in the context of the principles of support for the development of Polish students' wisdom. A proposal for one such interpretation of the current core curriculum used in pre-school education is presented in this article.

Keywords: teaching for wisdom, core curriculum for pre-school education

The gradual development of wisdom in an individual, understood as "...forms of species adaptation to the most difficult challenge – having good control over one's life ..." (Pietrasiński, 2001, p. 32; translation: E.P.), can take place only through the internal development of that individual. On the other hand, the teaching of wise thought and actions should be based on such aspects as dialogue, while teachers should develop tasks that trigger independent thinking and reflection on conditions and actions taken. However, in contemporary Polish schools teachers still focus mostly on the development of memory and the analytical skills necessary to remember and repeat information, which unfortunately does not create favourable conditions for the development of young people's wisdom. Another aspect that remains undervalued is personal development, along with learning about

and establishing positive interpersonal relationships. As modern pedagogical literature also points out, teachers at school require their students to use different methods of thinking than those needed in adult life. Problems discussed in school also differ from the problems of the real world¹.

Educational practice in Poland is also inconsistent with global and European guidelines and priorities. For example, the understanding of the essence of learning and teaching is too narrow, as the learning process is perceived as one of acquiring knowledge provided by the teacher, with the focus on discovery of the external world, while self-knowledge remains neglected. Subject literature also criticizes the dominant role of the teacher, the transmission of culture as symbolic power and didacticism at all stages of education, as well as the schematic and transmission-based approach to education and organization of the school environment². This type of education does not encourage the development of students' wisdom as part of their own activity and harmonious development in all areas. It is therefore necessary to interpret the current core curriculum of general education in the context of the principles of support for the development of Polish students' wisdom.

¹ Cf.: Sternberg R.J. & Spear-Swering L. (2003). *Jak nauczyć dzieci myślenia* [Teaching for Thinking (Psychology in the Classroom); translation; E.P.]; Bonar, J. (2008). *Rozwijanie twórczości uczniów klas początkowych poprzez zadania dydaktyczne w toku kształcenia zintegrowanego* [Developing Creativity of Primary Class Students by Didactic Tasks in the Process of Integrated Education; translation; E.P.]; Wiśniewska-Kin M. (2013). *Dominacja a wyzwolenie. Wczesnoszkolny dyskurs podręcznikowy i dziecięcy* [Domination and Liberation. Earlyschool Textbooks' and Children's Discourse; translation: E.P.].

² Polish educational system is criticized in such publications as: Dudzikowa D. (2001). *Mit o szkole jako miejscu wszechstronnego rozwoju ucznia. Eseje pedagogiczne* [The Myth of the School as a Place of the Student's Comprehensive Development. Pedagogical Essays; translation: E.P.]; Banach C. (2005). *Szkoła naszych oczekiwań i marzeń, potrzeb, projekcji i działań. Od A do Ż* [The School in our Expectations, Dreams, Needs, and Activities. From A to Z; translation: E.P.]; Niemierko B. (2007). *Kształcenie szkolne. Podręcznik skutecznej dydaktyki* [Education in School. Handbook of Effective Teaching; translation: E.P.]; Falkiewicz-Szult M. (2007). *Przemoc symboliczna w przedszkolu* [Symbolic Violence in Kindergarten; translation: E.P.]; Śliwerski B. (2009). *Problemy współczesnej edukacji. Dekonstrukcja polityki oświatowej III RP* [The Problems of Modern Education. Deconstruction of Educational Policy in III RP; translation:

Wisdom as a complex characteristic of an individual

Professor Z. Pietrasiński highlighted the negative effects of the above-mentioned phenomenon in Poland, describing it as the lack of teacher focus on the development of wisdom. Teachers introduce new methods of thinking, but with no reflection on their purpose, since "... they treat students as storehouses to be filled with yet another skill..." (Pietrasiński, 2001, p. 59; translation: E.P.).

This is perhaps the reason why the authors of recent Polish psychological and pedagogical publications have called for the organisation of the purposeful development of wisdom as a complex individual characteristic³. In her overview of various psychological concepts of wisdom, A. Kałużna-Wielorób (2014, pp. 63–79) showed how wisdom can be perceived: as an ideal, as a quality that can be reached as part of development, and as a phenomenon described by popular ideas. She also pointed out the holistic understanding of wisdom, which depends on an awareness of the limitations of knowledge – both one's own and generally accessible, as well as:

- Tolerance for ambiguity and understanding of the role of various contexts and determinants of human life and development,
- The ability to control one's life and development, taking into account both personal well-being and the common good,
- Reflective reference to the sense of life, values and life priorities,
- The ability to formulate judgements and offer helpful advice to others, to overcome uncertainty and take effective action in complex

E.P.); Kujawiński J. (2010). *Ewolucja szkoły i jej współczesna wizja* [The Evolution of the School and Its Contemporary Vision; translation: E.P.]; Klus-Stańska D. & Nowicka M. (2013). *Sensy i bezsensy edukacji wczesnoszkolnej* [Sense and Senselessness of Early Childhood Education; translation: E.P.]; Waloszek D. (2014). *Między przedszkolem i szkołą. Rozważania o gotowości dzieci do podjęcia nauki w szkole* [Between Kindergarten and School. Meditations on the Children Readiness for Learning in School; translation: E.P.].

³ Cf.: publications of Z. Pietrasiński, K. J. Szmidt, J. Czapiński, A. Sękowski, E. Pióciennik.

and ambiguous situations, or when the amount of information is insufficient (Kałużna-Wielorób, 2014, pp. 69–70).

The American psychologist R. J. Sternberg was the first researcher who used purposefully selected educational programmes, adapted to the various needs of students at individual stages of education, in activities aimed at the development of his students' wisdom. His programmes included guidelines concerning simultaneous development and integrated use of three aspects of the human mind: Wisdom, Creativity and Intelligence (*WICS: Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity Synthesized*). According to Sternberg's concept, wisdom is one of the characteristics guaranteeing the proper use of intelligence and creativity when solving various problems, as it allows for the accounting of both individual achievements and the common good, and then for their combination (Sternberg, 2003). In this understanding, wisdom is a part of practical intelligence and its use results in effective implementation of socially useful ideas (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005, p. 327–340). Thus, education aimed at simultaneous stimulation and development of wisdom, intelligence and creativity – in contrast to the traditional educational model based on the development of memory and analytical skills – enables realistic and effective solutions to important problems of civilization, as well as to everyday difficulties. Simultaneous development, stimulation and use of those three characteristics of an individual allows for optimal use of memory, knowledge and analytical skills in transgressive thinking and creative problem solving. It is also useful in the analysis and evaluation of existing solutions, as well as analysis and verification of the usefulness of new ideas, decisions, actions taken and various undertakings. Effective use of the discussed characteristics is additionally supported by the individual's own activity and his or her commitment to the task (Sternberg & Davidson, 2005, p. 340; Sternberg et al., 2009). An individual needs creativity to be able to find solutions and create projects, visions, individual and group plans, or programmes for specific institutions. Analytical intelligence, on the other hand, is required to estimate to what extent those creative ideas are new, good, appropriate and feasible, while practical in-

telligence allows the individual to bring those ideas to life and convince others of their value.

According to R. J. Sternberg, all these important factors of human behaviour are united by *wisdom*, which is the only guarantee that ideas and actions will be valuable and useful not only to the individual, but also in a broader context. The abilities and skills conferred by wisdom include:

- Reflective thinking – This allows for development of specific strategies for actions to be taken, analysis and monitoring of their effectiveness, and modification in order to find the best solutions that account for the short- and long-term interests of both the individual and society.
- Dialogical thinking – This allows for accounting for various perspectives and points of view when acting.
- Dialectical thinking – A requirement for the integration and synthesis of two varied points of view (Sternberg et al., 2009, pp. 106–110).

Using such concepts in education should result in increasing the students' activity in various areas (including those that are characteristic for the school environment), and making them more persistent in pursuing their goals and more reflective when faced with new contents and phenomena. Hence, R. Sternberg suggests creating conditions for students to formulate their own conclusions when performing tasks that require integration of materials and development of the above-mentioned three types of thinking. He also believes in the importance of awarding students' wise behaviour and using natural situations to condition it.

Thus, teaching wisdom for educational purposes requires discussion and changes in the way the expected effects of teaching are formulated in the Regulation of The Polish Ministry of National Education on the Core Curriculum for Pre-school and General Education in Individual Types of Schools (23 May 2014). The goals of the teacher's work with students are described in education documents and priorities specified by the competent authorities. Those guidelines present the current understanding

of social development, as well as the government's education policy. Thus, they should constitute the basis for teachers' actions, and also in terms of developing their students' wisdom. They should encourage tolerance and openness to ambiguity and allow students to develop their creative and reflective thinking, as well as their skills in dialogue, effective cooperation and resolving problems and conflicts at school. However, with the exception of Z. Pietrasiński's book, 'Mądrość, czyli świetne wyposażenie umysłu' [Wisdom – the Perfect Accessory of the Mind; translation: E.P.], the recognized Polish psychological literature does not offer any specific guidelines on the development of wisdom in schools. Such areas of educational or methodological activities as 'teaching for wisdom', 'teaching wisdom' or 'wisdom education' currently do not even exist in Polish terminology and pedagogical tradition.

Teaching for wisdom

The term 'teaching for wisdom' (in Polish: *edukacja dla mądrości*) is used in Professor J. Czapiński's Polish translation of the American publication 'Positive Psychology in Practice' ([Psychologia pozytywna w praktyce] Joseph & Linley, 2007, p. 132), which includes a chapter entitled 'Jak nauczyć podopiecznych mądrego myślenia: program <Edukacja dla mądrości>' [Teaching Students to Make Wise Judgements: The <Teaching for Wisdom> Program], written by A. Reznitska and R. J. Sternberg (creator of the concept). That term was also used in S. Juros's (2010) 'Nauka mądrości – odpowiedź na współczesne zapotrzebowania edukacyjne' [Learning of the Wisdom – the Answer to Contemporary Educational Needs; translation E.P.], published in the Internet magazine *Moj@klanza.org.pl* (No. 2, pp. 31–33), in which the author of the article refers to Sternberg's concept. In this author's own articles on the development of wisdom, which she has been publishing for three years⁴ now, the term 'teaching for wisdom'

⁴ This author's initial reflections and analyses on that subject are described in four articles published in separate books: Płóciennik, E. (2013). *Edukacja dla mądrości*

means a purposeful educational process, i.e. 'helping children to acquire wisdom'. This process covers both teachers' educational actions and the students' activity. For example, situations when students experience the effects of good and wise behaviour as part of their active participation in the school environment and the life of their community. This in turn allows students to learn more about themselves and their surroundings and encourages them to participate in actions that are beneficial not only for themselves, but also for their community. In addition, it makes them more focused on and committed to shaping new cultures of life based on universal values. However, in order to develop methodological solutions it is necessary to interpret the current Core Curriculum in the context of the principles of teaching for wisdom, so that every teacher could know 'why' and 'how' they are supposed to support the development of Polish students' wisdom.

Arguably, this can be achieved in two ways. The goals and effects of each stage of teaching can be supplemented by the effects of the development of wisdom, its factors and predictors. The interpretation of those goals and effects can highlight the social abilities, skills and competences of both teachers and students that need to be stimulated, practised and

we wczesnej edukacji – propozycje rozwiązań metodycznych [Teaching for Wisdom in Early Childhood Education – Methodical Solutions; translation E.P.]. In: J. Bonar & A. Buła (Eds.), *Poznać – Zrozumieć – Doświadczyć. Konstruowanie wiedzy nauczyciela wczesnej edukacji* (pp. 191–200). Cracow: Oficyna Wydawnicza Impuls; Płóciennik E. (2013). *Edukacja dla rozwoju potencjału i mądrości dziecka w świetle koncepcji R. Sternberga* [Education for the Child's Potential and Wisdom Development in the Light of the R. Sternberg Concept; translation E.P.]. In: Jabłonowska M. (Ed.), *Uczeń zdolny i jego edukacja. Koncepcje. Badania. Praktyka* (pp. 260–273). Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Universitas Rediviva; Płóciennik, E. (2013). *Teaching for Wisdom in Early Modern Education*. "Journal of Preschool and Elementary School Education", 2(4), 27–48; Płóciennik, E. (2014). *Edukacja dla mądrości – perspektywa teoretyczna i praktyczna* [Teaching for Wisdom – Theoretical and Practical View; translation E.P.]. In: M. M. Adamowicz & I. Kopaczyńska (Eds.), *Pedagogika wczesnoszkolna wobec zmieniających się kontekstów społecznych. Volume 1* (pp.148–161). Toruń: Adam Marszałek Press. The book (written by this author) entitled *Rozwijanie mądrości dziecka. Koncepcja i wskazówki metodyczne* [Developing a Child's Wisdom. The Concept and Methodical Instructions; translation: E.P.] is currently being edited at the Łódź University Press.

shaped by teachers and parents alike. As no one can personally change the core curriculum for pre-schools and general education in any way, it should be to discuss selected goals and effects of teaching with reference to the principles of teaching for wisdom. It will be attempted to show that the current core curriculum can be used by teachers as a basis for intentional and purposeful development of wisdom in Polish general education and nursery schools – it only depends on correct interpretation of the curriculum's provisions. As such, this paper will analyse the new provisions of the current core curriculum used in pre-school education.

Interpretation of the effects of teaching specified in the core curriculum of pre-school education⁵ in the context of teaching for wisdom

Having analysed the interrelations between the goals and effects of teaching specified in the current Polish core curriculum of pre-school education (2014, p. 1–2), and the principles of teaching for wisdom, it can be concluded that the goals for teaching are the same in both cases. In order to develop children's wisdom, it is necessary to support the development of their potential and various talents, along with the intellectual activity needed in everyday situations and further education. In other words, pre-school teachers have to support the intellectual, emotional, social, ethical, physical and aesthetic development of children, while taking into account the children's various abilities and physical, intellectual and health-related capabilities. The provisions of the core curriculum of pre-school education are consistent with the principles of teaching for wisdom. They highlight the necessity of arranging various activities for children as part of their education and comprehensive preparation for future tasks requiring reflective, dialogical and dialectical thinking, as well as creativity and practical

⁵ Regulation of the Minister of National Education of 30 May 2014 on the Core Curriculum for Pre-school and General Education in Individual Types of Schools. Journal of Laws of 18 June 2014, item 803.

intelligence. These goals also include guidelines for the ethical development of children, i.e. the development of competences associated with making decisions that will not be socially harmful (on the contrary – we should support positive actions for the benefit of others).

In addition, the core curriculum states that children of a pre-school age should be introduced to the world of values in order to prepare them to accept themselves and other people, know right from wrong and respect the natural environment (it also mentions the development of appropriate attitudes to nature). What's more, it highlights the importance of increasing children's emotional resistance, and also in the context of dealing with stress and failure. From the perspective of teaching for wisdom, these goals are crucial, as they concern such issues as the ability of self-assessment, encouraging children to explore their strengths and weaknesses, persistence in pursuing their goals, responsibility, and getting them into the habit of thinking and acting prudently and responsibly, as well as learning such personality traits as making justified judgements, showing tolerance for different points of view and decisions, being open to novelty, otherness and ambiguity, showing empathy, and being able to consider what is good for others when aspiring to their own success. In addition, goals for the development of the ability to know right from wrong provide the basis for the introduction of educational situations that can lead to the development of the abilities of reflection, analysis of values and acting for the benefit of the natural environment, which is also in accordance with the principles of teaching for wisdom.

Another important goal of both pre-school education and teaching for wisdom is showing children how to establish appropriate social relations, as well as helping them to develop a sense of social belonging (to their family, peer group and ethnic, national or language community), and preparing them for using a modern foreign language. Teaching for wisdom also stresses the importance of children being able to get along with their peers in various ways, as well as other members of their local community and society in general. This will allow them to gradually develop their empathy and respect for different opinions resulting from different living, learning and housing conditions. In addition, developing

children's awareness of multiculturalism and instilling in them respect for and openness to different physical, intellectual and health factors, views, customs, preferences, ideas, choices and decisions is an important element in teaching mature wisdom. Thus, setting such goals for Polish pre-school education provides a basis for the development of the children's future competences and abilities associated with living in a culturally changing environment and solving everyday school, local, regional, national and international problems.

According to the core curriculum, pre-school education should also be aimed at developing the systems of values and skills that children need in order to explore and understand the social, natural and technological world, and to gain the ability to present their thoughts in a clear and comprehensible way. Understanding the world depends on having the above-mentioned intellectual and social competences. However, these goals are also important in the context of teaching for wisdom. It should be remembered that children gain experience mostly when they are curious about the world, asking questions, seeing problems and acquiring skills and knowledge without adults' help, but learning from their own mistakes and repeated attempts to find the best way of doing something. What's more, children should feel like partners in discussions and actions, including those taken for the benefit of others. They should be able to express their emotions, thoughts and ideas in various ways, and understand what others want to communicate. This makes children more willing to establish social bonds, develop harmonious and friendly relationships and learn to understand and respect otherness and ambiguity.

Thus, having analysed the core curriculum of pre-school education in the context of the theoretical principles of teaching for wisdom, one can reach the conclusion that long-term goals are the same in both cases. However, as demonstrated by the following analyses, the authors of the list of skills, competences and knowledge to be gained by children attending Polish nursery schools (i.e. the effects of teaching), did not pay as much attention to the diversity of goals and children's activities necessary to develop their wisdom.

As regards social skills, children who finish their pre-school education and start attending primary school should already be able to communicate, not only with other children, but also with adults, and to get along well when playing and performing various tasks. Even though this educational goal seems to be clear and in accordance with the principles of teaching for wisdom, the details remain ambiguous. They do not mention the development of the abilities required for dialogue and negotiation in conflict situations, communication and explanation of one's needs, cooperation in establishing rules at the nursery school, taking into account the needs of other children when dealing with everyday situations, predicting the consequences of being rude to others or not knowing one's first name, surname or address, etc.

Another example, not necessarily about pre-school educational goals in terms of teaching for wisdom, is the provision in the curriculum that highlights the need to teach self-care, hygiene and cultural habits, and instil in children the need to keep their surroundings clean and tidy. However, such phrases as "...children should behave appropriately at the table..." (p. 3; translation: E.P.) and "...children should keep their surroundings clean and tidy..." (p. 3; translation: E.P.) are a bit vague. Firstly, these standards are subjective and ambiguous, dependent on specific customs and social contracts. Thus, it is uncertain how 'appropriate' behaviour at the table should really be understood. Should children comment on the taste of dishes, discuss events and situations they find interesting, or instruct one another on how to use a knife or a napkin? Or should they – as many nursery school teachers believe – sit straight (to prevent spinal curvature), not talk (not to make noise), not squirm (not to hurt themselves), and wait until all the children have finished their meal (not to distract those who eat more slowly or reluctantly)? Secondly, interpretation of this provision depends on the teachers' attitudes and competences, as they can develop the discussed skills in another way, without necessarily taking into account the development of wise thought and action in their pupils (including appropriate use of cutlery, self-reflection, self-assessment and taking responsibility for the effects of their actions during meals). The idea that children should keep their surroundings

clean and tidy is also ambiguous. Does this mean that children cannot, for example, rearrange the chairs and toys in the room and take necessary elements from cupboards to bring their creative ideas to life? Or should it be interpreted as reminding children to make sure that their 'mess' does not disturb others and to clean it up after playing? Or maybe the room should be 'clean' and 'tidy' all the time (which would mean that children have no right to creative, expressive and free play) to meet the aesthetic needs of the teacher or the headmaster?

Other ambiguous provisions concerning stimulation of children's wise behaviour as part of the development of their competences specified in the Polish core curriculum read as follows:

- "Children who finish their pre-school education and start attending primary school should: know how to look after themselves, [...] accept medical treatment, e.g. they know that taking medicines and injections is necessary..." (p. 4; translation: E.P.). This is further referred to in the next area of the effects of teaching: "...Teaching children how to take care of their own and their peers' safety, which includes such provisions as [...] children know that they cannot take medicine and use chemical agents (such as detergents) without adult supervision..." (p. 5; translation: E.P.). From the perspective of teaching for wisdom, two elements of this are unclear. It has not been verified whether children really do gain those competences. We can only judge on the basis of the knowledge the children are provided with by adults. However, this stands in contradiction to teaching for wisdom, which places the emphasis on children's activity, their experiences, reflection on making choices and decisions, and ability to put knowledge into practice. The method of verifying and developing these competences is also doubtful. How can pre-school teachers do all of that, when they are not authorized to organize treatment of children and are not present during doctor's appointments? In addition, the following question comes to mind: Is the taking of medicine and injections always necessary? Especially when we consider

such widely discussed social problems as drug addiction, abuse of children and adolescents, and overuse of medication, stimulants and designer drugs. So, perhaps we should start explaining to children that looking after themselves doesn't always require taking medicine and having injections, while the responsible use of prescription drugs, even without adult supervision, can save a life (e.g. in the case of allergies). Of course, we could also reach the conclusion that children should not take responsibility for their own health, which would mean that we should take absolute control of this aspect of childcare. In this case, though, what would be the purpose of those core curriculum provisions?

- According to one of the items in the core curriculum, in the section entitled 'Art Education – Children as Actors and the Audience' (p. 5; translation: E.P.), children that finish their pre-school education and start attending primary school should know "...how to behave during special events, such as concerts, fairs, theatrical performances or cinema screenings..." (p. 5; translation: E.P.). Again, this provision suggests verification of knowledge, instead of analysis of using that knowledge in practice. Thus, it lacks reference to the development of practical intelligence (after all, children don't always behave according to their level of knowledge). In addition, the understanding of appropriate behaviour during performances or at fairs might be totally different, and thus depend on the teacher's subjective opinion, unless the teaching technique applied is based on such activities as, for example, simulation of a theatrical performance during which children switch between the roles of actors and audience members that disturb the cast's work with loud talking or eating. Children can also analyse the meaning and course of various events or celebrations and then suggest appropriate behaviour, also on the basis of their own experiences. Therefore, the goals discussed herein should be supplemented with methods of reaching them, so as to bring the teacher's attention to the fact that children should first experience certain

educational situations before they begin correcting their habits and learning to act wisely in similar situations. Providing them with relevant knowledge by means of 'dos and don'ts' is clearly not enough, as at this age such knowledge is quickly forgotten.

- In the section 'Supporting children's intellectual development through constructive games and making them interested in technology' (p. 6; translation: E.P.), as well as in others sections, apart from artistic activity, the authors of the Polish core curriculum failed to consider a very important factor that encourages wise thinking and behaviour – creativity. The core curriculum of pre-school education does not include the effects of teaching in such areas as designing, making associations, divergent and interrogative thinking, combinations and transformations, despite the fact that these areas are most strongly connected with children's development.
- In the core curriculum section entitled 'Helping children to understand the nature of atmospheric phenomena and avoid dangerous situations' (p. 6; translation: E.P.), we can find a provision pursuant to which children who finish their pre-school education and start attending primary school should be able to "...take rational decisions and do not put themselves in danger in case of bad weather (e.g. do not stand under a tree during a storm)..." (p. 6; translation: E.P.). This is another provision which seems problematic in terms of verification and development of children's competences by the teacher. How are teachers focused on education for wisdom supposed to achieve that? Should they arrange situations in which children are to make decisions where to stand during a storm to be safe? Apart from the issue of child safety and the possible negative consequences of such actions, this would cause some organizational problems. The process of gaining that competence should be analysed in the case of each child, so that the educational situation in question should be organized as many

times as there are children in the group to provide each child with an opportunity to make the decision independently. Besides, pursuant to the rules of verification, checking the competence only once is not enough. To ensure that the child has a specific ability or acts in a specific way in a given situation, their reactions should be observed and repeated at least several times. It is therefore clear that this provision should be reconsidered and rewritten.

- In the core curriculum section entitled 'Teaching respect for plants and animals' (p. 6; translation: E.P.). we can read that children who finish their pre-school education and start attending primary school should "... know what conditions are required by animals (living space, safety, food) and plants (light, appropriate temperature and humidity)..." (p.6; translation: E.P.). From the perspective of teaching for wisdom, the curriculum fails to mention the competences that form creative and practical intelligence, e.g. when children design their own little gardens or grow plants in pots. What's more, including those competences in the curriculum could help teachers to support children in reaching the goal specified in the section 'Art Education – Various Artistic Forms' (p. 6; translation: E.P.), which also covers children's interest in "...architecture (including landscape architecture)..." (p. 6; translation: E.P.).
- Similar problems can be seen in another section: 'Supporting children's intellectual development through mathematical education' (p. 6; translation: E.P.). It states that children who finish pre-school education should "...know how to measure length and are familiar with simple methods of measurements, for example by steps or placing one foot after the other..." (p. 6; translation: E.P.). Children should acquire such knowledge through purposeful actions. Hence, encouraging them to take measurements in various life situations (practical intelligence), to learn methods for measuring height, length and width depending on specific needs and purpose (creative intelligence) and to evaluate the usefulness of

such actions (reflectiveness, criticism, self-reflection and self-assessment) would be much more relevant as regards the provisions of this core curriculum.

- The last of the examples analysed comes from the section 'Family, civic and patriotic education' (p. 8; translation: E.P.), which describes only the effects of such education on the children's knowledge. One of the provisions states that children who finish pre-school education "...know that all people have equal rights..." (p. 8; translation: E.P.). To check whether a child has that competence, the teacher should ask, 'Do you know that people have equal rights?', and look for a positive or negative answer. But it's hard to imagine how the teacher is supposed to verify and develop that knowledge, if not through information from adults conveying truths to be accepted and remembered. This, however, stands in contradiction to the development of wisdom. How are children supposed to understand that they have the same rights as the adults or that children from poor families have the same rights as their rich peers? According to teaching for wisdom, children should instead be provided with examples of the equality of rights and related obligations in various contexts. For example, they should share with others, who are in need, and plan actions to help maintain the equal rights of all children and their families, regardless of their background, material status, predispositions and physical or intellectual abilities. Thus, children should be able to explain human rights, plan individual and group actions to promote those rights, and actively participate in projects aimed at helping those in need, etc. Otherwise, how are we supposed to teach children respect for otherness and ambiguity, or empathy, which results in acting in one's own best interest while taking into account equal rights and the needs of others?

The same interpretation issues arise when we read the core curriculum for higher stages of education. The above analysis is required to de-

cide whether the current Polish core curriculum allows for the implementation of teaching for wisdom in Polish schools. In this author's opinion, the answer is 'yes'. However, this depends mostly on the teacher's competences, including those in the analysis and interpretation of ambiguous and overly general descriptions of the effects of teaching specified in the core curriculum.

Conclusions

First of all, the teacher should be familiar with the principles of teaching for wisdom, and then adapt the educational process to make it as beneficial to their students as possible. In other words, students should be given the opportunity to gain specific abilities and adopt specific habits. This not only applies to their knowledge and analytical intelligence, but also their creative and practical intelligence, reflectiveness, ability to deal with various life and social situations, decision-making habits and ability to act in both their own and other people's best interests.

Secondly, development of wisdom is a new and scientifically unexamined topic in the field of pedagogy. Therefore, broad practical and theoretical studies ought to be carried out on the conditions necessary to promote the development of children's wisdom. For example, on the system of values in the school and family environment, on teachers' personality competence, interesting teaching resources, and modern teaching methods for improving the student's activity.

Thirdly, diagnosis of the children's wisdom and thought is needed. Teachers should get to know their pupils' conventional wisdom, the way they solve every-day problems and their behavioural interpretation, self-reflection and the sources of their wisdom.

Such pedagogical and academic research can help to form the basis of optimal conditions for developing wisdom and changing the records in the core curriculum, in the context of the theoretical principles of teaching for wisdom. Furthermore, this also applies to the pre-school education level.

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The Change in Approach to Preparing Children to Learn to Read and Write

Abstract: Readiness to learn to read must be shaped at the level of pre-school education. One of the innovative methods of teaching pre-school children to read is the natural language teaching method developed by Wenda Pye. The programme consists in the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing using games and creative activities. The learning process is accompanied by children's creative activity. Therefore, the natural language teaching method is perceived not only as the process of language learning but also, and most importantly, as educating through language, where language is both a means of communication and a thinking tool.

The concept is based on the belief that child's language is a specific phenomenon determined, on the one hand, by natural child development and, on the other hand, by child's interactions with the environment. Consequently, child's language education should be enhanced by a subtle help from an adult, who – by the use of provocation, arrangement and gentle encouragement to take actions – opens up a new, unknown space to the child, i.e. the world of writing. Language plays a role of a factor that integrates various fields of knowledge and different types of child's activity in reality perception and acquisition. Natural situations used in the teaching of reading, which create occasional educational situations, inspire the child and simultaneously introduce him into the world of writing. Thus, learning to read should be accompanied by learning to write. The discovery of new values that the novel language of signs has with regards to information acquisition increases child's motivation to verbalise his own thoughts and to

learn to read and write. Emotional engagement facilitates memorizing a story or new vocabulary. It sensitizes the child to the graphical, phonological and semantic dimension of a given word by making a direct link between the graphical representation and the sound.

A point of departure for natural language teaching is a short and simple text and illustrations that highly relate to it. Texts form stories included in little books entitled "Sunshine Library". There is a series of 40 books designed for pre-school children self-study of reading. The books are graded at four levels of difficulty. Didactic aids used in the series are very well organised and introduce already consolidated semantic structures, providing new contents regarding language competence at a slow pace. Each book is composed of three stories. Typically, the first story includes one text with carefully selected new language structures. The following two stories serve the purpose of material consolidation. The essence of the books are pictures, which should be in line with the text because the basis of reading is to associate an image with its graphical representation. The print used in the books is large, legible, the words are clearly separated, and every sentence starts with a new line. The stories are simple and presented with repetitive sentence patterns.

Natural language teaching develops and deepens child's natural willingness to speak, read or draw graphical symbols. Speech is here not only the foundation of child's expression and learning to read and write, but also a support for child's paralinguistic activity.

The article presents the use of the natural language teaching method in pre-school children education.

Keywords: natural language teaching, method, pre-school, education

Introduction

Preschool education primarily operates on the notion of upbringing. However, the specifics of the process of upbringing in the kindergarten means that this term also includes the education process. Currently,

preparing children for school is one of the most important educational tasks of the kindergarten. A readiness to learn to read and write must be shaped at the level of pre-school education.

Most of the methods of teaching reading and writing attempt to modify analytical-synthetic methods or global methods, as well as increasingly incorporating the dissemination of interesting foreign solutions for learning to read and write.

One of the innovative methods of teaching pre-school children to read and write is the natural language teaching method developed by Wenda Pye. The programme consists of the teaching of listening, speaking, reading and writing using games and creative activities. The learning process is accompanied by children's creative activity. Therefore, the natural language teaching method is perceived not only as the process of language learning but also, and most importantly, as educating through language, where language is both a means of communication and a thinking tool (Czerwińska, Narożnik, 1997, p. 7).

Natural language teaching method in pre-school education

The concept is based on the belief that the child's language is a specific phenomenon determined, on the one hand, by natural child development and, on the other hand, by a child's interactions with the environment. Consequently, a child's language education should be enhanced by a subtle help from an adult, who – by the use of provocation, arrangement and gentle encouragement to take actions – opens up a new, unknown space to the child, i.e. the world of writing. Language plays the role of a factor that integrates various fields of knowledge and different types of child's activity in reality perception and acquisition. Natural situations used in the teaching of reading, which create occasional educational situations, inspire the child and simultaneously introduce them into the world of writing. Thus, learning to read should be accompanied by learning to write. The discovery of new values that the novel language of signs has with regards to information acquisition increases

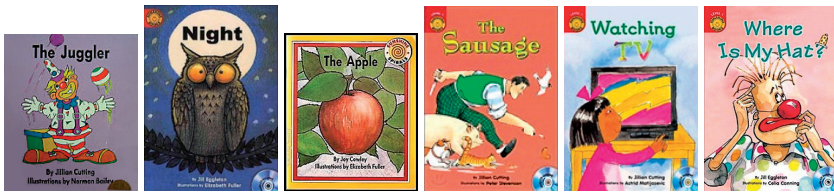
the child's motivation to verbalise their own thoughts and to learn to read and write. Emotional engagement facilitates the memorizing of a story or new vocabulary. It sensitizes the child to the graphical, phonological and semantic dimension of a given word by making a direct link between the graphical representation and the sound.

The basic strategy of teaching children to read employed in the method is the use of the child's cognitive processes, in particular its perception and memory. Preschoolers' perception is characterized by syncretism, i.e. they combine or merge whatever they perceive. This feature has been used to present words as whole, global language units, from which we get down to the level of components. In addition, the good visual memory of the pre-school child makes it is easier for them to remember whole words. Therefore, in the natural language teaching method the whole word method of literacy instruction coexists with the visual analytical-synthetic one, something which is particularly useful at early stages of education.

An integral part of the natural language teaching method is writing influenced by reading. Making graphical representations becomes a new way of communication for the child. The natural language teaching method assumes planning a series of activities which will step up the child's activity with regards to the acquisition of writing skills.

A point of departure for natural language teaching is a short and simple text and illustrations that highly relate to it. Texts form stories included in little books entitled "Sunshine Library", a series of 40 books designed for self-study reading by pre-school children. All books are included in the four sets and are differentiated by their constantly increasing level of difficulty:

- **set 1:** Jillian Cutting – The Juggler, Jill Eggleton – Night, Joy Cowley – The Apple, Jillian Cutting – Sausage, Joy Cowley – Big Race, Jillian Cutting – Watching TV, Jillian Cutting – The Storm, Jill Eggleton – A Birthday Party, Jillian Cutting – The Balloons, Jill Eggleton – Where Is My Hat?;



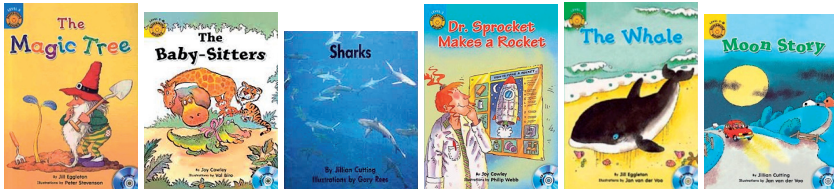
- **set 2:** Jill Eggleton – A Journey, Joy Cowley – Elephant Walk, Jill Eggleton – At the Zoo, Jillian Cutting – Where is My Dad?, Jillian Cutting – The Space Monster, Jillian Cutting – Who Ate the Bananas?, Joy Cowley – The Dragon, Jill Eggleton – I Can Climb, Joy Cowley – My Bike Can Fly!, Joy Cowley – Dinner Time;



- **set 3:** Jillian Cutting – The Penguins, Jillian Cutting – The Speed Boat, Joy Cowley – Jack and the Giant, Joy Cowley – The Magic Machine, Jill Eggleton – The Sky Diver, Jill Eggleton – The Snow Race, Jill Eggleton – The Pirate, Joy Cowley – The Cow in the Hole, Jillian Cutting – The Hungry Lion, Joy Cowley – The Seals;



- **set 4:** Jillian Cutting – At the fair, Jill Eggleton – The Magic Tree, Joy Cowley – The Babysitters, Jillian Cutting – Sharks, Joy Cowley – Dr Sprocket Makes a Rocket, Jill Eggleton – Grandpa’s New Car, Joy Cowley – I Like Worms!, Jill Eggleton – The Whale, Jillian Cutting – Moon Story, Joy Cowley – The Blueberry Pie.



Didactic aids used in the series are very well organised and introduce already consolidated semantic structures, providing new contents regarding language competence at a slow pace. Each book is composed of three stories. Typically, the first story includes one text with carefully selected new language structures. The following two stories serve the purpose of material consolidation. The essence of the books are pictures, which should be in line with the text because the basis of reading is to associate an image with its graphical representation. The print used in the books is large, legible, the words are clearly separated, and every sentence starts with a new line. The stories are simple and presented with repetitive sentence patterns.

Natural language teaching develops and deepens the child's natural willingness to speak, read or draw graphical symbols. Speech is here not only the foundation of the child's expression and learning to read and write, but also a support for the child's paralinguage activity.

The objective of natural language teaching is:

- to support the child in the process of discovering, creating, and understanding the signs which serve as means of communication between people,

-
- to help the child gradually gain independence in using such signs unassisted,
 - to provide the child with knowledge regarding the types of signs of the written and spoken language, their nature and possible applications,
 - to satisfy the need of understanding and being understood.

The task of the teacher following the natural language teaching method is to direct the didactic-educational process in such way that:

- the child can discover, get to know, and use various skills comprising the communication process,
- it creates opportunities for the child's free, unobstructed communication with others, for collecting, consolidating and broadening different experiences related to one's own activity,
- it yields a pattern of behaviour to follow, the essence of which is for people to communicate,
- it creates conditions which will allow the child to be successful in plumbing the mysteries of language communication between people,
- it organises situations through which the child can find the path of its own individual development and to explore its own predisposition,
- it positively reinforces the child's activeness,
- the cooperation with parents is active.

In order to accomplish goals and carry out tasks awaiting the teacher adopting the natural language teaching method the following materials need to be used in his daily routine:

- a series of little books by New Zealand writers entitled "Sunshine Library" and published by WSiP,
- the so-called "big books" (A3 paper size), which are enlarged versions of the "Sunshine Library" little books,

-
- poetry cards including poems, nursery rhymes, lyrics, accompanied by corresponding illustrations,
 - books created by the teacher, supplementing the theme introduced by New Zealand writers,
 - books created with the cooperation of the children, using their works, constituting an expression of their creativity,
 - letter cards including block capitals, upper case and lower case letters,
 - the so-called “individual alphabet” assisting individual writing,
 - worksheets including graphical exercises and didactic tasks of various nature and level of difficulty.

All aids used in the natural language learning setting are properly arranged as the teaching area is divided into separate interest areas. The main purpose is to channel children’s interest in the world. The room arrangement gives children access to aids and an opportunity to use them freely. What is more, it offers the teacher a chance to observe their pupils. The following interest areas or corners are found in the room of a group working on the principle of the natural language learning model:

- reading area,
- letter area,
- writing and drawing area,
- listening area,
- maths area,
- arts area,
- theatre area,
- music area,
- science and research area,
- construction area (Czerwińska, 1995, p. 34–38).

A literacy teaching programme based on the natural language learning model includes three equivalent forms of operation of children and teachers:

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- teacher-dominated activities,
 - teacher-assisted activities,
 - unassisted activities.

In the natural language teaching method the teacher supports the child in his aspirations to discover the meaning of the reading process on his own. The process of learning to read is staged as follows:

- the emerging pre-reading stage,
- the early reading stage,
- the fluent reading stage.

Reading materials employed at the above phases are selected carefully for the child to succeed in learning. The natural language teaching method assumes the following types of activities regarding the learning of reading:

- joint reading,
- team reading,
- individual reading.

On the other hand, exercises aimed at teaching the children to write on the basis of natural language learning are as follows:

- writing for children,
- writing with children,
- individual writing.

Writing with children involves activities performed either with the whole group or small teams. Children try to write letters supervised and assisted by the teacher. During individual writing the teacher supports child's unassisted activity and motivates him to undertake writing attempts (Kamińska, 1999, p. 81).

Example methodological solutions of the natural language teaching method

1. Theme unit based on the book titled "Underwater" (Ulita, 2011, p. 49–51):

the main letter: r, R,

the main word: ryba (fish),

repeat word structures: hunt(s), for.

Themes covered:

- types of reservoirs on earth, their location on the map – a characteristic colour scheme in map design,
- the Baltic Sea – the Polish sea, larger Polish rivers, lakes,
- underwater landscape – coral reefs, shipwrecks,
- aquatic flora and fauna,
- sea resources,
- food chains,
- measuring liquids – fun activities and experiments – conclusions.

Supplementary literature:

- "Great Undersea Search"
- "Sea" from the "Explore the World" series,
- "The Book of the Sea",
- "Sea Animals",
- "Whales" from the "The World Yesterday and Today" series,
- "Do Whales Need To Die?"

Reading and writing:

"Underwater" – working with a large format book, reading to children, reading with children;

discussing illustrations, predicting the ending, analysis and auditory synthesis of the word "fish";

spotting the letter *r* in the text and finding requested words;

analysis and auditory synthesis of selected vocabulary;

individual reading to a group of children;

“R, r – ryba” (fish) – a word card – discussing the shape of the letter and the way it is written;

“Small fish” – poetry card – reading to children, reading with children, exercises involving spotting and indicating the letter r (ryba) in the text and marking vowels;

“Fish” – worksheet – filling the contours of the word with letter-like patterns vertically – the sheet is properly positioned.

Natural education:

“Inhabitants of the coral reef” – watching fragments of a documentary – systematizing knowledge, drawing attention to food chains.

Maths education:

“How much water is in the bottle” – research games – comparing capacities, drawing conclusions, attempting to justify them.

Artistic activities:

“Our aquarium” – cutting out, decorating fish, drawing and painting on a salt base, gaining experience – salt as a resource extracted from the sea.

Musical activities:

“Small fish” – rhythmical games played when listening to a song – determining the structure of the song, getting the rhythm, defining the meter of the song.

Motor activity:

Morning exercises and gymnastics of one’s own design.

Activities in interest areas

Reading area:

- reading in pairs and individual reading of stories selected by the teacher,
- reading out the names of reservoirs on the map,
- attempting to read out the names of fish in the book.

Writing area:

- joint writing of fish names – alphabet cards,
- making captions under individual works – ruling,
- mastering the writing of selected letters.

Listening area:

- listening to relaxation music – sounds of the sea,
- listening to “The Fisherman and His Wife”.

Maths area:

- classifying fish templates – creating sets,
- adding the scores in the Fisherman game.

Reading area:

- displaying books regarding the topic covered,
- browsing through picture albums and other publications about the underwater worlds – gaining information.

Science area:

- observing and feeding fish in the aquarium.

An example of a lesson plan

Theme: Exotic animals – word and phonetic games (Ulita, 2011, p. 53–55).

Aims:

- children can find cards with their own names and read them,
- children try to “read” the book of the week pointing to the words as they read,
- children can recognize and name exotic animals,
- children can match pictures with correct words,
- children can indicate words with the letter: l,
- children perform an auditory analysis of words on the basis of pictures by searching for the sound “l” in initial positions.

Methods: natural language teaching/learning.

Forms: individual, team, group.

Didactic means: the book of the week “Who Ate the Banana?”, a letter card, pictures of animals, cards, a CD for games involving physical movements, various pictures, cards with various words, worksheets, hoops, animal tags.

Class course:

1. “Find your name tag” – a game involving physical movement.
Children move as they listen to the music. When it stops, they find their name tags and stand by them. When the music is on again, the teacher swaps the location of the name tags.
2. Reading to children, reading the book of the week, “Who Ate the Bananas?”, together with children.
 - the teacher reads the text to the children at the same time showing the words read out,
 - the children together with the teacher read the text, the teacher indicates the words read,
 - individual reading attempts. Keen children “read” the book on their own and point to the words read.
3. Discussion regarding the content of the book. Phonemic awareness exercises.
 - What animals are hiding in our book?
 - Pointing to animals on the pictures and finding matching captions.

-
- Dividing words into syllables.
 - Distinguishing the sound in the initial position.
4. "Exotic animals" – game involving physical movement and imitation.
The children imitate movements of animals of their choice.
Selecting adequate movement patterns to the accompaniment.
 5. Small teamwork.
The teacher divides the children into 3 groups.
They children sit by the hoops away from each other.
Every team is then joined by an animal (the teacher with a tag representing an animal from the book of the week) which gives them a task to do.
Team I – the children are to group word cards so that words with the letter "l" are inside the hoop.
Team II – the children are to group pictures so that inside the hoop are pictures with names with the sound "l" in the initial position.
Team III – children are to read the words and match them to corresponding pictures.
 6. Game involving physical movement.
 - drama technique "Animal sculptures" – pair work activity, one child is a sculptor, one – the material (role swapping).
 7. Desk work.
The teacher prepares worksheets of various difficulty levels:
 - Worksheet I – reading out and matching words and pictures,
 - Worksheet II – highlighting the letters: l, L from among other letters.

Conclusion

Natural language teaching or learning is mostly about the unique way of organizing educational influence that favours the child's acquisition of knowledge and skills needed in concordance with his development level and interests. Learning is supported with children's activity and a passion for knowing. Didactic practices based on the described

model allow us to draw the following conclusion: pre-school literacy learning may be nice and easy and children can find a lot of joy in it.

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The Innovative Early Childhood Education Teacher – A Summary of Own Research

Abstract: Content of article by Anna Szkolak *The Innovative Early Childhood Education Teacher – A Summary of Own Research* is related with the debate on the Polish teacher condition in the situation of the system transformation, changes in the Polish school. The particular role in this process is ascribed to an early childhood education teacher and his or her creative competences.

A creative teacher is undoubtedly a teacher with great imaginativeness and inspiration, open to the ideas of others, constantly deepening his knowledge and improving his professional qualifications. Constantly faced with new educational situations, the teacher has to make sure his work is not conventional or formalized but instead requires continuous searching for and creating new solutions. Pedagogical innovation is a characteristic feature of a creative teacher. Empirical research include early childhood teachers in town environment. Their professionalism was valued on the basis of self-assessment. The research results gave the empirical material proving the fact that early childhood education teachers present a good level of creative competences. The end of article is statement, there is no *one right way* for helping young children achieve their creative potential. Teachers will need to continue to experiment and test alternatives to see what is effective in their situation.

Keywords: innovation, creative competences, early childhood education teacher

Introduction

The main objective of modern early education requires a sensitive, wise, creative and critical teacher able to show the student various individual development paths from which to choose. Teaching for creativity has become a fundamental requirement of a modern education system, which is why the early childhood education teacher should acquire new creative competences.

Creative teacher – creative pupil

“Each child is a unique individual and all children are born with the ability to learn. Children have amazing capabilities which indicates that it is through the unity of thinking and feeling that young children can explore their world, represent their ideas, and communicate with others at their highest level. When educators fully understand how exploration, representation, and communication feed one other, they can help children achieve this potential best.

Teachers have to do their best to draw pupil’s attention, so they will have to design creative activities according to the necessities of each child in order to keep interest levels high in the classroom. This work can be difficult if you aren’t able to identify what pupil’s like doing, which has to be incorporated and used as teaching resource to maintain their attention. In this sense, teachers have to adapt their method of teaching according to pupil’s motivation and provide suitable conditions to maintain high levels of motivation. There is little chance for creativity where pupils work for long periods of time, when they have a little active input, when the results are controlled and prescribed or when complex topics are taught in superficial ways. What a creative teacher needs in early childhood education is time to explore, experiment and play with ideas, and we have to provide the right conditions for creativity to flourish.

If we achieve this aim children will become enthusiastic learners, which means that they will be active and creative explorers who are not

afraid to try out their ideas and to think their own thoughts and to afford this goal is really important to be a creative teacher.

Before explaining what a teacher should do to overcome the routine and catch pupil's attention I will start by showing what creativity means according to some contemporary authors and then we will have to put into practise these theories" (Szkolak, López, 2013, p. 73–74).

According to some authors , the meaning of being creative can be different, but they agree that creativity is a process that can be learnt so if you practice your creativity with different exercises or methods you can improve your capacity to think and act in a creative way. I have selected some authors that I have considered relevant to take into account. What skills and competences should a creative teacher possess in order to work effectively with young primary school students?

Czaja-Chudyba (2013) thinks that "through a creative style of work, personal creativity, that is through creating a special atmosphere during classes, a teacher can effectively trigger children's creativity and constructive criticism" (Czaja-Chudyba, 2013, p. 229). At the same time, Sufa (2011) maintains that "a creative teacher should not only create a proper environment for developing student's creativity but also, if necessary, modify creative activity of children according to their needs and developmental opportunities. He himself should feel the need for creativity" (Sufa, 2011, p. 57). Teachers need reflection about personal pedagogical practice, not only total trust in their practical knowledge (Grochowalska, 2014, p. 34).

"Educators understand that children learn best through meaningful play, therefore, an important competence of a creative's teachers is to provide a child a program which reflects the integration of physical, cognitive, social-emotional, language and self help skills. The best way to afford it is using creative techniques that allow children to express themselves using different methods.

As far as I'm concerned, young children are developmentally capable of classroom experiences which require higher level thinking skills, including analysis (breaking down material into component parts to understand the structure, seeing similarities and differences); synthesis (putting parts

together to form a new whole, rearranging, reorganizing); and evaluation (judging the value of material based on definite criteria).

Children want and need to express ideas and messages through many different expressive avenues and symbolic media. Young children form mental images, represent their ideas, and communicate with the world in a combination of ways. They need increasing competence and integration across formats including words, gestures, drawings, paintings, sculpture, construction, music, dramatic play, movement, and dance. Through sharing and gaining others' perspectives, and then revisiting and revising their work, children move to new levels of awareness. Teachers act as guides, without imposing ideas and beliefs upon the children.

Besides, young children learn through meaningful activities in which different subject areas are integrated. Open-ended discussions and long-term activities bring together whole- language activities, science, social studies, dramatic play, and artistic creation. Activities that are meaningful and relevant to the child's life experiences provide opportunities to teach across the curriculum and assist children in seeing the interrelationships of things they are learning" (Szkolak, López, 2013, p. 77).

The Creative Competences of Early Childhood Education Teachers – a summary of own research^{6,7}

Every teacher starting his work at school should understand that creative competences are indispensable in their everyday work and significantly increase its effectiveness.

⁶ A detailed description of the research is published in Polish: A. Szkolak, *Mistrzostwo zawodowe nauczycieli wczesnej edukacji. Istota, treść, uwarunkowania* [Professional Mastery of Early Education Teachers. The Essence, Contents and Conditions], Attica, Cracow 2013.

⁷ A full research report about creative competences of early childhood education teachers is published in English: A. Szkolak, *Creative Teacher – a Study Report*, [in:] *Předškolní vzdělávání v teorii a praxi. Jaká je současná situace v české republice a zahraniční východiska pro vzdělávání u nás* (ed.) Z. Syslová; V. Rodová, Masarykova Univerzita, Brno 2014, p. 176–184.

A closer look has been taken at a catalogue of creative competences of early childhood education teachers. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to diagnose the competences during the whole period of a teacher's professional activity. The subjects of the research were teachers from primary schools located in cities in the Świętokrzyskie region. The following questions were asked:

1. Are you able to prepare your own teaching curriculum?
2. Do you improve your teaching and training skills? Do you modernize your teaching tools and introduce innovative solutions?
3. Do you create your own educational projects (e.g. lesson plans, articles) and publish them in educational journals?

The first question in the survey was related to the ability to design the teacher's own curriculum.

Table 1. Self-assessment of the ability to design teacher's own teaching curriculum in the context of the length of service

Are you able to design your own teaching curriculum?										
Self-assessment category	Length of service in years								Total	
	0 – 5		6 – 15		16 – 25		More than 25			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High	3	30	17	47	17	41	3	23	40	40
Average	6	60	11	30	22	53	9	69	48	48
Low	1	10	8	23	2	6	1	8	12	12
Total	10	100	36	100	41	100	13	100	100	100

The results obtained show that a comparable number of teachers assess the level of abilities to design their own teaching curriculum as high – 40% and as average – 48%. Only 12% admit they are not able to design their own teaching curriculum. The results are similar in all groups of teachers. In the group of teachers with the shortest length of service out of 10 people only 3 (30%) are unable to design a curriculum for early school education, 6 (60%) report an average interest in designing their own curriculum for grades 1–3 of early school education whereas 1 person (10%) reported a high interest in doing so. In the group of teachers with the length of service spanning from 6 to 15 years, 47% of the surveyed teachers reported a high level of ability to prepare a teaching curriculum, 30% – average and 8% – no ability to do so. In the group of teachers with the length of service from 16 to 25 years approximately half (41%) reports high level of the ability to design one's own teaching curriculum, 22 teachers (53%) – average level and 2 (6%) – low level. Based on the self-assessment of teachers working in their profession for longer than 25 years, 23% reports high level of the ability to design their own teaching curriculum, 69% – average whereas 8% – low.

The empirical material points to certain problems existing in connection with the ability to design one's own teaching curriculum. The majority of teachers reported an average level of ability in this respect.

The respondents were also asked about whether and how they improve their teaching and training skills and whether they modernize their teaching tools and introduce innovative solutions.

The results presented in Table 2 refer to the answers to Question 2, taking into account the length of service of the surveyed teachers.

As can be seen from the results presented in Table 2, the surveyed teachers reported a high level of ability to improve their teaching and training skills (93%). In the light of self-assessment, all teachers working not longer than 15 years have no problems in introducing innovative solutions to teaching activities. More experienced teachers also make some attempts to modernize their teaching tools. A high level of self-assessment was reported by 38 teachers (92%) with the length of service from 16 to 25 years and 9 teachers (69%) working for longer than 25 years.

Table 2. Self-assessment of the level of improvement of teaching and training skills as well as undertaken attempts at modernizing teaching tools and introducing innovative solutions.

Do you improve your teaching and training skills? Do you modernize your teaching tools and introduce innovative solutions?										
Self-assessment category	Length of service in years								Total	
	0 – 5		6 – 15		16 – 25		More than 25			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High	10	100	36	100	38	92	9	69	93	93
Average	0	0	0	0	3	8	4	31	7	7
Low	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	10	100	36	100	41	100	13	100	100	100

Only 8% of the respondents consider their creative abilities in their contacts with students as average. These are 3 teachers in the group of teachers with the length of service from 16 to 25 years and 4 (31%) from the group of teachers working for longer than 25 years. No teachers assessed the level of their creative abilities in teaching as low.

To sum up, it needs to be stressed that the majority of respondents assessed the level of improving their teaching and training skills, modernizing their teaching tools and introducing innovative solutions as high. In this way, they are able to master their teaching, introducing new solutions which lead to better teaching outcomes and faster progress of students. The teachers participating in the study are engaged in searching, examining and experimenting, thus going off the beaten track when it comes to improving their teaching and training skills.

The last question connected with creative competences regarded the ability to design the teacher's own educational projects and to publish

them. Based on the results presented in Table 3 it can be concluded that the answers to the given question depended on the length of service.

Table 3. Self-assessment concerning the creation of teacher's own educational projects (e.g. lesson plans, articles) and publishing them in educational journals.

Do you create your own educational projects (e.g. lesson plans, articles) and publish them in educational journals?										
Self-assessment category	Length of service in years								Total	
	0 – 5		6 – 15		16 – 25		More than 25			
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
High	3	30	12	33	13	31	4	30	32	32
Average	6	60	15	41	19	46	7	53	47	47
Low	1	10	9	26	9	23	2	17	21	21
Total	10	100	36	100	41	100	13	100	100	100

The highest number of surveyed teachers (47%) reported a moderate level of self-assessment concerning the creation of their own educational projects. A similar number of teachers assessed their level of abilities as high – 32% and low – 21%. There were no significant differences in the results between the groups of teachers with the length of service of up to 5 years and from 6 to 15 years, in which approximately one third of the respondents, 30% and 33% respectively, assessed the level of abilities to create their own lesson plans and write articles as high, 60% and 41% – as average whereas 10% and 26% do not create educational projects and do not publish articles in educational journals. The teachers with a length of service from 16 to 25 years reported a little worse results – 31% assessed their abilities to create educational project

as high, whereas 46% claimed their abilities in this respect were average. 23% of the respondents are not involved in the preparation of their own educational projects and publishing them. More than half of teachers (53%) with the length of service of 25 years or more claimed that their abilities to create educational projects are average. 30% (4 teachers) state that they present new educational ideas, however, 17% (2 teachers) reveal that in their work they do not pay attention to new ideas concerning educational work with children.

Comparing the research results presented above with the results of a study conducted by Włoch (2006), similar conclusions can be drawn, namely in both studies a small number of teachers are reported to write their own lesson plans. The majority of teachers use ready curricula and only a small percentage of teachers participating in the study writes their own curricula or modifies the existing ones (Włoch, 2006). The conclusions drawn from both studies are that teachers prefer to use ready curricula rather than design their own ones and bear the moral and professional responsibilities for them.

However, the answers provided by the teachers participating in the study are contradictory. On the one hand, many teachers admit to having some problems with designing their own educational projects, on the other, they claim that they introduce innovative solutions to their process of education. It might be concluded that the teachers are aware of the problems connected with improving their teaching and training skills but nevertheless make attempts at modernizing them.

Conclusion

The results presented point to two trends. On the one hand, the teachers undertake creative activities, manifested by the improvement of teaching and training skills and attempting at obtaining additional professional qualifications. On the other hand, the teachers are not always ready to design their own curriculum or write individual educational projects, such as lesson plans or articles.

Looking at the self-assessment of creative competences of early school education teachers, the overall conclusion is that such competences are developed at an average level. Nevertheless, this part of research can be summarized with an optimistic statement that the surveyed teachers have the ability to assess their work critically. This, in turn, guarantees the understanding of the need for continuous professional development, both in terms of knowledge and creative undertakings.

“As we have seen children have amazing capabilities to learn, and the best way of promote and motivate their knowledge is through creativity, which also means the unity of thinking and feeling that young children can explore their world, represent their ideas, and communicate with others at their highest level. When educators fully understand how exploration, representation, and communication feed one other, they can help children achieve this potential best.

The main objective of a creative teacher is that pupils learn in a motivating way, so we have to design activities to achieve our aim. In my opinion it is important that pupils interact with each other to create a favourable climate in the classroom to enhance their learning, and now we know different techniques to achieve it. We can try to put into practice in class, and maybe we will have to change some of the point according to children's necessities because every child is unique (...). Pupils should be given enough freedom to practise and learn from their mistakes because it is more effective to prompt pupils into discovering their own mistakes and helping them to find the right solution for themselves. I think that it is also really important to cooperate with families, because it has no sense to work on some values in the classroom if then children are learning in the opposite way in their own houses.

Finally, there is no *one right way* for helping young children achieve their creative potential. Teachers will need to continue to experiment and test alternatives to see what is effective in their situation” (Szkolak, López, 2013, p. 84).

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Preparedness of Czech Primary School Teachers for Inclusive Primary Education

Abstract: Preparedness of teachers to work with pupils with a need of supportive measures and especially with pupils who live and grow up in socially excluded localities, is very low. Quantitatively oriented research investigation⁸, carried out in 13 regions of the Czech Republic with the sample size of 2005 respondents, offers results that raise doubts towards the inclusively oriented primary education. The teachers are not ready for the phenomenon. This paper focuses on attitudinal constructs of the teachers which can be understood as evaluative relationship towards the observed phenomenon, whose form reflects the subjectively perceived preparedness. It concerned the orientation in the context of questions of social exclusion and school education, actual form of school environment and, ultimately, their own perception of school inclusion.

Keywords: preparedness, teacher, primary school, child and pupil with special educational needs, inclusive education, research, social exclusion.

⁸ Research Project ESF ECOP called "Sociological monitoring of educational inputs and outputs of children and pupils, including children and pupils with special educational needs in the Czech Republic" (CZ.1.07/1.2.00/47.0009).

I. Introduction, or the Origin of Our Research Topic

The current transformations in the Czech education system which are especially related to primary education pose many questions. The answer to these questions cannot be simply defined and finding the correct and accurate answers is not easy. It is rather impossible because if we want the answers to be unambiguous, we will omit important moments from the school environment which should be covered in the process of inclusion and for which the critical discussion among politicians, experts and teachers and even the parents supports common interests, sometimes even contradictory reactions and aims. A new frequently used term "inclusive education" connects all pupils into a collective educational process, therefore the class of pupils creates a new heterogeneous group. By the presented paper we do not contribute to the "infected" discussion. The aim is to point to the current situation of the (un)preparedness of primary school teachers for designing school inclusion in a practical sense.

The mentioned transformational changes interfere with the differently designed horizontal or vertical schematic processes of school policy. Various professional platforms from experts or fans and even from the parents' group that influence educational policy have been intensively and extensively (in terms of time) involved in individual process activities. The advisory and working bodies of the Government of the Czech Republic have a significant role in these matters, as well as variously formed working groups of individual departments of ministries. The question of mainstream education and the conception of inclusive education in narrower or broader sense is also dealt with by differently defined registered societies (formerly non-governmental organizations) in the Czech Republic. The individual problems of school practice which are subject to transformation have become the focus of the interest and represent an outcome of the particular results of long-term observed intentions, the results of empirical domestic or international research investigation, but they also incline to appeals and criticisms of the European or other global organizations involved in this topic. Here an

overview of a few key changes that are still in the process of being solved are required:

- diagnostic procedure influencing the transfer of pupils outside mainstream education,
- new diagnostic methods and procedures,
- reduction of types of primary schools, therefore, a change in the conception of integration and inclusion,
- support of a school counselling facility,
- competences of a school counselling facility,
- system of further education of pedagogical workers,
- system of supportive measures, their content and scope,
- qualification of teachers to perform their function,
- compulsory pre-school education in the minimum length of one school year,
- conception of pre-school education in preparatory class of the primary school,
- modification of curriculum documents in pre-school and primary education,
- number of pupils in class of integrative, respectively inclusive education.

We oriented our research intention in a different direction in the context of this paper. We dealt with pedagogical workers of primary schools who held various pedagogical positions (functions) in the observed period of time. They are definitely affected by the mentioned changes, but we did not set the mentioned school political problems within the research. The subject became the research question: *Are the pedagogical workers of primary schools prepared for an inclusive education?* This became our central research topic outside the whole research intention with the title *Sociological monitoring of educational inputs and outputs of children and pupils, including children and pupils with special educational needs in the Czech Republic (CZ.1.07/1.2.00/47.0009)* and it contains three research lines, corresponding with the key activities of the research (KA1, KA2, KA3).

Our presented paper is based on the results KA1 with a title *Sociological analysis focused on a comparison of achieved results of pupils with special educational needs in different types of schools*.

The major aim of the realised intention was the sociological monitoring of educational indicators in education of children and pupils, including children and pupils with special educational needs in all regions of the Czech Republic excluding the capital, Prague. More specifically, it was an analysis of objective sociological, pedagogical, special educational and psychological indicators in pre-school and compulsory education, and this with the application of a transdisciplinary approach, with the help of qualitatively and quantitatively oriented strategies. The transdisciplinary basis of the outputs of sociologically oriented research intention is underlined by the fact that the direct participants of our own realization were on one side knowledgeable experts in systemized sciences, such as sociology, pedagogy, social pedagogy, special education, psychology, social work, law, political science and others. On the other hand, participants directly from the environment participated in the process of data collection, so that the methodological cohesion of particular inputs, processes and outputs of empirical data was ensured. Subsequently, the data was subject to proper process activities according to the methodological standards of the chosen research orientation and it was published in the following outcomes: Kaleja and Zezulková, 2015a, Kaleja, Zezulková 2015b, Kaleja, 2015, Zezulková, 2015.

II. Who Is Affected by Inclusive Education and How

A child in the context of the educational trajectory is an individual attending pre-school education (kindergarten, a preparatory class of a primary school). In the context of the family environment, a child is a person who is generally considered a child. In the social context a child is considered an individual that has not reached adulthood (18 years of age). A pupil is an individual participating in a state-guaranteed nine-year compulsory school attendance and/or participating in secondary school education (ac-

ording to the Education Act). The educational law regulating the education of children, pupils and students except tertiary education was based on the National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic until 2014 (sc. White Paper, 2001), while from the beginning of 2015 the scope of the education policy with its strategic priorities has been formulated in the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020. For a brief overview we will state only a few key changes of school practice, which are introduced by Strategy 2020, where the emphasis is placed on the following triad of areas in education.

1. Improvement of the quality of education, pedagogical competence of teachers and effective management of the educational system by:
 - innovation of educational programmes,
 - preparation of teachers for these changes (pre-gradual preparation and also further education),
 - completing the carrier system and standards of the teachers' profession,
 - rational equipment of schools with necessary educational means,
 - management of changes which will accompany these innovations, etc.

2. Development of the personality of the educated, and their equipment with positive human and civic attitudes by:
 - availability and permeability of all levels of schools for all social groups,
 - support of participation in early intervention and early phases of pre-school education, especially for children and pupils with a need of supportive measures, and also for their parents,
 - prevention of failure of students in education by the development of competences of teachers and cooperation of schools with functioning counselling services,
 - creation of space for inclusive, stimulating and motivational environment for learning throughout the whole life, etc.

3. Preparation for a job by:

- Increasing the availability and quality of pre-school education,
- Improvement of the 2nd level of education,
- support of secondary vocational education,
- adequate development of networks of schools and school facilities for long-term employability of graduates in the society and the labour market.

These areas of school practice are currently undergoing processes of defining and constructing the final binding form specific for the school environment. They influence the phenomenon of inclusive education in parallel, affecting the quality of social education, determining social equality and social justice, and thereby shifting the interpretation of questions of equal opportunities (for more see Kaleja, 2015, Kaleja & Zezulková E., 2015, Zezulková E., 2015).

The Act No. 561/2004 Coll., on Pre-school, Basic, Secondary, Tertiary Professional and Other Education (the Education Act), as amended, regulates education in all regions in the Czech Republic and is in compliance with the Constitution of the Czech Republic (Act. No. 1/1993 Coll.) and with the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Basic Freedoms (Act no. 2/1993 Coll.). Special educational needs represent certain specifics in the educational trajectory of concerned persons, specified in relevant legal documents. A pre-school child, a pupil and a student with special educational needs is considered, according to effective education legislation, a person that needs the provision of supportive measures in order to fulfil their educational opportunities or to apply or exercise their rights on the basis of equality with others. The amendment of the Education Act no. 82/2015 Coll. further uses the term special educational needs, however, it abandons the original systematic categorisation of pre-school children, pupils and students with special educational needs according to *health disability, health disadvantage, social disadvantage*. Special educational needs of concerned individuals are saturated with supportive measures. Supportive measures mean necessary adjustments in education and education services corresponding to the state of health, cultural

environment or other living conditions of a pre-school child, a pupil or a student. Pre-school children, pupils and students with special educational needs have the right to free provision of supportive measures by the school and educational facility.

The last amendment of the Education Act (82/2015 Coll.) brought several expected changes. Special educational needs are more often specified in relation to fulfilling educational opportunities and application and also in relation to securing their own rights to equality in education through the application/implementation of supportive measures that take into consideration the state of health, cultural environment and living conditions of an individual. The horizontal classification of special educational needs was supplemented with a vertical perspective with five defined levels of support. The level of support is categorically connected with the organisational, pedagogical and financial aspect of integrative or rather inclusive processes. The combination of the usage of individual levels of support can be indicated by counselling facility depending on the type and level of the health disability of an individual.

Pre-school children and pupils from the environment of social exclusion can show signs of all the above mentioned categories of special educational needs if they go through the process of diagnostics in the counselling facility and if they are legitimately diagnosed with a disability or a disadvantage. The special educational needs of the concerned individuals are saturated with supportive measures. These represent a set of diverse strategies and approaches (methods, forms, means, tools, etc.) of education that take into consideration the specifics of a pre-school child, a pupil or a student with special educational needs and they do not represent limits in the education of others. These measures include the following:

- Provision of counselling services at school and outside of school, modification of the organisation, the content, the evaluation, the methods and the forms of education,
- modification of the conditions for commencing and terminating education,

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- the usage of compensatory tools, special textbooks and special educational tools,
 - modification of expected educational outcomes in the plan of curricular documents,
 - education according to the individual educational plan,
 - the usage of the position of a teacher's assistant or another pedagogical worker, interpreter into Czech sign language, transcriber, etc.,
 - provision of education and schooling services with respect to construction and technically adjusted buildings.

Collective education, equal education and social justice in education are terms that the professional public often connects with the concept of inclusive education. In collective education we face a heterogeneous class, while heterogeneity can be perceived variably, from different perspectives (e.g. age, ethnicity, the level of support etc.). The term equal education represents the equality in opportunities of concerned pupils with the emphasis on explicitly taking into consideration the disadvantaged input conditions that the pupils commence their educational path in. The equality of opportunities in this case cannot be measured by mathematical principles, it also cannot be connected with positive discrimination. The equality of opportunities requires the consideration of individual characteristics in comparison with other pupils from non-target groups with a clearly defined aim, which is the support of the personal development of pupil/s in all relevant spheres. Justice in education, even though it is a quickly changing topic in the context of time, place, situation, conditions of education etc., is, therefore, represented by all effective acts and regulations that adjust and guarantee the education of all groups of pupils. In this collective educational process pupils with special educational needs are also included. We do not emphasise their mutual difference, however, we take into consideration their disadvantage or their special educational needs with the aim of determining the level of support in their educational trajectory and setting the optimal supportive internal and external mechanisms in the intention of social justice. Inclusive

trends in education include a wide variety of strategies, activities and processes that are trying to realise justice on the level of quality, pragmatics and optimally outlined education of pupils with special educational needs, while other pupils are not disregarded. On the contrary, all the realised inclusive educational methods in the class must serve to everyone, must be beneficial for everyone. Segregation, marginalization or any methods having the character of exclusion are excluded (comp. Hájková, Strnadová, 2010, Pipeková, J., Vítková, 2014, Adamus, 2015, Bartoňová, B., Vítková, Vrubel, 2014, Lechta, 2010, Krupová, 2010 etc.). The predisposition for the prevention of the mechanisms of social exclusion in the school environment is undoubtedly becoming the internal (subjectively perceived) and qualified external (objectively measurable) preparedness of a teacher for the education of pupils in variously composed heterogeneous groups (for more see Kaleja, 2015).

The Czech Republic formally guarantees inclusion in education in acts, regulations and strategic documents. Within the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, according to article 24, which states: *“Education, according to which States, which are Contractual Parties, recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education with a view to realizing this right without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunity.”*, the Czech Republic approved another Action Plan for Inclusive Education for the period 2016–2018 (Action Plan). According to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports it follows the Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020 and the Long-term Policy Objectives of Education and Development of the Education System in the Czech Republic for the period 2015–2020. The Action Plan solves the support of equal opportunities and just access to quality education, including prevention and correction of the early termination of education. It mentions supportive measures, requires a register of the number of pupils in inclusive education and inspection system of diagnostics in counselling facilities. The Action Plan also pays extra attention especially to the binding tasks of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports towards the European Commission by determining three priority tasks:

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- Cancellation of the appendices to Framework Educational Programme for Elementary Education for pupils with mild mental disability and revising the Framework Educational Programme for Elementary Education. The support of pupils with mild mental disability will be implemented in its revised version.
 - Update of the implementing regulations of § 16 of the amendment of Education Act, which include the rules of the provision of the system of supportive measures.⁹ Their specific list and purpose of the supportive measures will be systematically determined in the annex to the regulation.
 - Application of already implemented diagnostic instruments and systems of diagnosis and the register of special educational needs for pre-school children from socially disadvantaged environment in order to identify supportive measures and also methodical documents for the work with these instruments.

The process of the creation of an inclusive and quality educational system is divided into five strategic paths¹⁰ in the Action Plan that create a mutually connected system:

- The sooner, the better (the necessity of early and efficient support of versatile development of every pre-school child and pupil from the family, the teacher, other experts).
- Inclusive education is beneficial for everyone (for the development of the potential of every pupil not only professional support is necessary but also positive attitudes of the pupil towards education and good climate in classes and schools).

⁹ Supportive measures are necessary adjustments in education and school services corresponding to the state of health, cultural environment or other living conditions of a pre-school child, a pupil or a student. Pre-school children, pupils and students with special educational needs have the right to free provision of supportive measures by the school and school facility.

¹⁰ European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education. *Five Key Messages For Inclusive Education*. Odense, Denmark 2014.

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- Highly qualified professionals (the quality of work of pedagogical workers is one of the most important aspects influencing the results of pupils and determining the quality of the educational system as a whole).
 - Supportive systems and the mechanisms of financing (counselling in schools, in school counselling facilities including career counselling, etc.).
 - Reliable data (the creation of strategies on the basis of verifiable data is a necessary precondition for a long-term development of the systems of inclusive education – ensuring equal opportunities, internal differentiation and individualisation of education, adaptation during the transition between the levels of education, the usage of formative and summative evaluation of children, etc.).

The perception of pre-school children and pupils with special educational needs gets closer to fulfilling the Convention¹¹ on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which defines: "... *disability is an evolving concept that results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinder their full and effective participation in the society on an equal basis with others.*" A similar point of view can be applied also on disadvantages connected with different living conditions.

The research by Kaleja (2013) outlines the gaps in the educational paths of target groups: motivation, support, current condition of education, purpose and aim of education. The results say that only 12 % of pupils connect the education with their future professional success in the labour market, then that 14 % of pupils state that they are bored at school, they have nothing to do and that no one pays sufficient attention to them. Discipline problems are subjectively stated by a total of 14 %. Furthermore, 76 % of pupils do not like Czech language classes and mathematics at

¹¹ The notice from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs about the negotiation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, no. 10/2010 Coll. of international agreements. For the content of the Convention see: <http://www.mpsv.cz/files/clanky/10774/umluva_CJ_rev.pdf>

school (Kaleja, M. 2014), perhaps because they are not successful in these subjects. This is also shown by the national sociological analysis GAC from 2009. Approximately 22 % of pupils of primary schools subjectively declare that they are not successful at school. In other words they come to school with the belief that they are not good and that they have to sit through the lessons. This can be considered alarming for the pedagogical practice. On the other hand, the mentioned limits can show the way to proceed, what to use and what to build on. For example: 73 % of pupils state in the research that the parents care about their education. This is also confirmed in the research of Alice Petrasová and Štefan Porubský (2013). They further state that the teacher is the person who helps them at school (84 %), so they are aware of his / her authority, they like him / her and they trust him / her. 42 % of pupils state that they are successful in some subjects and that they thrive.

Globally, we can summarize the consequences of social exclusion in the socio-economic, cultural and political dimensions. The Roma language is considered the mother tongue or the native language of Roma pupils, if their parents or their relatives use it to communicate with them. The actual declaration of the Roma language as the mother tongue of Roma pupils and their parents is greatly influenced by several factors. Červenka et al (2009, p. 48) says: "...and lastly, a native language is also influenced by the attitude the users have towards their own language, or towards the whole culture where the language belongs. Roma people, who currently do not have active knowledge of their language and who did not learn the language from their parents, may still – thanks to their positive attitude towards the Roma culture, claim the Roma language as their mother tongue and view their lack of the knowledge of their language as a deficit. On the other hand, some Roma people, who see a great value and benefit in the integration into the non-Roma environment, may be suppressing their knowledge of the Roma language and claim the Czech language as their mother tongue in order to demonstrate a symbol of integration. This is not to say that "integration" is incompatible with active participation in the Roma community or with using the Roma language actively." Šotolová (2008) focuses in her work on the Roma and Czech language in terms of

the interference between both languages and in individual language levels (phonetic, phonological, lexical-semantic, morphologic and syntactic, pragmatic). She also specifies the determination of mother tongue with particular linguistic peculiarities used by Roma pupils.

The question of the social and psychological maturity of Roma children is scrutinized by Ferejenčík (1995), who claims that Roma children who attend the first grade are, in terms of cognitive, emotional and social aspects, poorly prepared. They are not familiar with the basic skills necessary to succeed in school. According to Fontana (1997) a child coming from a fluent and expressive language environment has an advantage over a child whose parents cannot be regarded as well-equipped in terms of language skills. Portik (2003) adds that speech plays a key role in the development of behaviour which can be described as intelligent. Therefore, parents with low language skills are not able to teach their children correct communication methods which would correct their behaviour. Portik (2003) also states that sometimes young students who attend primary schools are evaluated by teachers as less gifted. The primary cause of their disability is the fact that they come from an unmotivated speech environment.

At the beginning of 2015 the Government of the Czech Republic adopted the *Strategy for Roma Integration till 2020* and in it the government set the following primary goals for the area of education: “*Decreasing the differences in education between majority society and the Roma people through ensuring equal access of Roma people to quality education on all levels.*” These are subsequently categorised into specific goals:

- Increasing the access of Roma children to quality pre-school education and care,
- removing the practice of incorrect placement of Roma children into education with lower educational ambitions,
- ensuring basic conditions for the development of the inclusion of Roma pupils in the main educational stream and the development of inclusive education,
- removing the segregation of Roma children in education on all levels,

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- supporting Roma people in achieving secondary and tertiary education,
 - supporting the addition of education in Roma adults and lifelong education.

The strategy states that it also considers the following documents important in achieving the set goal: *Operation Programme for Research, Development and Education 2014–2020*, *Strategy Against Social Exclusion 2016–2020*, *Social Inclusion Strategy 2014–2020*, *Plan of measures for the execution of the verdict of the European Court for Human Rights D.H and Others vs the Czech Republic “Equal Opportunities” from 2012 and its updated version (Action Plan for the Verdict on Education of Roma Children, Pupils and Students for the period 2015–2017)*.

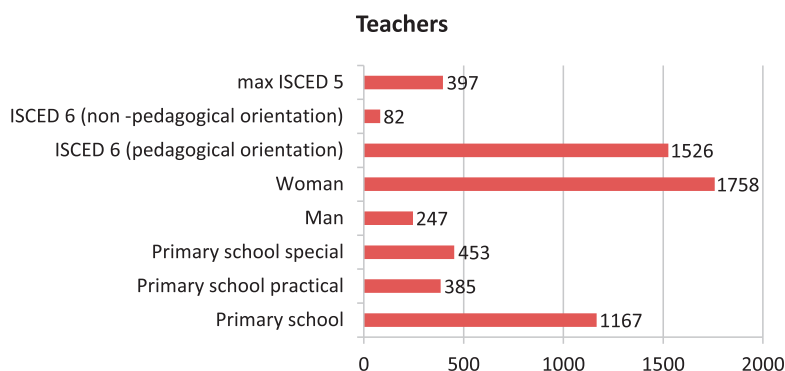
III. Research about the (Un)preparedness of Teachers for Inclusive Education

With respect to the set order from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic and with respect to the subject-factual tendency of interdisciplinary approach we set the goal to *analyse the preparedness of teachers of primary schools in 13 regions of the Czech Republic* (Prague region was excluded), where we categorised the observed phenomenon into three research areas. Their partial components influence each other, they mingle and interact with each other. The areas are the following: the teacher's orientation, the teacher's field practice, teacher's point of view of inclusion, in the context of our research they are considered the bearing pillars of the subjectively perceived preparedness of the teacher (N 2005) for the education of pre-school children and pupils of three target groups:¹²

¹² Legend: * = the minimum criterion for groups of children and pupils according to the order of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports – see research set = target group of children and pupils

- Pre-school children and pupils mentally within normal limits, children and pupils with mental disability *, pre-school children and pupils in mental subnorm *,
- Pre-school children and pupils with special educational needs without a mental disability, pre-school children and pupils from the environment of social exclusion *,
- Pre-school children and pupils from the ethnic majority society, children and pupils from an ethnic minority society.

**Figure 1. The Characteristics of Teachers of Primary Schools
– the participants in the study**



We point out that we researched the subjectively perceived preparedness of teachers. The concept took into consideration previously realised researches and their key findings for the researched phenomenon. In the research we took into consideration the variability of the procedures of individual steps, the actual procedures and the possibilities of the realisation of the research scheme. We took inspiration from the research of many experts (Petrasová, et al., 2012, Petrasová, Porubský, 2013, Rosinský, 2009, Rafael et al., 2011, Pinková, Slepíčková, Solárová, 2013 etc.). Therefore we chose the measurement of opinion and attitudinal constructs, where we chose the evaluation according to L. Tondl (1999). We already have experience with it from analysing the opinions and attitudes

of parents of Roma children towards education (Kaleja, 2011) and value constructs, where we analysed the required schemes – through the opinions and attitudes of pupils at the second level of primary schools (Kaleja, 2013). It is obvious that the structure of evaluation from the formal perspective has qualitative, quantitative, comparative, preferential and point aspects. For our research, we chose the quantitative concept of analysis. When we applied the same research concept to measure opinion and attitudinal constructs in parents (Kaleja, 2011) and subsequently in pupils (Kaleja, 2013), it was confirmed that teachers are an important determinant in the educational trajectory of children and pupils and that they play an important intentional and functional role in building their value schemes in education. It depends also on their opinions and attitudes to what extent and how the concerned ones (children and pupils) perceive education. So now we examined the preparedness of teachers for the education of these children and pupils.

For the research we created our own questionnaire containing necessary requirements. These are:

- content and functional adequacy of the items following the determined research goal,
- adequacy of the form of required answers,
- precision, intelligibility and unambiguity of the items for the chosen research set – here it was necessary to take into consideration that the research tool is meant for pedagogical workers of different types of schools, having different pedagogical positions in the workplace, with different lengths of pedagogical practice, with different levels and types of achieved education and working with different characteristics of children and pupils.

The verification of the above mentioned requirements of the research tool was done in two ways:

- The tool was properly consulted with experts in the realisation of similarly aimed research schemes,

-
- the tool was pilot tested on a sample of teachers (25) working at one primary school in the Moravian-Silesian Region.

Both ways of verifying the reliability and validity of the questionnaire brought several key observations that we had to take into consideration even before the actual administration of the questionnaire and the collection of relevant data. The questionnaire, among others, was also investigating chosen determining features (*categorising information*), on their basis the classification of the obtained empirical data was done. The determining features were:

- the type of primary school where the teacher works (primary school, practical school, special school),
- the length of pedagogical practice (up to 5, up to 10, over 10 years),
- the degree and type of achieved education (secondary, university of pedagogical type, university of non-pedagogical type),
- the position of the teacher at the workplace (teacher, teacher's assistant, other pedagogical worker),
- the characteristics of the pupils they work with (pupils with bordering level, pupils with a mental disability, with a combined disability, pupils mentally within normal limits, pupils from a socially excluded locality, pupils from an ethnic majority society, pupils from an ethnic minority society, pupils with special educational needs without a mental disability).

IV. Interpretation of Key Findings and Basic Recommendations for Practice

The main research question mentioned above was differentiated into individual research questions (RQ1–RQ3), whose formulation was sorted out later and their wording is compact with research spheres of the subjectively designed preparedness:

RQ1: What is the orientation of teachers of primary schools in key topics intervening into the concept of social exclusion and education?

- *Nearly 92 % of teachers consider the concepts of disadvantage and social exclusion as synonymous, although in reality they are not.*
- *Almost 84 % of teachers believe that exclusively Roma people live in socially excluded localities in the Czech Republic, however, according to known sociological analyses it is not true.*
- *Nearly 67 % of teachers think that the pupils with social disadvantages should be educated according to the curriculum for pupils with a mental disability.*
- *Almost 96 % of teachers assume that pupils with social disadvantages have a mental disability.*

Social disadvantage cannot be perceived as a synonym for social exclusion. The individual terms have a broader and narrower definition, hence the connotative and denotative background in which they differ significantly. Outside the sociological platform of individual phenomena, both problematic questions are entered by various disciplines always with its' own professional perspective. The difference between disadvantage and exclusion is also obvious, among other things, in particular school regulations which deal with the education of children and pupils, including children and pupils with special educational needs. From the above it is absolutely obvious that the addressed teachers use both terms interchangeably and they perceive them similarly. It is, therefore, questionable, whether they feel a need to understand the given issue and on the basis of understanding and also modifying their own attitudinal constructs to the affected children and pupils.

According to the last sociological analysis (GAC 2015) the Czech Republic currently records a total of 606 socially excluded localities, where approximately 95 to 115 thousand inhabitants live. From the perspective of ethnic origin, Roma people dominate. However, the estimation is that 10 to 15 % of inhabitants of these localities are people from the majority society. Their life strategies are very close to the life strategies of socially

excluded Roma people. Therefore, it is about an existential problem closely connected with a character of life strategies, not the problem of ethnic origin. From various nationwide researches it transpires that most members of the majority society do not wish to have Roma neighbours, they do not want to live with Roma people, considering them to be misfits, etc. The society perceives Roma people very negatively and this is the picture of Roma ethnicity not only in the Czech Republic, but also elsewhere in the world (e.g. Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, etc.). The problem from the perspective of certain discrepancies, ambiguities and methodological imprecision is factual sociological non-differentiation. In reality if we ask about Roma people in similar findings (in the context of education, living, employment), the society thinks that we are asking about Roma people, who are characterized by socially excluded localities or localities endangered by social exclusion. In other words, similarly oriented research with findings about the society and its relationship with Roma people have such characteristics. However, it has to be emphasized that the phenomenon of social exclusion has several aspects. It represents the current state of social exclusion as well as dispositions towards this phenomenon: (a) Each Roma person does not have to be socially excluded in the society; (b) each Roma person (with respect to ethnicity) has more characteristics compared to the majority society to be easily socially excluded for certain significant ones.

If these socially excluded pupils were diagnosed with an intellectual disability, they would belong to the category of pupils with a health disability, whose education would be then legitimately realized according to the curriculum for pupils with a mental disability. The research did not focus on the fact whether all pupils with social disadvantage have been diagnosed with an intellectual disability, but within logical intentions and objective indicators, such as general prevalence in population, the presumption can be disproved, or considered irrelevant. By the adoption of a new education policy with curricular principles and in accordance with the then *National Programme for the Development of Education in the Czech Republic* (sc. White Paper, 2001, from 2015 it is a document called *Strategy for Education Policy of the Czech Republic until 2020*) and with the

adoption of a new education act (561/2004 Coll., as amended) new documents have been created in two levels (state and school). They replace the former "Standards of Education" containing the innovative structure and a new title "National Programme for Education". The pupils at the border level are educated in the mainstream education.

According to the valid legislation, pupils with social disadvantages and their special educational needs belong to the group of pupils in need of supportive measures. They are not, however, related to the diagnosis of intellectual disability. The pupils diagnosed with a mental disability belong to the category of health disability. Therefore we are talking about two completely heterogeneous groups of pupils who are entitled to different support of their educational needs. The differentiation involved in the educational process can be, among other things, seen in didactic, methodological and other (special) pedagogical approaches, which are used by the teachers.

RQ2: What is (the actual) terrain practice of teachers of primary schools in education of pupils of target groups?

- *Of the questioned teachers, 74 % state that during the school educational process it is suitable to approach the pupils of Roma ethnicity head on and that there is no need for the application of any other specific approach.*
- *Of the questioned teachers, 87 % confirm that during the process of school education it is suitable to approach the pupils with mental disability head on and that there is no need for the application of any other specific approach.*

The school education of Roma pupils is specific and requires taking into consideration the preconditions for education with which the pupil commence his / her educational trajectory. The school or teachers working with these pupils should know the socio-educative characteristics of Roma pupils from the environment of social exclusion, because it is these characteristics that by their nature determine the course themselves, the

factors of education and subsequently the aim of the educational path itself. It is not necessary to emphasize the specifics of school education, including the importance of pre-school preparation, school maturity and preparedness, possible educational or upbringing difficulties, educational needs, methods and models of management of the educational process, and also the necessary active cooperation with the family, or cooperation with the non-profit sector. We have written about the other questions about education elsewhere (see Kaleja, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2011 etc.) and experts have been dealing with this pedagogical phenomenon for several decades (cf. Šotolová, 2011, Portik, 2003, Kyuchukov, 2009, Horňák, 2005, Bartoňová, 2009, Balvín, et al. 2001, Petrasová, 2013, 2012 etc.). Even in recent years the issue of the education of Roma pupils, especially from the environment of social exclusion, has become the subject of interest of several European professional organizations (e.g. UNESCO, Open Society Institute, Roma Education Fund, European Training Foundation, or the European Roma and Travellers Forum, etc.) and it is also the focus of interest of the European Commission for Education of the Council of Europe.

Mental disability is a developmental disorder of the integration of mental functions, affecting the person in all personality parts, where the cognitive part is affected the most significantly. The cognitive processes are endogenous dominant mechanisms, which enable cognition in the broadest meaning of its sense. Therefore, the mental disability means for the person a lifelong disadvantage and it manifests itself at the cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural level. The character of the school education of pupils with a mental disability has to take into consideration the level of intellectual disability. It is the level that indicates the degree and possibilities of cognitive, emotional, social and behavioural processes. All existing national (Zezulková, 2011, 2013, 2015, Adamus, P. 2014, 2015, Pipeková, 2010, Švarcová, 2003, Kaleja, 2014, Bartoňová, Vítková, 2013, Valenta, Michalík, Lečbych, et al., 2012 etc.) as well as foreign studies (Vančová, 2014, Algozzine, Ysseldyk, 2006, Beirne-Smith, Patton, Kim, 2005 etc.) point to the specifics of home and school education.

RQ3: *How is the realization of inclusion perceived by teachers of primary schools in the context of pupils from the target groups?*

- *Of the questioned teachers up to 84 % admit that they are not well oriented in special educational methods of work with pupils with special educational needs.*
- *Of the questioned teachers up to 85 % admit that they are not oriented in defined supported measures for pupils with special educational needs.*
- *Of questioned teachers up to 71 % confirm that they do not know the conditions stated in the curriculum for primary education of pupils with special educational needs.*
- *Of the questioned teachers up to 87 % say that not even their colleagues at work know the conditions stated in the curriculum for primary education of pupils with special educational needs.*
- *Of questioned teachers 95 % mention that school where they work does not use all conditions for the successful education of pupils with social disadvantages stated by the curriculum of the Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education.*
- *Of questioned teachers 94 % declare that school where they work does not apply all conditions for successful education of pupils with mental disability stated by the curriculum of Framework Education Programme for Elementary Education.*

We did not monitor whether absolutely everyone in the current period worked with pupils with special educational needs. However, within the scope of integrative or inclusive educational tendencies, each qualified teacher should be able to at least know these methods. In the undergraduate preparation the teachers learned the basics of special education, in which the topics of integration or inclusion of pupils of target groups were mentioned. The system of the further education of pedagogical workers offers rather wide variety of educational events focused on specifics in the education of pupils with the need of various supportive measures. Continuous self-education of teachers is natural in their

profession. Self-education of teachers in the questions of integration / inclusion of chosen groups of pupils with special educational needs, especially those who are educated by these teachers in the current period, should be required by the management of the school.

Measures in the education of children and pupils with special educational needs are legislatively defined in particular documents and they should serve to directly support the successful education of concerned children and pupils. The teacher should be able to be knowledgeable in them. Especially the ones who are affected by its application in their pedagogical practice. Ignorance and lack of orientation in these binding documents do not support the question of subjective preparedness to performance of pedagogical profession. Regardless of the approbation of the teacher, the child and pupil with special educational needs requires quality standards and the quality approach of all pedagogical workers (guaranteed to him / her by the state), who has direct or indirect influence on his / her trajectory. Special educational needs only emphasize the quality standard and quality approach, they have to adequately take into account those socio-educative peculiarities of children and pupils.

The curriculum documents at the state or school level are binding for the field of school education and for all of the pedagogical workers of school. They lead to key competences which should be achieved by the children and pupils. The key competences focus on effective learning (strategies and preconditions for lifelong education), effectively and normatively constructed models of behaviour in given problematic situations, effectively chosen ways of communication in wider and also broader sense of the meaning, forming intrapersonal beneficial and socially appropriate relations and last but not least they also focus on forming the human personality to responsible citizenship. The pedagogical worker should be aware of this fact during the whole time of the performance of his / her profession. He / she should appropriately and purposefully construct processes and strategies of education, so that his / her chosen individual steps of educational processes lead to a maximal development of all children and pupils, with whom he / she comes in touch during the education. He / she applies the principle of differentiated

education and principle of individual approach to children and pupils regardless of their differences.

Ignorance of the conditions of the school education of pre-school children and pupils with special educational needs by teachers of primary schools can be an indicator of insufficient engagement of teachers, their lack of interest, inappropriate organization of competences at work, internal or external motivation or possibly insufficient control from the management of the school and other relevant circumstances. However, all the mentioned determinants can have a significant influence on the course itself and the result of the educational trajectory of concerned students.

V. Conclusion

If we focus on the scope of barriers in the education of target groups of children and pupils with special educational needs (especially from the environment of social exclusion), we could define many reserves of both internal and external origin. We have extracted the key problematic elements, which we have dealt with in a long time (Kaleja, 2011, 2013, 2014, 2015) and which have completely demonstrable direct impacts on the educational trajectory not only of our target groups of children and pupils: *environment, family and school (with emphasis on the teachers) and educational and upbringing process.*

In the environment we want to emphasize physical, environmental and social conditions of the phenomenon of social exclusion, which indicate the character of education, motivation, need and the means of their saturation. Already before and then during the educational trajectory of children and pupils we should, within the scope of our possibilities, eliminate all processes supporting segregation, ghettoization and stigmatization. The children and pupils do not benefit from these processes. The processes do not offer children and pupils sufficient stimuli to education, they do not lead them to see the value of it, and they offer them inadequate models, which they gain during socialization and social edu-

cation. With respect to their ontogenetic characteristics, they are not able to critically evaluate them. They were born into such formed environment, they live in it in long term, or they move. Under all circumstances, such an environment is not a positive one for the psycho-socio development of any child.

The attitudes of parents to education are important. It is shown in the famous publications mentioned in the research. Parents build on their own experience, some of them are not able to sufficiently motivate their children to education. Lifestyle shows children the way, the parents hardly overcome the right change in their life. Their cooperation with school is time restricted. Research says that in case of apparent failures of children and behavioural problems arising from failures in the educational process (Kaleja, 2011, 2014) the parents do not want to cooperate with the school, the cooperation fluctuates and they start to perceive school only as a formal institution where the child has to go.

The school performs many necessary functions supporting socialization processes. Also the research shows that approximately one third of teachers has a negative experience with Roma pupils, their competences and approaches are significantly limited. This is related to the peculiarities of children and pupils from the environment of social exclusion (Kaleja, 2013). An active pedagogical monitoring is sometimes missed, teachers do not participate more than is necessary. They are not sufficiently motivated, sometimes they even face problems endangering their existence at the schools where they work. The cooperation with family and vice versa is determined by a whole number of factors. In some cases motivation and support in education from the teachers to pupils do not reflect specific peculiarities and do not take into consideration their needs. The educational upbringing process shows reserves in some cases. The dynamics of lessons, adequacy of content and aims of educational processes and pragmatic side of the process are not always optimally chosen.

The preparedness of the teacher in terms of the education of children and pupils with different characteristics, not only with a need of supportive measures, children and pupils from environments of social

exclusion or children and pupils from different cultural environments requires the fulfilment of certain criteria on the objective and subjective level. The first one represents formal requirements, usually fulfilled by necessary qualifications, the second one represents how the teachers themselves perceive their preparedness. Thus, the paper points to their own declaration of the low, subjectively perceived preparedness of teachers for the inclusive education of children and pupils.

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The Practices and Challenges of Kindergarten Education in Addis Ababa City Administration: Ethiopia

Abstract: The intention of this study was to assess the practices and challenges of kindergarten education in Addis Ababa city administration. The core intentions of the study were to check the appropriateness of the instructional material, teacher quality and the physical environment of the schools. For this study, the researcher used a descriptive survey research method and both qualitative and quantitative research approaches were employed. The data gathered from 22 kindergartens, 116 teachers, 21 principals, 5 education quality, audit and inspection experts. The findings of the study revealed that in most kindergartens the key inputs, such as indoor and outdoor materials, were insufficient, there was a lack of qualified human resources and instructional materials, constituting a major bottleneck, awareness creation on the part of stakeholders was low and limited support from educational expertise to private schools were among the challenges. Therefore, Addis Ababa Education Bureau ought to be revising, preparing and distributing curriculum materials based on the interest and developmental level of the children. The city administration, in collaboration with different college and Universities, are supposed to provide training for kindergarten teachers and other personnel to enhance their capacity. In addition, the city administration may promote investors who participate in the sector to construct buildings which may function as kindergartens; “woreda (section of district)” education office in partnership with schools and other stakeholder ought to support small enterprises to produce indoor and outdoor materials. Moreover, joint training, workshops, seminars

and awareness amongst pertinent stakeholders should be promoted in a coordinated manner.

Keywords: kindergarten, early childhood, preschool

1. Background of the Study

Nowadays, the largest wave of early childhood educational activity is designed to facilitate appropriate child development and overcome their cognitive, social, emotional and physical potentials deficits (Gezahagne, 2005). Since children need certain skills and understanding to become intelligent citizens of their country, meeting the needs of the children with a school program will foster their best development (Morison and Perry, 1961). Kindergarten strives to offer children a foundation for the development of social skills, self-confidence, motivation and cognition. They acquire a variety of important skills, knowledge and attitudes that will affect their ability to learn, personal development, relationships with others, and future participation in a great society (Curtis, 1998). Smith (2001) also indicated that early education is termed as the foundation stage of education, where children experience rapid physical, emotional, intellectual and social growth. There is an increasing recognition by professional educators and nonprofessional alike that kindergarten experience is an important part of a child's education. A number of states have added the kindergarten to their school system in recent years, other localities are taking steps to incorporate kindergartens as an accepted lower rung on the educational ladder.

Kindergarten education program will be emphasizing on creative play, social interaction and natural expression, also teaching social skills, and provide children with an academic foundation for next grade. In class, they are learn the alphabet, numbers and colors, they study their bodies, their families, and their communities, they listen to stories and read aloud, they make art projects, they participate in skits or short funny and dramatic productions and they learn about holidays, plants, animals and

other topics in science and social studies. It strives to offer children a foundation for the development of social skills, self-confidence, motivation and cognition (the process of knowing). A kindergarten teacher can help children to develop self-confidence in themselves and collaborating with others to solve problems by extending children's play. Play is the first and most important mode of instructional strategies in kindergarten by providing an environment in which children are free to play with each other and with a wide range of carefully selected material, teacher facilitate children's of development and learning (Gezahagne, 2005). There are other appropriate modes of instruction suitable for facilitating kindergarten children's development and learning, chiefly learning by doing, experiencing and observing (Wills and Stegeman, 1956).

From the human rights perspective, the UN convention on the rights of child (CRC), adopted by the Transitional Government of Ethiopia (TGE) in December 1991, stipulated that the child's right to education shall be directed to "the development of the child's personality, talent and physical abilities to their fullest potential". The world conference on education for all (EFA) that took place in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, articulated the significance of the early years as the foundation for the life of an individual. As indicated in the universal declaration of human rights, the international convention on economic social and cultural rights and the CRC, the obligation of the member state is not limited to making education available and accessible to every child but also includes ensuring content and quality (MoE, MoWA, MoH, 2010). Positive early experiences with school are of paramount importance to young children. What they learn in kindergarten provides the basis for the acquisition of literacy and mathematics in later grades.

The government of Ethiopia recognized the importance of early childhood care and education (ECCE) as a critical period that require due attention and a great deal of investments (MoE, 2003). With the intention of having intelligent and creative children, the government itself indirectly supports the initiatives for private kindergarten by preparing the curriculum as well as by training teacher's (MoE, 2002). Nevertheless, kindergarten education is still one of the most neglected areas in Ethiopia.

The enrollment rate in 2010/2011 is about 5.2% nationally which is a negligible figure. Out of the estimated 7.31, million children of the appropriate age group (age 4–6), only about 382,741 children have been reported to have access to pre-primary education in 3,418 kindergartens all over the country. Though the enrollment is small when compared to the appropriate age group, enrollment is higher than in the previous year by about 0.4 % (MoE, 2003 Educational Annual Abstract). In the last few years the private sector in urban centers has shown a growing interest in this opportunity but in Addis Ababa, however, it is only accessible for the very few children coming from well-to-do families. In order to provide access it is important to give due consideration to the expansion of kindergarten in general and to its curriculum, human, material resource supplies, and basic facilities in particular. The inspiration for this study partly arose from the recognition of the role kindergarten education plays in enhancing opportunities for further education in Ethiopia.

2. Statement of the Problem

It is clear that various research evidence has suggested the critical importance of the pre-school program for the future harmonious development of children. However, the pre-school education program in Ethiopia is to date too limited to meet the demands of the growing numbers of preschool age children and provides only for well-to-do families in the country (Teshome, 1979, Dereje, 1994) and they stated that the government is unable to assuage the demand of kindergarten age children even in the capital. The research findings also show that there is a problem of meeting the educational opportunity of preschool age children, not only in rural Ethiopia but also in the capital itself. Today, with the rise and growth in the kindergarten movement, research on kindergartens appears to be concerned with the skill, maturity factors in relation to school achievement, the physical aspect of the school plant, the development sequence in learning, factors influencing human relations, methods and training (Foster and Headley, 1959 p.29). Research played

an important role in supplying us with facts which have helped to find a definite place for the kindergarten in education system, helping to alert the public to the developmental need of young children, teachers to evaluate their own procedures and administrators and policy-directing groups plan for the welfare of kindergarten age children.

Kindergarten teachers face diverse problems in curriculum implementation such as, lack of physical facilities, difficulty in evaluation practice, lesson planning and organizing child activities, teaching-learning process, social environment problem, stating goal and objective, content, lack of administrative support and problems related to parental involvement (Kari A. Dietz, 2002). In Ethiopia, the major challenges confronting current pre-school education are high fees, lack of a standard curriculum, guidelines, culturally relevant story books, lack of access to early childhood education for almost all children and especially children from low socio-economic backgrounds, lack of awareness about the value and type of care and education and misconception about children's learning (MoE, 2003). Therefore, it is important to conduct this research for the following reasons: (1) to recognize the role of kindergarten education in the future primary education of children, (2) to identify the main challenges facing kindergarten education related to the quality of teachers, instructional material and physical environment of the schools, and (3) to recommend solutions to reduce problems. In addition, the works of the researchers from the Woreda Education Office in the area of education quality, audit and inspection have indicated that there are serious problems in the practice of kindergarten education. These include problems related to giving high attention to academic achievement with little emphasis to social development, ignoring the play way teaching method, low quality of teaching and insufficient competency to teach in kindergarten and lack of indoor and outdoor material. All of these factors compelled me to investigate the practices and challenges of kindergarten education. Indeed, while different educators and researchers have investigated the problem abroad, there has been limited local research conducted in the area of kindergarten education in Ethiopia. The central purpose of the study is to explore the practices and challenges of kindergarten education. On top of this, the study

was design to investigate problems faced by teachers with respect to their educational level, usage of indoor and outdoor material, availability of curriculum material and conduciveness of the physical environment. In so doing, the following basic research questions are posed in relation to the practices and challenges of kindergarten education.

- 1) To what extent are the indoor materials of the kindergarten appropriate to children's learning?
- 2) To what extent are the outdoor materials of the kindergarten appropriate to children's learning?
- 3) To what extent is the physical environment of the kindergarten conducive to children's development?
- 4) Is the kindergarten curriculum material relevant to the children's developmental needs?
- 5) To what extent are kindergartens made available with the required human resources?

3. Review of Related Literature

History: The German educator Friedrich Froebel started the first kindergarten in 1837 in Blankenburg, Prussia. Froebel chose the German term kindergarten (literally, children's garden), because he intended the children in his school to grow as freely as flowers in a garden. Froebel's idea was influenced mainly by the work of Johan Amos Comenius, who in the 17th century introduced the idea that school should teach infants. Another influence was the French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau, who wrote *Emile* (1762), a treatise on child's education in nature. In addition, the Swiss education reformer Johann H. Pestalozzi, who founded a school for infants in the late 18th and early 19th century also influenced Froebel (Curtis, 1998, Gezehagn, 2005). The fundamental ideas behind Froebel's concept of the kindergarten are giving happiness to children by providing them with the necessary environment for growth. He designed special play materials and introduced the idea of associating ac-

tions with singing songs (Seefeldt, 1989). Froebel not only influenced the European pre-school education system but he also brought the concept of the kindergarten to America when the German immigrant Margareta Meyer Schurz opened the first kindergarten in Watertown, Wisconsin – the first American kindergarten was established in 1856. The kindergarten is now an established part of American education, and many of Froebel's ideas of childhood experience and methods of play have been incorporated into current theories of early childhood education and progressive schooling. The same is true for the rest of the world – for instance, England launched childhood education in 1851 <<http://www.faqs.org/childhood/Me-Pa/Nursery-School.html/>>

Historical development of kindergarten education in Ethiopia: the development of education in Ethiopia is strongly influenced by traditional (religious) aspects. It began in the 4th century A. D. and in 1908 Menelik II opened the first modern school based on the western education systems. The traditional approach has characterized Ethiopian education throughout the history of this nation. The traditional education system is deeply rooted in the Ethiopian orthodox church and is recognized as one of the oldest education systems in the world. For centuries orthodox churches, monasteries and convents were the only centers for formal schooling, from preschool to the university level (Pankhurst cited in Hoot, Szente and Belete, 2004, Zeray, 2011). It was limited to males alone and dated to the medieval period when male children began attending church services at around age of 4. The curriculum for children of this age consisted primarily of the drilling and practice of the alphabet. Mastery of the alphabet was followed by reading and recitation of religious texts that began with the psalms of David (Belete, 2004 as cited in Zaray, 2011: 24). In Ethiopia, the concept of preschool education in the modern sense is a recent phenomenon dating to the 20th century when Emperor Menelik II recognized the importance of improved and modern education, establishing the first public school called Menelik II in 1908. Likewise, the first modern pre-school was established in Dire--Dawa, mainly for the children of French consultants who were helping to build the first railroad in the country (Amelework, 2007:11, Aregesh, 2005 cited

in Yalew, 2011:13). These authors argued that the year of establishment of the first kindergarten in Ethiopia was 1900 marking the moment when formal education began but misguided policies meant that very few children received an education. Demeke (2007) praised the Socialist revolution of 1966 as a turning point in the history of early childhood education in Ethiopia which resulted in the establishment of an independent commission called "Ethiopia Children's Commission" in 1973 with a task of caring for and educating Ethiopian children. To begin the task, a manual for kindergartens in Ethiopia was produced by the commission for the first time in 1974. After the revolution, kindergarten education expanded significantly from urban to rural areas in such a way that they grew in number from 77 to 912, accompanied by an enrollment growth of 7,573 to 102,000 from 1975 to 1990. Following the Socialist revolution of 1974, preschool education become part of the national education policy and then its curriculum was developed for the first time (Demeke, 2007). The new education and training policy in 1994 recognized kindergarten education as a very important element in the overall development of early childhood and for the preparation of formal schooling (MoE, 1994). According to MoE (2002), kindergarten education is the preschool preparatory education for children aged 4–6 and can take up to three years. In this program, children are offered a fun education that would enable them to express their feelings, to appreciate beauty, and to learn to distinguish and form letter and numbers. According to the document, the opening of kindergartens should be left to private investors and religious organizations, and to the parents who can afford to pay the fees. The government indirectly supports the initiative and provides professional pedagogical training, childcare, health, counseling, and advice for private kindergarten teachers. Furthermore, the government provides short-term training on how to improve their quality and efficiency in kindergarten education. MoE (2002) stressed that enrolment in kindergarten in Ethiopia is run by non-government organization, owned by community, missions, and private individuals, religious institutions wishing to enhance the involvement of the private sector in education and also maximize the government's efforts at other levels of education. The New

Education and Training Policy (1994), sets the aim of preschool education in the country as the all-round social, emotional, intellectual and physical development of the child in preparation for formal schooling. Based on this aim, MoE set different regional states of the country to adopt the general objectives of preschool education. The enrollment increased with time, as shown in the following table.

Table 1. Statistical Feature of Kindergarten Education in Ethiopia

No	Item	Years					Average Growth Rate
		2006/07	2007/08	2008/09	2009/10	2010/11	
1	Kindergarten Enrollments	219,068	263,484	292,641	341,315	382,741	15.0%
2	Number of KG Teachers	8,017	9,794	13,763	9,647	13,963	14.9%
3	Number of KG Schools	2,313	2,740	3,865	3,318	3,418	10.3%
4	Kindergarten Gross Enrollment Rate	3.10%	3.9%	4.20%	4.8%	5.2%	13.8%

Source: Educational Annual Abstract 2011

As the above table shows, kindergarten education enrollments increased significantly, with the average growth rate of 15% in the last five years. The general enrollment rate similarly improved, with an average growth rate of 13.8%. The number of schools and teachers increased with an average growth rate of 10.3% and 14.9% respectively.

4. Research Design and Methodology

4.1 Methods and Design of the Study

The research used survey research design and both qualitative (interview, document analysis and observation) and quantitative (questionnaire for teachers and principals) research approaches were employed for this study. The major methodological concern of the research was descriptive survey analysis and the interpretation of the responses to the

given questionnaires, interview, observation and document analysis in reference with the theoretical and practical framework of kindergarten education. The analysis and interpretation mainly emphasized the current practices and challenges of kindergarten education.

4.2 Sample Population and Sampling Techniques

The research used simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques to select a sample population for this study. More specifically, the lottery method random sampling technique was utilized to select sample schools. Stratified random sampling techniques were employed to select sample teachers. School principals were selected using available sampling and education quality, inspection and audit expertise was selected using purposive sampling techniques. The researcher used both primary (first-hand information) and secondary sources of data. As a primary source, the researcher used 5 education quality inspection and audit experts, 22 principals and 120 kindergarten teachers. Apart from this, various record documents such as teachers' qualifications, instructional material (curriculum material and guideline) and children's achievements and communication books were employed to secure secondary data.

4.3 Data Gathering Tools and Procedures of Data Collection

Educators have advocated the use of multiple methods of data collection, because by selecting complementary methods, a researcher can improve the weakness of one method with the strength of another. In line with this Hunter (1989), Patton (1987) as cited Yamane (2005) stated that using more than one data collection technique in a single study helps the researcher to substantiate the strength and correct the defect of any one source of data. Based on this idea, the researcher employed semi-structured interview, observation, document analysis and questionnaire as data gathering tools.

Questionnaires are advantageous for gathering data from a number of respondents at one place, making an economy of time and expense possible and providing a high proportion of usable responses (Best and Kahn, 2005). Therefore, based on the research questions and a review of

related literature, two set of questionnaires were prepared and administered for school principals and teachers. The questionnaire consisted of both closed and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions contained scale questions and particularly Likert type items on which the respondents showed their agreement. Open-ended questions were prepared to give subjects the chance to give a response in their own words. Observation can help to study all observable social phenomena in their natural setting as long as they are accessible (S. Sarankos, 2005.p 221). Based on this idea, the researcher used direct observation through an observation checklist consisting of three parts, meaning detailed instruction in the classroom and indoor-outdoor material and the physical plan of the school, interactions between kindergarten children, materials and teachers as well.

I used document analysis because it is a vital and relevant source for both qualitative and quantitative research and helps to yield information that is important in explaining social or educational practices (Best and Khan, 1993). Within this frame, the research reviewed significant document such as the number of students, teachers and qualifications of teachers and profile of children, the availability of curriculum materials, and other international children's rights documents. In addition to this, in qualitative research, interviewing is a major source of data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study (Merriam 1988). An interview is a kind of conversation with a purpose. A researcher interview is an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about an issue – Robson (1993, p.227) as cited in Yamane Gama (2007). The researcher conducted interview with five Woreda education quality and audit experts.

4.4 Methods of Data Analysis

Quantitative data was collected through questionnaires via percentages, frequency and mean. The frequency in the table represents how many times a particular response appeared in different questions. The mean is the arithmetic average of a set of a given number. The frequency and mean score was utilized to analyze and describe the extent to which the problem featured in kindergarten education. The data obtained

through interviews, observation and document analysis was analyzed using narrative description (qualitative methods of analysis).

5. Analysis and Presentation of Data

This section deals with the presentation and interpretation of the data: 116 (96.7%) of 120 teachers and 21(95.5%) of 22 principals properly responded to the questionnaire. The researcher also analyzed and interpreted data gathered through qualitative methods, namely interview, observation and document analysis. The responses of each group were presented using a table followed by relevant discussion.

Table 2. Teachers and Principal qualification and ownership of training institution they attend

No	Items	Alternatives	Teachers		Principals	
			No	%	No	%
1.	Qualification of teacher and principals	Grade 10 complete	–	–	–	–
		Grade 12 complete	1	0.9	–	–
		Six months of KG teacher training	5	4.3	1	4.8
		One year of KG teacher training	64	55.2	3	14.3
		One year certificate (TTI)	14	12.1	5	23.8
		College diploma	23	19.8	5	23.8
		BA/BSC/BED	9	7.7	7	33.3
		Total	116	100	21	100
2.	Which training college did you attend (ownership of the institution)	Government	79	68.1	12	57.1
		Private	33	28.4	8	38.1
		Non-governmental organization	4	3.5	–	–
		Other	–	–	1	4.8
		Total	116	100	21	100

In terms of the qualifications of teachers and principals, most teachers – 64 (55.2%) – have had one year of kindergarten teacher training and a significant number of teachers – 23 (19.8%) – had a college diploma. On the other hand, most principals – 7 (33.4%) – had a bachelor’s degree, while 5 (23.8%) of them have a college diploma and the same percentage possess the one year certificate (Teacher Training Institute). Only 1(4.8%) had six months of KG teacher training. It is difficult to ignore the problem because teachers and principals who lack basic knowledge and skills about child development and his/ her needs will not be able to meet the child’s physical, intellectual, social and emotional needs (UNESCO, 1982 Dereje, 1994). TGE (1994) asserts that starting from kindergarten to higher education it should be necessary to have the relevant teaching qualification and competency in the medium of instruction through pre-service and in-service training.

The reason for determining the pre-service training institution was related to the issue of the quality of training. Most teachers – 79 (68.1%) – graduated from a government teacher training institution and 33 (28.4%) from a private institution, with the rest from non-governmental organizations. Similarly most principals – 12 (57.1%) graduated from government teacher training institutions and the rest from private teacher training institutions. As we know, since 2003 the government of Ethiopia closed most private teacher training institutions because of a quality problem. However, a significant number of teachers and principals had already graduated from such institutions so they need supplementary training to be self-sufficient.

Table 3. Issues related with director training and information about *monthly fee*

No	Items		Principals	
			No	%
1	Were you trained to teach in kindergarten education	Yes	16	76.2
		No	5	23.8
		Total	21	100

2	Monthly tuition fee	100–150birr	–	–
		151–200birr	4	19.1
		201–250birr	2	9.6
		251–300birr	4	19.1
		301–350 birr	5	23.8
		351 and above	3	14.2
		Free from payment	3	14.2
		Total	21	100

As can be seen from table 3, 16 (76.2%) of the principals confirmed that they have had training for the kindergarten education program while 5 (23.8%) have not. This cannot simply be ignored because if principals are without basic knowledge and skills, it may be difficult to facilitate the teaching/learning processes.

We attempted to find out the amount of fees charged each month by the kindergartens under the study. As table 3 shows, the largest percentage of students – 5 (23.8%) – paid monthly fees ranging from between 301–350 birr. Furthermore, 4 (19.4%) of the respondents indicated that the monthly fees are between 251–300 birr and the same percentage of respondents indicated that they paid 151–200. 3 (14.2%) paid monthly fees of 351 and above and 2 (9.6%) paid between 201–250 birr. The remainder – 3 (14.2%) – were owned by the government and were free from fees. The monthly fees have increased gradually and many parents cannot afford to pay the private schools fee. Further, it would be much more difficult for the same parents who have two or more children. The major challenges of kindergarten education include poor availability to most children and especially children from low socio-economic backgrounds (MOE, MOWA, MOH, 2010). Because of high fees, a significant number of children miss out on a kindergarten education and this may strongly affect the long lasting life of the children.

Table 4. Issue related to adequacy of teacher training

No	Item	More than adequate		Adequate		Somewhat adequate		Not so adequate		Not adequate		Mean	Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		No	%
1	Initial training provided for kindergarten teachers	25	21.5	32	27.6	22	19.8	27	23.3	10	8.6	3.3	116	100
2	The training that you received was sufficient for the many tasks in kindergarten	24	20.7	32	27.6	23	19.8	29	25	8	6.9	3.3	116	100
3	On-job training and orientation provided for KG teachers	19	16.4	35	30.2	21	18.1	28	24.1	13	11.2	3.1	116	100
4	Training provided for kindergarten teaching assistants	11	9.5	30	25.8	30	25.8	36	31	9	7.7	2.9	116	100
Aggregate mean												3.15		

As table 4 above indicated, most teachers responded that the initial training that kindergarten teachers were provided with was somewhat adequate. The mean value of teacher responses was 3.3. Regarding whether the program prepared them sufficiently well for the manifold tasks in kindergarten, most teachers responded that it had been somewhat adequate, the mean value of the teacher response being similar to that of initial training. With regard to on-job training and orientation provided for kindergarten teachers, most of the respondents said that it was somewhat adequate, the mean value of the teacher response was 3.1. Table 4 item 4 indicated that the largest number of respondents – 36 (31%) – agreed that the training provided for kindergarten assistance teacher was not so adequate. Kindergarten teachers perform a complex and multidimensional role, they are responsible for implementing a program that is thoughtfully planned, challenging, engaging, integrated, developmentally appropriate, and culturally and linguistically responsive, and that promotes positive outcomes for all children (McDonnell, 1999). *Teaching assistants* were also involved directly in the care and education of groups and individuals, child with special needs, in planning and delivering the curriculum, in preparing the materials and activities, recording, assessment and review (Iain

Macleod and Brudenell, 2004). Hence, it is possible to conclude that both kindergarten main teachers and assistants need additional in-service training such as seminars, workshops and short-term training courses for successful kindergarten curriculum implementation.

Table 5. Issue related to adequacy of principal training

No	Item	More than adequate		Adequate		Somewhat adequate		Not so adequate		Not adequate		Mean	Total	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%		No	%
1	Initial training provided for kindergarten principal	3	14.2	5	23.8	2	9.6	5	23.8	6	28.6	2.7	21	100
2	Training that you got enough for multitude of tasks the KG	3	14.2	6	28.6	2	9.6	5	23.8	5	23.8	2.8	21	100
3	On-job training and orientation provided for kindergarten principal	1	4.7	5	23.8	2	9.6	9	42.8	4	19.1	2.5	21	100
4	Participation in workshop on ECCE policy framework and on its implementation	–	–	5	23.8	3	14.2	6	28.6	7	33.4	2.3	21	100
Aggregate mean												2.57		

As the above table indicates, the largest group of respondents – 6(28.6%) – agreed that the initial training provided by kindergarten principals was inadequate. The remaining 5(23.8%) said adequate, 5(23.8%) not so adequate, 3(14.2%) more than adequate and 2(9.6%) said somewhat adequate. The second item in table 5 shows the opinion on the adequacy of the training that principals got to the multitude of tasks in their kindergarten. 6 principals (28.6%) responded that it was adequate the other 3(14.2%) said more than adequate, 2(9.6%) somewhat adequate, 5(23.8%) said not so adequate and 5(23.8%) inadequate. This reveals that a significant number of principals in the studied kindergarten lack the necessary training to play their role in kindergarten education.

Regarding the on-job training and orientation provided for kindergarten principals, the largest group of principals – 9 (42.8%) responded

that their training was not so adequate. The remaining 1 (4.7%) said more than adequate, 5 (23.8%) said adequate, 2 (9.6%) said somewhat adequate and 4 (19.1%) inadequate. Adequately trained principals are crucial to ensure the quality of kindergarten education. Hence, it is possible to say that kindergarten principals in the studied kindergarten need additional training to facilitate the teaching and learning process properly.

As indicated in the fourth item of table 5, the last question deals with the adequacy of principal participation in a workshop on ECCE policy framework and its implementation. Accordingly, most of the principals 7(33.4%) responded that their participation in the workshop was inadequate. The rest 6 (28.6%), 3 (14.2%) and 5 (23.8%) of respondents replied that their participation were not so adequate, somewhat adequate and adequate, respectively. Principals run different activities in today's schools including administrative manager, instructional leader and communication manager in all aspects of the teaching and learning process (Smith, 1990). Hence, professional knowledge and training in these areas is important for appropriately practicing the above-mentioned activities, provided support and to conduct educational research, which is crucial to perform educational activities.

Table 6. Principal responses about availability of human resource

No	Item	Very high		High		Medium		Low		Very low		Mean
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
1	Availability of trained principal in the market	1	4.7	4	19.1	3	14.2	9	42.9	4	19.1	2.5
2	Availability of trained teacher	6	28.6	4	19.1	6	28.6	5	23.8	–	–	3.5
3	Availability of trained assistance teacher in the market	2	9.6	2	9.6	8	38.1	8	38.1	1	4.7	2.8
4	Availability of trained guardian in the market	–	–	1	4.7	6	28.6	6	28.6	8	38.1	2.0
5	Availability of janitor and guard in the market	1	4.7	3	14.2	3	14.2	7	33.4	7	33.4	2.2
Aggregate mean												2.6

As indicated in table 6, most principals 9 (42.9%) responded that the availability of trained principals in the market was low, the rest responded: 4 (19.1%) very low, 3 (14.2%) medium, 4 (19.1%) high and 1 (4.7%) very high. The mean value of the principals response was 2.5. This shows that the availability of trained principal in the market is low. Regarding the availability of trained teachers on the market, most principals responded that it was medium, the mean value of the principals response was 3.5. The availability of trained teaching assistants in the market was close to medium, the mean value of the principals' response was 2.8. The availability of trained guardians, janitors and guards was very low and low, respectively. The mean value of the principal response for guardians was 2.0 and for janitors and guards, 2.2. Principals and education quality experts at the Woreda level reported that the availability of trained teachers was medium but most of them are not competent and qualified to teach children. Furthermore, the lack of trained and qualified principals and teaching assistants was one of the major challenges in kindergarten education. Hence, it is possible to conclude that the kindergarten education sector needs well trained and qualified principals, teachers and assistants. Kindergarten teachers play a vital role in the development of children and qualified teachers are indispensable for a sound kindergarten program. A special kind of education is necessary to develop kindergarten teachers who are able to guide each child in their charge towards their optimum development (Wills and Stegeman, 1956).

Table 7. Principal Response on Issues Related to Availability of Curriculum Material

No	Item	Principal response				Total	
		Yes		No		No	%
		No	%	No	%		
1	Is Education and Training Policy available in your school?	8	38.1	13	61.9	21	100
2	Are there kindergarten education manuals in your school?	12	57.2	9	42.8	21	100
3	Is there a syllabus in your school?	18	85.8	3	14.2	21	100
4	Are there kindergarten standards in your school?	15	71.4	6	28.6	21	100

5	Are there guidelines for preschool education in your school?	6	28.6	15	71.4	21	100
6	Are there guidelines for educating children with special needs?	1	4.8	20	95.2	21	100
7	Is the UN convention on the rights of the child in your school?	8	38.1	13	61.9	21	100
8	Are there textbooks in your school?	8	38.1	13	61.9	21	100
9	Are there teacher guides in your school?	3	14.2	18	85.8	21	100

Based on the information from principals shown in table 7, 13 (61.9%) of kindergarten schools do not have the Education Training Policy document. Most kindergartens – 18 (85.8%) – have a syllabus and 12 (57.2%) a kindergarten manual. With regard to the new standards of kindergartens, most schools – 15 (71.4%) have the new standard prepared by the Ministry of Education, but as the education quality officer reported, during the interview most of them admitted that they do not use the syllabus properly or fulfill the materials based on the standards. Most of the kindergartens – 15 (71.4%) do not have guidelines for preschool education and 20 (95.2%) of kindergartens do not have them for children with special needs. This means that kindergarten education in the studied area was not inclusive and discriminated children with special needs. The kindergartens cannot accept and treat children with special needs properly. It is important to see what the world did about children’s rights. However, most kindergartens – 13 (61.9%) – did not have the United Nation Convention on the rights of the child in the studied area.

Regarding student textbooks and teacher’s guides, 18 (85.8%), 13 (61.9%) of kindergartens do not have textbooks and teacher’s guides, respectively. Observations in the classroom were made to check to what extent teachers use the materials. However, most teachers cannot use the materials and instead preferred different textbooks which served as student texts which had been imported from abroad and prepared in a foreign language and context without the acknowledgement of the government. Teachers, principals and education quality and audit experts reported that the education bureau had not supplied the necessary materials for the kindergarten adequately. Accordingly, a significant number of kindergartens prepared a textbook without considering the maturity level of the

children, the environment and the demands of the government and they found their own ways to get other curriculum materials. Based on the above information it is possible to conclude that there was a lack of governmentally prepared textbooks, teacher’s guides, guidelines for preschool education and guidelines for educating children with special needs, whilst other international documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child or Education and Training Policy were not accessible. In addition, a further problem of the proper implementation of standards were the challenges in the practices of kindergarten education in the study area.

Table 8. Issues related to competencies of kindergarten human resources

No	Item	Respondent		5	4	3	2	1	Mean	Total
		TR	FR							
1	Directors’ ability to develop, manage and apply a variety of management strategies to support KG teachers	TR	FR	22	25	25	34	10	3.1	116
		DR	FR	6	5	4	5	1	3.5	21
2	Directors’ ability to build, facilitate and maintain working relationships with parents and other care givers to enhance student learning	TR	FR	28	20	18	39	11	3.1	116
		DR	FR	5	4	4	7	1	3.2	21
3	Teachers’ ability to monitor, assess, record and report student learning outcomes	TR	FR	43	22	19	26	6	3.6	116
		DR	FR	7	5	5	3	1	3.6	21
4	Teachers’ Mastery of Education and Training Policy	TR	FR	21	20	21	37	17	2.9	116
		DR	FR	1	4	2	8	6	2.3	21
5	Teachers’ ability to teach kindergarten students	TR	FR	33	26	24	28	5	3.4	116
		DR	FR	6	4	7	4	–	3.6	21
6	Teachers’ ability to prepare weekly and daily lesson plans	TR	FR	48	29	19	16	4	3.87	116
		DR	FR	10	8	2	1	–	4.3	21
7	Teacher’s understanding of the early childhood education and commitment to their professionalism	TR	FR	19	22	24	41	10	2.99	116
		DR	FR	3	6	3	7	2	3.0	21
8	Teaching assistant’s knowledge to teach children	TR	FR	18	26	24	44	4	2.48	116
		DR	FR	3	5	8	5	–	3.28	21
9	Teaching assistant’s ability to facilitate student learning	TR	FR	22	29	23	36	6	3.2	116
		DR	FR	4	8	5	4	–	3.57	21
10	Guardian ability to care for children and enhance student learning	TR	FR	19	26	21	39	11	3.0	116
		DR	FR	5	4	6	3	3	3.2	21
Aggregate mean		TR							3.16	
		DR							3.34	

NB: FR=frequency, DR=director, TR= teachers: 5= Very High, 4= High, 3=Medium, 2= Low and 1= Very low

The above table indicated that most of the respondents agreed that the director's ability to develop, manage and apply varieties of management strategies to support kindergarten teachers was medium, the mean value of the teacher and director response was 3.1 and 3.5, respectively. The role of principals is indispensable to work in partnership with teachers, parents and caregivers to ensure that each child has access to the best possible educational experience. Facilitating student learning, informing how teachers plan, develop, manage and apply varieties of teaching strategies to support quality student learning is the competency of directors for their success. In order to achieve this objective it's necessary for the director to obtain management skills. Similarly, most teachers and directors agreed that their ability to build, facilitate and maintain work relation with parents and other care givers may enhance student learning. The mean value of teacher and director response were both 3.2. Without the active participation of parents and caregivers, it is difficult to fulfil the aim and goals of kindergarten education. Hence, a directorial ability to build, facilitate and maintain work relation with all parties involved in the educational process determines the successful partnership.

As table 8, item three shows, most teachers and directors replied that teachers' ability to monitor assess, record and report student learning outcomes was high, and the mean value of teacher and director responses was similarly 3.6. McDonnell (1999) describes that the early childhood teacher's role is having the knowledge of child development and growth, child observation, record and assessment. The ability to monitor, assess, record and report student learning outcomes is among the five teacher competencies expected from the Ethiopian teacher (MoE, 2002). The researcher made document analysis and observed that teachers continuously assess, record and report student learning outcomes and other behavior to their parents through a communication book. This was an encouraging experience in the current practice of kindergarten education. Regarding teachers' mastery of Education and Training Policy, most teachers and directors said that teachers' mastery of Education and Training Policy was medium and low, some of them even though they did not have access to see what the document dealt with. The mean value

of teacher and director responses was 2.9 and 2.3, respectively. Mastery of Education and Training Policy (ETP), curriculum and other program development are competencies expected from the Ethiopian teacher (MoE, 2002). Teachers' understanding about education and training policy contributed a lot to the curriculum and the implementation of other programmes in line with the objective stated.

Regarding teachers' ability to teach kindergarten children, most respondents agreed that teachers' ability to teach kindergarten children was between medium and high, the mean value of the teacher response was 3.4, close to medium, and the director response was 3.6, close to high. However, education quality experts reported during the interview that the one year (10 month) kindergarten teacher training was not enough to cope with the multitude of tasks in the kindergarten education program and they stated that the low quality of kindergarten human resources was a major challenge in kindergarten education. Teachers must create and support a learning environment in which children construct their own knowledge through play and social interaction whilst balancing direct teaching with play (Montessori, 1963). Hence, teachers' ability determines all the activity in the teaching/learning process in the kindergarten. Therefore, continuous training about how to teach is advisable for the successful implementation of the program.

As table 8 item 6 indicated, teachers' ability to prepare weekly and daily lesson plan was high, the mean value of the teacher and director response was 3.8 and 4.3, respectively. The researcher made document analysis and observed that teachers indeed prepare weekly and daily lesson plans and the plans are checked by directors at the end of the week. The problem is the lack of uniformity in the format, stating objectives and the fact that the objectives in general are not specific, measurable, achievable, reliable, and time bounded. Similarly, item seven indicated that teachers' understanding of early childhood education and commitment to their profession was medium, the mean value of teachers and directors response were 2.99 and 3.0, respectively. Education is a dynamic process, so teachers' involvement in continuous professional development program and contribution to the professional develop-

ment program of their colleagues is a competency expected from teachers (MoE, 2002). Teachers, principals and education quality experts reported that the absence of updating and upgrading programs led teachers to move outside the teaching profession, such as accounting and other business area, creating a lack of commitment to their profession. It is important to recommend that including and cascading continuous professional development program/ updating and upgrading program/ up to kindergarten level is crucial for the successful implementation of the kindergarten curriculum.

With regard to teaching assistant's knowledge of how to teach kindergarten children, the mean value of the teacher response was between low and medium which was 2.48 while the director response was close to medium, 3.28. The document analysed by the researcher showed that most teaching assistants had completed 10th or 12th and they did not get the training provided for a kindergarten teacher. Teaching assistants were involved directly in the care and education of groups and individuals, children with special needs, in planning and delivering the curriculum, in preparing materials and activities, recording, assessment and reviews. They should have detailed knowledge of the curriculum, foundation, child development and community in which they work (Iain Macleod and Brudenell, 2004). Similarly, teaching assistant's ability to facilitate student learning was medium, the mean value of teacher and director response was 3.2 and 3.57, respectively. There is no controversy about the importance of teaching assistants in the practice of kindergarten education but no institutions train just teaching assistants in the country. This was one of the challenges – there are not many teaching assistants in the market and because of this kindergartens insist on using other opportunities, employing 10th and 12th grade (and even below 10th grade) people as teaching assistants.

Regarding guardians most of the respondent teachers and directors said that the guardian's ability to care and enhance student learning was medium, the mean value of teacher and director response were 3.0 and 3.2, respectively. The researcher made document analysis regarding the qualifications of guardians, most of them were 8th and 10th grade

graduates, and also a significant number of kindergartens did not have a guardian. This created a work burden on the main teacher, because the main role of the teaching assistant and guardian is to support the main teacher and share the multitude of tasks in the practice of kindergarten education. Guardians are expected to understand the needs of the child based on their level, development, knowledge and ability, so that commitment of the guardian is fundamental in the program implementation.

Interview and Observation Analysis about the Practices of KG Education: The researcher observed that most teachers used play based instruction, illustrating stories and learning by song in the classroom. A significant number of teachers used dramatization, discussion and lecturing methods in classroom instruction. Most teachers used straight line seating arrangement because of the large number of students in a small classroom. The majority of teachers were required to prepare lesson plans which were checked by principals at the end of the week. Teachers always tried to check student exercises, this is an encouraging trend but they lack the proper usage of teaching aids. Nearly all teachers used the mother tongue language to teach children but sometimes they used English as an instructional language. The researcher observed that a limited number of teachers encourage child centered learning and independent activities. Teaching numbers and alphabets in the context of student development and level lack uniformity, with some teachers and schools teaching beyond the limits of the syllabus and this may result in learning difficulties for children. The assessment mechanism of teachers varies from school to school; some schools used grading and other used marking, except in very limited kindergartens where the assessment mechanisms to check student progress were not appropriate, being formally similar to that of primary and secondary level.

Regarding outdoor materials, the researcher observed the following material student ratio, for example slide (1:177), merry-go-round (1:24), ladder (1:175), sand box (available only in one kindergarten), tires (1:186) and seesaws (1:46) and these were not adequate. Since play is an impor-

tant way of teaching children, appropriate and sufficient indoor and outdoor materials are mandatory. When we come to indoor materials, the researcher observed that the blocks, pictorial books, art materials, shop corners, family corners, health corners, music corners, mathematics corner, table toys and pictorial teaching aids were inadequate in the average kindergarten. Kindergartens in the study area have child-sized chairs and tables and have somewhat appropriate shelves – this was an encouraging trend.

Most kindergarten buildings were to some extent conducive, neat and decorated areas, free from noise. However, the dining and rest rooms were not and less conducive, respectively. In addition, they lack first aid materials and a first aid room and kit. Kindergartens in the study area had somewhat conducive administrative rooms, toilet, water, and decorated classrooms. With regard to the average observed number of children, those who enjoy kindergarten program total 3,540 in an area of 2528.57 square meters. This means that on average 1.4 meters square is available for a child. On average, the child-teachers ratio was 1:33. Principals, teacher and education quality experts reported that proper attention was not given from the government in providing land for building kindergartens, because the required 63-meter square classroom size and 1.55 meter square per child MoE (2003) cannot be fulfilled by private kindergartens. It is possible to say that most kindergarten classrooms were inappropriate to teach children in. Besides the poor classroom condition, most of them were not ventilated, not well equipped with corners and outdoor play materials. Due to the narrowness of the classroom, children were unable to relax. The researcher observed that 13 (59.1%) of kindergartens were not constructed for the purpose of a kindergarten. Only 5 (22.7%) kindergartens had a dining room, 11 (50%) have rest rooms, 8 (36.3%) have a staff room, 19 (86.3%) kindergartens have an administrative room but all are inappropriate based on the standard. Most of the teachers, principals and education quality experts agreed that the practice of kindergarten education was not free from difficulty, among the fundamental problems some of them they pointed out were as follows:

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- 1) Lack of structured teacher training institution for KG teachers and other personnel,
 - 2) Lack of appropriate building or school constructed for the purpose of kindergarten,
 - 3) Textbooks, teachers guides, syllabuses, policy documents, manuals, national and international legal directives prepared by government are not available in most kindergartens,
 - 4) Lack of appropriate indoor and outdoor play materials, rest room, dining room, water, toilet, first aid room and kit, registration of under age children; lack of parent participation and inattention to the program are major problems in the implementation process.
 - 5) Lack of on the job training for teachers and principals in the area of child development, care and education; lack of continuous professional supervision and support from woredas,
 - 6) Lack of uniformity on the implementation of the program, access, equity, quality and standardization problem were major challenges in Ethiopian kindergarten education,
 - 7) Parents and schools are highly concentrated only for English language and give low emphasis to child first language results in learning difficulties, teaching children without considering the limitations of the syllabus. The stage and age level of the children still represents a bottleneck,
 - 8) Lack of trained and qualified teachers, relatively short period of training for teachers. Low salary resulting in high teacher turnover and creating a shortage of qualified teachers.

To this end, Curtis(1998) noted that kindergarten classrooms were generally placed at the corner of the building with their own entrance, playground and providing large areas of space to allow for a flexible and stimulating environment. Therefore, to trim down the above major problems, the subject under the study advances the following proposed conclusion and recommendations.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Conclusion

In Ethiopia, despite the fact that 10 decades have passed since kindergarten education began, its quality as well as availability for the preschool age children of the country has been very low. From the above findings and discussion, the following conclusions were drawn.

With regard to indoor or classroom materials of the kindergarten, most of the preschool lacks appropriate child-sized chairs and tables, blocks, pictorial books, art materials, corners such as shop corners, family corners, health corners, music corners, mathematics corners, table toys and pictorial teaching aids in the sample kindergarten. Similarly, the outdoor materials of the kindergarten are not appropriate to child development, with insufficient features such as a slide, merry-go-round, ladder, sand box, tyres, and seesaws. Since play is an important way of teaching children, appropriate and sufficient indoor and outdoor materials are necessary for the successful realization of kindergarten education.

The physical environment of the kindergarten is less conducive to children's development, most of kindergarten buildings have not been constructed for the purpose of kindergarten and are not conducive, neat, decorated or silent enough. Similarly, the dining and rest room are not appropriate, there is a lack of appropriate playgrounds when compared to the number of children that need the facility. Kindergartens in the study area have not very conducive administrative rooms, toilets, and water facilities. It is possible to say that most of the kindergarten classrooms were not appropriate to teaching children.

Curriculum material implementation is inconsistent and does not consider children's needs. Preschools do not have enough textbooks, teachers' guides, culturally relevant storybooks, syllabuses and they lack of curriculum frameworks and standards at kindergarten. With regard to the quality of kindergarten human resources, the program has faced a lack of qualified and trained human resources (teachers, guardians and teaching assistants or caregivers), low salary of teachers causing

a high rotation, a lack of community participation, and supervision and support were the major negative factors hindering the successful implementation of kindergarten education.

The difficulty mentioned above observably affects children's interest towards learning and schooling, mental and developmental needs, physical development and social development as well. To change this, the collaborative work of parents, investors, colleges, the government, non-governmental organizations, educational expertise and the media is necessary.

6.2 Recommendations for Potential Improvement

Based on the above findings and conclusions the following suggestions and recommendations are provided to reduce the problems and advance the practice of kindergarten education sector in the country.

- 1) The pre-service training term of teachers needs to be increased to a relatively longer period, perhaps from two to three years. It should be focused more deeply on preschool education related courses such as health, social development, mental or cognitive development, child psychology and moral development to enable the kindergarten education system to be more effective. Furthermore, certain organizational improvements have to be made for the preschool training institutions in government and private sector in quality and quantity so that they are able to produce quality human resources (principals, teachers, assistants and guardians).
- 2) Providing appropriate in-service training in collaboration with government, NGOs and investors involved in the sector for kindergarten teachers and other personnel including experts on preschool education is irreplaceable in promoting the practice of quality kindergarten education.
- 3) Creating and developing awareness of the community and other people interested in the issue concerning the crucial aspects that may help to reduce the problems and successfully implement the program aiming at the improvement of kindergarten education.

- 4) In most kindergartens, indoor and outdoor teaching (play) materials are limited. However, play is not only the business of the child but also an essential medium of instruction for the preschool education program. Thus, to alleviate the current shortage of play material, establishing a preschool material production center is important. Middle and small enterprises may produce materials and equipment such as merry-go-rounds, seesaws, ladders, slides and swings with the support of the government. In addition, teachers have to know how to produce simple and local play materials.
- 5) It is important to take immediate measures to prepare developmentally appropriate and relevant curriculum materials, print and distribute the kindergarten textbooks, teacher's guides, syllabuses, standards and other related directives to kindergartens with proper improvement – this should be done by Addis Ababa education bureau in collaboration with city administration and it will help to make the practice of kindergarten education implementation uniform.
- 6) Woreda education officials and experts ought to implement standards and force private kindergarten owners to provide the children and teachers with basic facilities such as dining rooms, rest rooms, offices, toilets, water and first aid rooms and consider the appropriateness of presenting the physical plan before giving the license. They should also continuously follow up after licensing the institution.
- 7) The city administration is supposed to promote and encourage private investors by providing land at a discount to construct buildings for the purpose of kindergartens and supervise the private owners as to whether they construct buildings for the purpose of kindergartens based on their contractual responsibility and liability.
- 8) Finally, this study is limited in many respects, further and in-depth investigations have to be made in order to disclose the underlying problems, which can help to come up with more valuable findings that would influence decision makers, planners, the state and the public.

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The Role of the 'Post Graduate Diploma in Secondary School Teaching' Program in Improving the Quality of Teaching in Eastern Ethiopian Secondary Schools

Abstract: This study dealt with the role of the Postgraduate Diploma in Secondary School Teaching (PGDT) program in improving the quality of teaching in Eastern Ethiopian secondary schools. The study used a mixed research design that integrated both qualitative and quantitative research methods concurrently. The data was collected from 140 respondents, comprised of 83 teachers and 57 school leaders (i.e., mentors, principals, and head teachers) of 14 secondary schools found in four zones of Eastern Ethiopia. The researchers used simple random sampling to select secondary schools, whereas teachers and school leaders were selected using purposive and expert sampling techniques respectively. Quantitative data was collected via a questionnaire and qualitative data through focus group discussion (FGD), interview, and observation. The data is analyzed both in a qualitative and a quantitative manner. The findings of the study showed that PGDT graduates seem to be contributing their part to enhancing quality education by raising high order thinking questions, implementing classroom activities such as: problem-solving, cooperative leaning, discussion and brainstorming,

frequently managing the classroom for active learning implementation, using exercises to elicit students' ideas, knowledge and skills and encouraging students to become active participants in classrooms. This is considered to be an encouraging trend for the desired improvement in teaching quality. The result of this study also demonstrated that PGDT graduates have good subject matter knowledge and apply it effectively in their classrooms. The grand mean of teachers' and school leaders' responses related with their subject matter knowledge is 4.33 and 3.81, respectively. This seemed to exist because of their undergraduate program; they have had an opportunity to attain various major courses in the three-year bachelor program. After that, in order to become a high school teacher, they had to attend a one-year or a two-summer long PGDT program to equip them with fundamental pedagogical skills. This is understood as the benefit of the new teacher-education program. Despite all of these facts and in contrast with the teachers' response, the researchers observed that in most Eastern Ethiopia secondary schools teaching was dominated by traditional methods of teaching or lecturing. This approach makes students passive, less confident, unreflective and poorly motivated to enjoy learning. Furthermore, concerning students learning assessment, an inconsistency of application was observed. Therefore, the researchers suggested that the Ethiopian Ministry of Education, in collaboration with higher learning institutions and teacher-training colleges, would have to provide continuous training for secondary school teachers about student assessment, active and constructivist methods of teaching to enhance quality education and produce robust graduates fit for the 21st century world of work and consciousness.

Keywords: quality, teaching, PGDT

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

In a vast body of literature, education is acknowledged as an essential element in the process of national development. It unlocks human potential and helps individuals better understand the world in which

they live. Education can address the complexity and interconnectedness of problems such as poverty, wasteful consumption, environmental degradation, urban decay, population growth, gender inequality, health, conflict, violation of human rights and seeks to empower people to assume responsibility for creating a sustainable future (UNESCO, 2005; TGE, 1994). The strength of any educational system, however, largely depends on the quality and commitment of its teachers. Oliveria and Farrell, as cited in Ayalew Shibesh (2009), pointed out that the teacher is the most important resource in an education system in any society. The teacher also plays a major role in the delivery of quality education. Educational quality has largely been a function of teacher quality (Avalos and Hadad, 1979; Fuller, 1986). Platt (1970) emphasizes a similar notion and points out that teachers are the heart of the educational process, main determinants of the quality and effectiveness of educational process, and players of decisive role in the fulfillment of educational goals. In relation to the aforementioned explanation, Miles (1975) states that school facilities, such as good curricula, creative instructional materials, efficient organization and management, modern facilities and equipment, all contribute to the effectiveness of education, but all depend for their full realization upon the skill, wisdom and commitment of teachers. Indeed, teachers are the most important elements in the realization of educational goals. Because of this, every educational system should strive to attract qualified people to the profession and provide them with the best possible working conditions and material incentives that will satisfy their needs.

Today, we are fully aware of the function that education plays in society and the country as a whole. Ethiopia is striving to expand education at all levels (primary, secondary, and tertiary). To this end, new goals of access, equity, quality and efficiency were articulated at the national level in the Ethiopian Education and Training Policy of 1994. In effect, this has helped the country to respond to the rapidly changing demand of education by enhancing teacher preparation in the last few decades. The educational sector in Ethiopia was given a powerful impetus after the overthrow of the military government in 1991. Since then, education has been a development priority on the national agenda. The Government of Ethiopia

has developed an Education Training Policy (ETP) and an Education Sector Strategy in 1994. In this policy, teacher education has a due attention. Based on this, a number of mechanisms have developed to address the problems of teacher training specially since 2003. Thus, teacher development programs have passed through different reforms and improvements. The purpose of teacher education is to produce effective practicing teachers (George et al., 2000) and address the question of how trainees can best be prepared to become effective classroom practitioners. In the case of Ethiopia, the new teacher education program was designed to strengthen the quality of teaching at secondary school level and fill gaps identified in the knowledge, practice and commitment of teachers (MoE, 2007, MoE, 2009b). This new program is intended to bring the preparation of secondary school teachers in line with international standards, which comprises a degree in a relevant subject followed by a professional qualification. In recent years, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has implemented PGDT (Post-graduate Diploma in Secondary School Teaching) program to equip secondary schools with pedagogically skilled and knowledgeable teachers. However, the impact and role of PGDT program in securing quality teaching has not yet been adequately investigated. Thus, the main objective of this study was to investigate the role of PGDT program in improving the quality of teaching in secondary schools found in Eastern Ethiopia.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The issues of quality education in general and teacher training and development program in particular have remained a huge challenge for the Ethiopian educational system since the introduction of modern education in the country, back in 1908. Following the introduction of the new Education and Training Policy and Education Sector Strategy in 1994 (TGE 1994), Ministry of Education has designed and implemented a series of Education Sector Development Programs (i.e., ESDP I, II, III, IV and V). Issues of quality were emphasized more in ESDP IV and V, which focuses on: improving student achievement, designing a new program to help disadvantaged children, developing the capacity of the system, and improving school management and administration (MoE 2010a). In 2010, the gov-

ernment also launched the General Education Quality Improvement Program (GEQIP) with the objective of improving the delivery of quality education in five key areas: curriculum, textbooks and assessment, teacher development, school improvement, management and administration, and coordination, monitoring and evaluation (World Bank 2008).

With all these efforts, the issue of teacher education in Ethiopia seemed to have remained unresolved. Numerous studies show that Ethiopian secondary schools face several challenges related with teacher high turnover because of the low salary, resulting in a shortage of qualified and pedagogically skilled teachers. In order to tackle this problem, the government of Ethiopia has initiated PGDT (Post-graduate Diploma in Secondary School Teaching) program. A Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) is awarded to candidates who satisfactorily complete a one-year long course in School of Education and pass stipulated university examinations at the end of the study period <<http://sis.ucci.edu.ky>>.

Since 2010, the PGDT programme has been available in ten universities in a summer school mode. The very initiative behind beginning the programme was the gap identified from the teacher-training programme of Teacher Education System Overhaul (TESO), which was implemented from 2003 to 2010. The PGDT program has faced complicated problems since its commencement. The problems observed are related with admission procedures, selection procedures, placement strategies (to university), teaching/learning process, status determination, evaluation mechanism, lack of uniformity, provision of teaching materials and practicum courses work and so on. Similarly, the authors of this article also observed problems with regard to the implementation of PGDT program. Experiencing such problems in the program led the writers to come up with the research topic, so that it would be possible to recommend some intervention strategies to improve quality-teaching originally deemed to be seen through the implementation of PGDT program. This study answers the following basic research questions:

1. To what extent are PGDT graduates equipped with subject area knowledge?

2. How frequently do PGDT graduates apply Active Learning Methods in their classroom teaching?
3. How frequently do PGDT graduates assess their students' progress?

1.3. Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research is to assess the contributions of PGDT graduates towards improving the quality of teaching in secondary schools found in Eastern Ethiopia. Specific objectives of the research are to:

- a) Explore the subject matter knowledge of PGDT graduates.
- b) Investigate the frequency of Active Learning Methods application by PGDT graduates.
- c) Assess the extent of continuous assessment implementation by PGDT graduates.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The result of this research is believed to make stakeholders of the PGDT program such as Teacher Education Universities, Ministry of Education, Regional Education Bureau, Zonal Education Department, Woreda Education Offices and Schools more aware of the current contribution(s) and gaps of PGDT program. The result discloses the role of PGDT Program towards quality of teaching so that they would be able to take interventions for effective implementation of the program.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Conceptualizing Teacher Education

Several writers in the field of teacher education have in the past drawn a distinction between 'teacher education' and 'teacher training' (Cruikshank and Metcalf, 1990), thinking these represent two poles of an ideological dimension concerning the ways in which teachers are most appropriately prepared for their profession. The former is deemed to be concerned with the intellectual development of teachers, whereas the latter is more specifi-

cally concerned with the development of particular areas of knowledge and skills that are instrumental to the task of teaching. It has been argued that teacher education is involved in all-round education and the development of teachers, emphasizing teaching as a profession involving well-informed judgment; whereas teacher training refers to a more mechanistic approach to teacher preparation, more akin to a craft apprenticeship involving the mastery of well-defined routines. Obviously, learning to teach does involve the acquisition of certain knowledge and skills that are essential to adequate classroom performance. It is also the case, however, that learning to teach involves being able to reason about one's own actions, being able to justify particular strategies, understanding the subject matter, children and their ways of learning, and having a conception of the purposes of education and the ways in which schools operate in order to promote education. The continued use of such distinctions may in fact prevent the recognition of the merits of each perspective, hindering the exploration of alternative perspectives, how each refers to different areas of teachers' work and highlights different aspects of learning to teach.

2.2. The Issue of Quality in Secondary School Education

Secondary school education in Ethiopia and in other sub-Saharan Africa countries has been considered both an important sub-sector in the education system, as well as imperative for the development of the country's economy. Inputs into higher education and in the labor force in Ethiopia depend on qualified outputs from secondary schools. For the past number of years, quality has continued to be a dominating and challenging notion in different fields of research. In education, quality continues growing as an interesting area of research. In the past decades, researchers have tried to address the concern of 'quality in education'. The term quality has been used in the commercial field and is also increasing and growing in the field of education. The notion has remained a discussion agenda and varying definitions are found. Quality has been defined as a high degree of goodness or excellence (Mosha, 2000), a degree of fitness to what the customer wants (Lomas, 2002), and the level of satisfaction with effectiveness in the service offered (Manyanga, 2007).

Different countries in the world acknowledge that the quality of secondary school education is a pillar for national development (Gropello, 2006; Bedi and Sharma, 2006; Shahzad, 2007 as cited in George Batano, 2012). Improved quality of secondary school education is considered a key element for the growth of economy in sub-Saharan Africa (George Batano, 2012). It is through secondary school education that nations build skills and competences among young individuals to serve in various sectors of the economy. In Ethiopia too, despite the challenges the country is facing in education, the quality of primary and secondary school education has been set as a priority. To ensure and offer quality education in primary and secondary education, different strategies were implemented in the past. Among varieties of strategies implemented, post-graduate diploma in secondary school teaching (PGDT) aimed to produce competent and effective teachers. That is why it was found important by the authors of this article to assess the role of PGDT program to serve quality education in Eastern Ethiopia.

Poor performance in examinations and the falling quality of education can be associated with lack of teaching and learning resources (Bedi and Sharma, 2006), ill-trained teachers (Wedgwood, 2005), and overcrowded classrooms (Nilson, 2003; Wedgwood, 2005). Nevertheless, these alone may not be adequate measures of quality in education. According to Shahzad, (2007) quality of education is measured using different performance indicators. Competence and achievements are examples of performance indicators. The emphasis of measuring quality of education therefore has been associated with improving the performance of teachers and competences and achievements of the students (Campbell and Rozsnyai, 2002). Similarly, Vedder (1994) depicts that measuring the quality of education is related with raising students' achievements. Although, measuring of quality is important, it is not an easy task to judge the best strategies for measuring (Weir, 2009). In this sense, measuring quality becomes a complex and value-laden process (Mortmore and Stone, 1990). This means there is no simple one-dimensional measure of quality in education. In defining quality of education, many factors interact: students and their backgrounds, teachers

and their skills, schools and their structures and environment, curricula, and societal expectations (Nilson, 2003). In addition, the components of education that can be measured vary, depending on the objective of measurement and the interest of the judges. In either case, measuring the quality of education gives better pictures of what may be changed and how.

2.3. Role of Quality Teachers in Secondary School Teaching

Content-focused teacher professional development is thought to contribute to improvements in the quality of education (Harris and Sass, 2006). The presence of trained teachers is also considered to be one of the critical elements in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All Goals (Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse, 2008). So, proper schooling cannot be conceived without the presence of qualified teachers. This means that schools without trained teachers cannot do their job effectively. This is because teachers play a pivotal role in educational provision and thus significantly affect education quality. The number of teachers available, the pupil–teacher ratios, and the personal characteristics of teachers are considered as markers of quality. The personal characteristics include academic qualifications, pedagogical training, content knowledge, ability/aptitude and teaching experience (Workneh, 2013). Teacher motivation and incentives are also key factors in the success and /or failure of teaching and learning. Mpokosa and Ndaruhutse (2008), who carried out research on teacher training and school management in 13 developing countries, found that the level and structure of teacher incentives greatly contribute to teaching quality and student achievement. Teachers' motivation can be affected by the quality of their professional relationship with their supervisors and with each other. Good management and collaboration among teachers can balance the effect of poor pay on motivation. Teachers' motivation is also influenced by differences in standards and expectations. Better qualifications may cause teachers to have higher expectations and therefore, be more motivated to produce high-quality teaching (Urwick and Mapuru, 2005).

3. Research Design and Methodology

This part of the research focuses on research design and methodology, population, sample and sampling techniques. Moreover, it deals with sources of data, instruments of data collection and methods of data analysis. This study was conducted in four Zones located in Eastern part of Ethiopia. Among these, two of them are located in Oromia National Regional State, which are West Hararghe and East Hararghe Zones, while the remaining two are located in Somali National Regional State, which are Shinile, and Jig-Jiga Zones.

This study has a descriptive survey design, specifically a mixed research method that concurrently utilizes both qualitative and quantitative research approaches. Descriptive survey design is preferred for this research because it helps the researchers to make their investigation with a narration of events and to draw conclusions based on the information obtained from relatively large and representative samples of the target population (Kothari, 2004). Additionally, descriptive survey research design aims at describing behaviors and people's perceptions, opinions, attitudes, and beliefs about a current issue in education (Kumar, 2006). Moreover, mixed research method is preferred since it uses the combination of qualitative and quantitative data so that the weakness of one can be strengthened by the strengths of the other (Creswell, 2009).

From the Somali National Regional state out of the nine Zones, two Zones, namely Shinile and Jig-Jiga, were selected using the convenient sampling technique. From these two Zones, six secondary schools were selected using simple random sampling techniques. From these six sample secondary schools, all PGDT graduate and mentor teachers were included as respondents of the survey and principals and Woreda supervisors interviewed and included in Focus Group Discussions. In East and West Hararghe Zones, eight secondary schools (four from each Zone) were selected using simple random sampling technique. From the selected eight schools all PGDT graduate and mentor teachers were included for the survey whereas the principals and supervisors included in interviews and FGDs. Finally, all Teacher Development Program (TDP) ex-

perts and supervisors in Somali National Regional State, East and West Hararghe Zone of Oromiya National Regional States Education Bureau were included using expert sampling techniques. The population of this research includes PGDT graduates of three batches: Mentors, Principals, and Supervisors. In total, 170 respondents were involved in filling in the questionnaires. Out of these, 90 respondents were secondary school teachers (sample graduates of three batches) and the remaining 80 respondents were secondary school leaders (Mentors, Principals, and Supervisors). Four data collection instruments (Questionnaire, Interview, Focus Group Discussion (FGD), and Observation) were used to gather the necessary data.

The questionnaire contained both closed-ended and open-ended types used to collect data from PGDT graduates. The researchers designed scale questions to assess PGDT program graduates in terms of the subject matter knowledge, instructional planning skills, professional commitment, and application of different teaching techniques during classroom instruction and assessment of student progress included in this instrument. To do this, some items of the questionnaire were adapted from the research works of other researchers while some others developed by the members of the research team. The investigators preferred to use questionnaires as an instrument of data collection for this study, because it is the most flexible tool and possesses a unique advantage over others in collecting both qualitative and quantitative information (Kumar, 1999). In addition, according to (Kothari, 2004), the questionnaire is convenient to acquire the necessary information from a large number of study subjects within a short period.

As a method for collecting qualitative data, focus group discussions emphasized learning about understanding, the thoughts and experiences of others. When the participants take part in a group interview, they can demonstrate their interest in the discussion topic. When the participants are mutually interested in the discussion, their conversation often takes the form of sharing and comparing thoughts about the topic (Victor, 2006). Based on this assumption, FGD was used to collect data regarding the subject matter and pedagogical content knowledge,

lesson planning, professional commitment and assessment of students' progress from supervisors, and principals concerning quality PGDT program graduates. Similarly, in qualitative research, observation can help to study all observable social phenomena as long as they are accessible (Sarantakos, 2005). The main advantage of observation is being able to directly observe and describe the phenomena as they occur in their natural setting. Based on this understanding, direct classroom observation was conducted to witness the extent to which PGDT program graduates apply different methods of teaching during the time of classroom instruction, plan for their lessons in advance and undertake continuous assessment.

In qualitative research, interviewing is a major source of data needed for understanding the phenomenon under study (Merriam 1988). An interview is a kind of conversation with purpose. A researcher interview is an interpersonal situation, a conversation between two partners about an issue (Robson, 1993, p. 227 as cited Yamane Gama, 2007). Accordingly, the researcher conducted interviews with 4 TDP experts at the regional and zonal level. These people contributed a lot because of their important position (all are TDP expertise) they were the main people to select, assign and evaluate PGDT graduates. Both the quantitative and qualitative data necessary for this study were collected concurrently (side-by-side). This means that while distributing a questionnaire for PGDT program graduates, the investigators undertook focus group discussions with mentors, supervisors and principals until the respondents of the questionnaire filled it in and returned it to them. Simultaneously, classroom observation was conducted by some of the investigators while others conducted focus group discussions. The collected data for this study was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The quantitative data collected through close-ended questionnaire from PGDT program graduates was analyzed by using descriptive statistics like the mean and percentage. Qualitative data collected through focus group discussions, interview and observation and it was analyzed via narration by categorizing and forming themes based on their major concepts.

4. Data Analysis and Interpretation

This chapter deals with the organization, analysis and interpretation of the data gathered from government secondary schools leaders, teachers, and education experts through questionnaires, FGD, observation and interviews. In total 170 respondents were involved in filling in the questionnaires. Out of these, 90 respondents were secondary school teachers and the remaining 80 respondents were secondary school leaders (head departments, mentors and principals). Accordingly, the questionnaires were distributed to the whole of the sample population, with 83 of the 90 teachers (92.22%) and 57 of 80 school leaders (71.25%) filling and returning successfully. On top of this, to substantiate the quantitative data, observations through checklist, focus group discussion and interviews were conducted with education experts.

Description of the questionnaire: the researchers developed a Likert type questionnaire to capture the level of agreement and frequency of respondents about the role of PGDT program in improving the quality of education in Ethiopian secondary schools. The scale given for closed ended question are stated as (5) SA= Strongly Agree, (4) A= Agree, (3) U= Undecided, (2) D= Disagree, (1) SD= strongly disagree, (5) AL= Always, (4) FR= frequently, (3) SM= sometimes, (2) R=rarely, (1) NA= not at all). The data collected through questionnaires, interviews, FGD and observation checklists were organized, analyzed and interpreted in line with the objectives of the study as described below:

Sex of respondents

Table 1. Sex

No	Sex	Teachers		Leaders	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	Male	74	89.2	53	93.0
	Female	9	10.8	4	7.0
	Total	83	100.0	57	100.0

As indicated in the above table, 74 (89.2%) of teachers are male and the rest 9(10.8%) are female. This indicates that secondary school education in the study areas were still dominated by male teachers and the participation rates of female teachers in secondary school are low. Similarly, 53 (93%) of the school leaders participating in school leadership are male and the remaining 4 (7%) are female. This data shows that the participation of female in teaching and school leadership is low.

There are considerable factors for this disparity such as access to education, opportunities, cultural variables or perception and practice towards women performance and quality, lack of experience and participation in training and capacity building program in leadership. To reduce this gap and improve women’s competitiveness in leadership, continuous women empowerment training and capacity-building program may be necessary.

Issue related to Age of School Teacher and leaders

Table 2. Age of School Teacher and leaders

No	Age	Age of School Teachers		Age of School Leaders	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	25 and Below	47	56.6	5	8.8
	26–30	36	43.4	32	56.1
	31–35	0	0.0	13	22.8
	36 and above	0	0.0	7	12.3
	Total	83	100.0	57	100.0

As the above table 2 indicated that, 47 (56.6%) of school teachers are aged 25 and below with the rest 36 (43.4%) 26–30. Compared to school leaders, 5 (8.8%), 32 (56.1%), 13 (22.8%) and 7 (12.3%) of school leaders are aged 25 and below, between 26–30, 31–35 and 36 and above respectively. This data indicates that most school leaders and teachers in the study areas are young and energetic to handle their respective tasks.

However, absences of experienced teachers affect mentor-mentee relationships and in-belt supervision at the school level. The teaching profession is considered the mother of all other professions, however, in most sub-Saharan African countries the lack of well trained and qualified teachers are identifiable challenges in realizing education for all and sustainable development. During focus group discussion, most of the participants raised the issue that today the majority of secondary school teachers are looking for better jobs and are ready to leave the teaching profession. They also raised that teachers' high rotation, which is caused by the lack of incentives or low salary and respect. As a result, a significant numbers of teachers shifted their profession to business, economics, and engineering and other attractive professional areas. This requires urgent intervention to save teachers or the so-called "Nation Builders" and also the teaching profession.

Issue related to experience of teacher and leaders

Table 3. Experience of Teacher and Leaders

No	Experience	Teachers		Leaders	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
1	0–2 years	52	62.7	1	1.8
	3–5 years	25	30.1	13	22.8
	6–8 years	4	4.8	19	33.3
	9 and above years	2	2.4	24	42.1
	Total	83	100.0	57	100.0

As the above table indicates, 52 (62.7%) teachers in the research area put down their experience between 0–2, the rest 25 (30.1%) have 3–5, 4 (4.8%) have 6–8, 2 (2.4%) have 9 and above years experience, respectively. The experience of school leaders, in comparison, stands at 24 (42.1%) having 9 and above years experience while the rest 19 (33.3%) have 6–8 years, 13 (22.8%) have 3–5 years and 1 (1.8%) has 0–2 years experience,

respectively. This data implies that most teachers in the study areas have low experience but, in contrast, most school leaders have experience in leadership.

Issue related to Teacher Training

Table 4. Teacher Training

No	Item	Alternatives	Teachers		Leaders	
			N	%	N	%
1	Do you think that the overall duration of the PGDT training is adequate to be effective in high school teaching	Yes	67	80.7	45	78.9
		No	16	19.3	12	21.1
		Total	83	100.0	57	100.0
2	In the last three years did you participate in any kind of short term training(s) that might have added value to enhance your quality of teaching	Yes	21	25.3		
		No	62	74.7		
		Total	83	100.0		

From the above table, we can understand that 67 (80.7%) teachers and 45 (78.9%) leaders agreed that the overall duration of the PGDT training is adequate to produce effective teachers in high school teaching. The rest 16(19.3%) of PGDT graduates and 12 (21.1%) of leaders did not agree that the one year of regular or two summer training program in teacher education was enough. A “zero” incentive one year PGDT training program discourages newly recruited teachers, because some university graduates who have a degree in applied sciences have the opportunity to be employed in different high schools to fill the shortage of teachers without any pedagogical training with an equal salary to that of PGDT graduates. This shows the inconsistency of the Ethiopian teacher education program and, therefore, the Ministry of Education should revise the program to alleviate the inconsistency.

Regarding participation in short term training which helps to improve the quality of teaching, 62 (74.7%) of teachers responded that there was no kind of training in the last three years to enhance their capacity in teaching, the remaining 21(25.3%) had an opportunity to participate

in short term training. This data implies that nearly 75% of teachers in eastern Ethiopia have not had the opportunity to update his/ her profession through short-term training that helps to enhance quality teaching. However, the quality of teachers as well as of their influence on the quality of the educational process and its outcomes are undisputed. Numerous studies have shown that teachers are the key factor in determining the quality of the educational process, as well students' motivation and academic achievement (Graham Donaldson, et.al. 2013). Therefore, the Ministry of Education may introduce a continuous on job training, which is necessary to update the capacity of Ethiopian teachers in collaboration with NGOs.

Issue related to Quality of Teaching

Table 5. Quality of Teaching

No	Item	Alternatives	Teachers		Leaders	
			N	%	N	%
1	How would you rate the status of quality teaching in your school	Very High Status of quality of teaching	13	15.7	7	12.3
		High Status of quality of teaching	38	45.8	37	64.9
		Low Status of quality of teaching	25	30.1	13	22.8
		Very Low Status of quality of teaching	7	8.4	0	0
		Total	83	100.0	57	100.0

As the above table indicates, 13 (15.7%), 38 (45.8%) teachers and 7 (12.3%), 37(64.9%) leaders confirm that the status of quality of teaching in his/her school is very high and high, respectively. This is an encouraging trend, the remaining 25 (30.1%) and 7 (8.4%) teachers say, low and very low, respectively. Similarly, 13 (22.8%) leaders responded that the quality of teaching in their school was low. This data implies that a significant number of respondents affirm that the quality of teaching in eastern Ethiopian secondary schools is questionable. Concerning the status of the quality of teaching in eastern Ethiopian secondary schools, one expert from the Somali National Regional State reported that:

Quality of teaching is directly related to the positive interaction of teacher and students, students with their friends, practice of student-centered teaching methods, appropriateness of classroom, library, laboratory, pedagogical centers organization, and authenticity of learning, usage of teaching aids, appropriateness of assessment techniques, and application of reinforcement strategies.

However:

Frankly speaking, teaching in Ethiopian secondary schools is still dominated by teacher-centered methods of teaching approach, poor student-student, student-teacher and student-instructional material interaction, poor library, laboratory and pedagogical center organization, students' high dependency on others in doing homework and assignment, limited application of teaching aids and poor classroom management. Therefore, all stakeholders should work strongly to address all these issues to secure quality education for the coming generation.

Issues related to knowledgeability of PGDT graduates on the subject matter they teach

The ability to connect theories, experience and occupational requirements through the study of your own practice demands knowledge on two levels. The first level concerns educational knowledge about course content, teaching strategy, the students, etc. To construct this educational knowledge, professionals also have to develop methodological knowledge; in concrete terms this means knowledge about how to study their own practice. Ponte (2007) calls this knowledge at the second level.

Table 6. Knowledgeability of PGDT graduates

No	Items	Teachers							Leaders							
		SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Total	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Total	
1	Teachers have good subject matter knowledge and apply it effectively in the classroom	N	49	29	3	2	0	4.5	83	15	33	5	3	1	3.75	57
		%	59	34.9	3.6	2.4	0		100	26.3	57.9	8.8	5.3	1.8		100
2	Teachers know what to teach, how to teach, when to teach and where to teach	N	58	21	3	1	0	4.6	83	22	25	5	3	2	4.08	57
		%	69.9	25.3	3.6	1.2	0		100	38.6	43.9	8.6	5.3	3.5		100
3	Teachers have the required skills, understanding and creativity	N	45	30	6	1	1	4.4	83	17	24	10	3	3	3.85	57
		%	54.2	36.1	7.2	1.2	1.2		100	29.8	42.1	17.5	5.3	5.3		100
4	Teachers engage in a variety of in-service activities	N	32	38	6	1	6	4.08	83	13	26	11	4	3	3.73	57
		%	38.6	45.8	7.2	1.2	7.2		100	22.8	45.6	19.3	7.0	5.3		100
5	Teachers have opportunities for advancement, specialization and independence	N	34	32	11	2	4	4.08	83	14	24	9	6	4	3.66	57
		%	41.0	38.6	13.3	2.4	4.8		100	24.6	42.1	15.8	10.5	7.0		100
Grand Mean							4.33	Grand Mean							3.81	

Note: (5) SA= Strongly Agree, (4) A= Agree, (3) U= Undecided, (2) D= Disagree, (1) SD= Strongly Disagree

As the above table indicates, both teachers and school leaders agreed that teachers have good subject matter knowledge and apply this effectively in the classroom. Teachers are acquainted with their major tasks of what to teach, how to teach, when to teach and where to teach. They also affirmed that teachers have the required skills, understanding, and creativity and they engaged in varieties of in-service activities. Furthermore, with slight difference to school leaders, teachers agreed that they have an opportunity for professional advancement, specialization and independence with a mean score 4.08. Generally, the above table demonstrates that PGDT graduates have good subject matter knowledge and apply it effectively in their classroom. The grand mean of teachers and school leaders is 4.33 and 3.81, respectively. This is because in their undergraduate program they have an opportunity to attain various

courses within three years. After graduation, to be a high school teacher, taking the one year or two-summer PGDT program is mandatory to equip them with fundamental pedagogical skills. The program has 40 credit hour courses such as: Secondary School Curriculum and Instruction, Instructional Technology, Assessment and Evaluation of Learning, Teaching in Multicultural Context, Psychological Foundations of Learning & Development, Teachers as Reflective Practitioners, School and Society, Special Need and Inclusive education, Practicum, English for Secondary School, subject Area (I&II). It is indisputable these courses are important and we can say that this is the benefit of the new teacher-training program in Ethiopia.

Despite their good subject matter knowledge, most of the interviewees affirmed that the majority of newly deployed teachers have an instructional language (English language) deficit and low communication skills. Similarly, during classroom observation the researcher observed that most teachers could not speak English properly and, simultaneously, used the local language in the classroom. This is the result of an inconsistent language policy in Ethiopia, because in most Ethiopian elementary schools (up to grade seven and eight) the instructional language is the local language. Consequently, an immediate shift from local language to foreign language (to English) is a serious challenge for both teachers and students in Ethiopian high schools. Therefore, the researchers recommended that groundbreaking research at national level was needed to generalize the dilemma and make intervention possible to avoid the language crisis in Ethiopian education.

Issue related to Effectiveness in Active Learning Implementation

Table 7. Issue Related to Teacher Effectiveness in Active Learning Implementation

No	Items	Teachers								Leaders							
		AL	FR	SM	R	NA	Mean	Total	AL	FR	SM	R	NA	Mean	Total		
1	I raise high order thinking question for students	N	26	21	31	4	1	3.8	83	7	17	27	4	2	3.4	57	
		%	31.3	25.3	37.3	4.8	1.2		100	12.3	29.8	47.4	7.0	3.53		100	
2	I implement problem solving, cooperative learning group discussion and brainstorming	N	32	24	25	1	1	4.0	83	10	27	14	4	2	3.68	57	
		%	38.6	28.9	30.1	1.2	1.2		100	17.5	47.4	24.6	7.0	3.5		100	
3	I manage the class for active learning implementation	N	44	23	14	2	0	4.3	83	15	22	15	3	2	3.78	57	
		%	53.0	27.7	16.9	2.4	0		100	26.3	38.6	26.3	5.3	3.5		100	
4	I use exercise to elicit students ideas, knowledge and skill	N	44	25	10	3	1	4.3	83	12	25	14	4	2	3.73	57	
		%	53.0	30.1	12.0	3.6	1.2		100	21.1	43.9	24.6	7.0	3.5		100	
5	I encourage students to become active participant	N	61	13	6	3	0	4.59	83	13	20	17	6	1	3.66	57	
		%	73.5	15.7	7.2	3.6	0		100	22.8	35.1	29.8	10.5	1.8		100	
6	I arrange students for different classroom activities	N	41	15	21	3	3	4.06	83	12	20	18	6	1	3.63	57	
		%	49.4	18.1	25.3	3.6	3.6		100	21.1	35.1	31.6	10.5	1.8		100	
7	I am interested in implementing active learning in my classroom	N	57	14	9	2	1	4.49	83	16	15	16	8	9	3.73	57	
		%	68.7	16.9	10.8	2.4	1.2		100	28.1	26.3	28.1	14.0	15.8		100	
8	I support students to increase their problem solving capacity	N	51	18	8	5	1	4.36	83	9	22	17	8	1	3.52	57	
		%	61.4	21.7	9.6	6.0	1.2		100	15.8	38.6	29.8	14.0	1.8		100	
Grand Mean								4.23	Grand Mean								3.64

Note: (5) AL= always, (4) FR= frequently, (3) SM= sometimes, (2) R=rarely, (1) NA= not at all

Scale for interpretation: <1.49= not at all, 1.5–2.49=rarely, 2.5–3.49=sometimes, 3.5–4.49=frequently and >4.5= always

Teacher classroom practice and interaction at the classroom level seems to have a vital importance in learning improvement. The following idea confirms this point. "In all education systems, the performance of teachers is one of the handful of factors determining school effectiveness and learning outcomes for teachers. Interaction with learners is the axis on which educational quality turns" (VSO, 2002). With the changing educational reforms, new ways of practice, new ways of working and above all, different ways of instructional practice, it is necessary for the teachers to continuously improve and update their skills. With this understanding, assessing teacher classroom practice is indispensable to identify the gaps for future intervention.

The above table shows that teachers raise high order thinking question, implement (problem-solving, cooperative learning, discussion and brainstorming) activities in their classroom, they manage the classroom for active learning implementation frequently, they use exercises to elicit students' ideas, knowledge and skills and encourage students to become active participants in the classroom. Furthermore, they affirmed that they arrange students for different classroom activities and interested to implement active learning in their classroom, they support students to increase their problem solving capacity frequently. The grand mean of teachers' response is 4.23. Teachers and school leaders (mentors, department heads and principals) confirm frequently that in their response with regard to the frequency of teachers support to increase students problem solving capacity, raise high order thinking question and organizing various classroom activities. The grand mean of school leaders' response is 3.64. This shows that effectiveness in active learning implementation is recurrent.

With regard to active learning implementation, most of the interviewees affirmed that: recently, several schools had commenced the implementation of cooperative learning practice. Despite this fact and in contrast with the teachers' response, the researcher observed that most of eastern Ethiopia secondary school teaching was dominated by traditional or teacher-centered methods of teaching or lecturing in the classroom. This makes students more passive, less confident, un-

reflective and poorly motivated to enjoy learning. Therefore, the researchers suggested that providing continuous training to secondary school teachers about active and constructivist methods of teaching is indisputably vital.

Issue related to Student Assessment

Table 8. Student Assessment

No	Items	Teachers							Leaders							
		AL	FR	SM	R	NA	Mean	Total	AL	FR	SM	R	NA	Mean	Total	
1	How often PGDT teachers check student work and give constructive feedback	N	30	33	16	4	0	4.07	83	9	19	23	5	1	3.52	57
		%	36.1	39.8	19.3	4.8	0		100	15.8	33.3	40.4	5.5	1.8		100
2	How often PGDT graduates collect data for making decision to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and learning	N	17	25	30	6	5	3.5	83	6	21	23	4	3	3.4	57
		%	20.5	30.1	36.1	7.2	6.0		100	10.5	36.8	40.4	7.0	5.3		100
Grand Mean							3.78	Grand Mean							3.46	

Note: (5) AL= always, (4) FR= frequently, (3) SM= sometimes, (2) R=rarely, (1) NA= not at all

Scale for interpretation: <1.49= not at all, 1.5–2.49=rarely, 2.5–3.49=sometimes, 3.5–4.49=frequently and >4.5= always

As shown in the above table, most of the teacher respondents confirmed, with a mean score of 4.07, that teachers check student work and frequently give constructive feedback. Similarly, the response of school leaders for the same question put down frequently with 3.52 mean score. The researchers observed teachers' portfolio or commonly called "mark list. It shows students the results of "assignment work, class participation, mid exam, and final exam" and the teachers call it continuous assessment. However, this is a collection of students' marks and it does not demonstrate the continuous progress of students, it is not used for possible intervention, remedial action or followed through to maximize students' learning.

Regarding the extent to which PGDT graduates collect data for making decisions to measure and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching – learning processes in item 2 of table 8, both the response of teachers and school leaders lay between frequently and sometimes with 3.5 and 3.4 mean score respectively. The researchers observed that there is inconsistency in the application of continuous assessment in Eastern Ethiopian Secondary Schools. To establish a firm foundation for improved student outcomes, teachers must integrate their knowledge about the curriculum, and about how to teach it effectively and how to assess whether students have learned it. Teachers need knowledge and skills in assessment to maintain a student focus: the ability to identify exactly what students know and can do is a prerequisite for teaching that is responsive to each student's needs. Therefore, the researcher recommended that providing continuous short term on job training is vital to develop the capacity of teachers about effective assessment.

Issue related to Students Assessment

As table, 8.1 item one indicated, both teacher and school leaders respondents, with 4.31 and 4.05 mean score, respectively, showed teachers' skills in eastern Ethiopian high schools in administering, scoring and interpreting the results of student assessment. In item 2 of table 8.1 respondents confirm that teachers are skilled in communicating assessment results to students, parents, other audiences and educators. They also agreed that teachers are skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions. Furthermore, both teachers and leaders agreed, with a 4.32 and 4.1 mean score respectively, that the focus of assessment in their school is to establish where students are in their learning and teachers' assessment provides information about students' knowledge, skills and understandings of the learning outcomes. The mean score of the respondents of teachers and leaders is 4.49 and 4.07 correspondingly. This is an encouraging trend to achieve quality education.

Table 8.1: Students Assessment

No	Items	Teachers							Leaders							
		SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Total	SA	A	U	D	SD	Mean	Total	
1	Teachers are skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting the result of assessment	N	38	39	3	1	2	4.31	83	14	34	7	2	0	4.05	57
		%	45.8	47.0	3.6	1.2	2.4		100	24.6	59.6	12.3	3.5	0		100
2	Teachers are skilled in communicating assessment result to students, parents, other audiences and educators	N	19	49	12	1	2	3.98	83	9	35	9	4	0	3.85	57
		%	22.9	59.0	14.5	1.2	2.4		100	15.8	61.4	15.8	7.0	0		100
3	Teachers are skilled in developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decision	N	37	33	9	3	2	4.24	83	8	33	14	1	1	3.80	57
		%	44.6	39.8	10.8	3.6	2.4		100	14.0	57.9	24.6	1.8	1.8		100
4	The focus of assessment is to establish where students are in their learning	N	38	37	6	1	1	4.32	83	17	31	7	2	0	4.1	57
		%	45.8	44.6	7.2	1.2	1.2		100	29.8	54.5	12.3	3.5	0		100
5	Teachers assessment provides information about students knowledge, skills and understandings of the learning outcomes	N	45	31	5	2	0	4.49	83	18	28	8	3	0	4.07	57
		%	54.2	37.3	6.0	2.4	0		100	31.6	49.1	14.0	5.3	0		100
Grand Mean							4.26	Grand Mean							3.97	

Note: (5) SA= Strongly Agree, (4) A= Agree, (3) U= Undecided, (2) D= Disagree, (1) SD= Strongly Disagree

Most of the interviewees confirm that PGDT graduates are skilled in administering, scoring and interpreting students' assessment results. They also validate that teachers' skills in communicating student results to students and parents are being gradually developed. Similarly, they agreed with teachers and leaders responses about the ability of teacher assessment in providing information about students' knowledge, skills and understanding of the learning outcomes. This may be the role of the PGDT

program in securing quality education and considered as an opportunity in Ethiopian teacher education program. Nevertheless, in contrast and based on the researchers' observation and document analysis, in most of the observed high schools, student's assessment strategies lack standardization and the necessary consistency to measure student's knowledge, skills and attitudes.

Conclusions and Implications

Based on the above findings and discussion, the following conclusions and implications are drawn:

1. Most PGDT graduates confirmed that they are contributing to enhancing the quality of teaching by putting into practice active learning techniques and continuous assessment. In contrast with the PGDT graduates response, the researchers observed that in most Eastern Ethiopian secondary school classrooms activities are dominated by teacher-centered or lecturing methods. Therefore, the researchers suggested that the MoE, in collaboration with higher learning institutions and particularly with teacher training colleges or institutes, provide continuous training to secondary school teachers about active and constructivist methods of teaching. This can make students confident, reflective, motivated, creative, innovative, and independent and problem solvers in their future lives.
2. This study shows that there is inconsistency in the application of continuous assessment in Eastern Ethiopian secondary schools. To establish a firm foundation for improved student assessment, teachers should incorporate diverse assessment strategies to check whether the desired objectives or learning outcomes such as required skills, knowledge and attitudes were achieved or not. Therefore, researchers suggested that the collaborative work of NGOs,

teacher education colleges or institutes, and MoE are demanding to provide in-service and pre-service training via continuous professional development programs to develop the capacity and skills of teachers about effective continuous assessment techniques, which is crucial for identifying the gaps in student learning, making corrective action, and the enrichment of student learning.

3. The outcome of this study also demonstrates that PGDT graduates have good subject matter knowledge and apply it effectively in their classroom. The grand mean of teachers and school leaders' responses is 4.33 and 3.81, respectively. This is because in their undergraduate program, they have an opportunity to attend various major courses within three years. After commencement, taking the one year or two-summer PGDT program is mandatory to become a high school teacher and this is a necessary minimum to equip them with fundamental pedagogical skills. This is the benefit of the new postgraduate program in secondary school teaching or teacher-education program. However, at a standstill institutionalization capacity, inattention, materialization and ownership of courses MoE should take all the necessary steps to ensure the best is made of the program.

For the successful implementation of this teacher education program, a consistent modality, materialization of the program, creation of a common understanding among stakeholders, incentivizing the profession, standardization of the curriculum (contents, learning experiences and leadership), developing the citizenship behavior of teachers, the application of modern methods of teaching, assessment and learning theories, accountability and educational management practice might be required in the future.

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REPORTS & REVIEWS

Aneta Kamińska

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The report from V Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference about The Moral Efficiencies in the Upbringing and Education

On the 20th April, 2016, the members of the Department of General Pedagogy and Theory of Education under the leadership of Professor dr hab. A.M. de Tchorzewski, took an active part in the **V Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference** under the auspices of the Committee of Pedagogical Sciences of the Polish Academy of Sciences and J.M. Rector of the University of Szczecin, about **The Moral Efficiencies in the Upbringing and Education**. The conference was organized by the Department of Family Studies, Faculty of Theology, University of Szczecin.

It should be noted that the University of Szczecin annually meets representatives of various scientific disciplines to reflect on the phenomenon of moral efficiency. They are specific internal dispositions, directing man towards moral behaviour. Therefore, they constitute an important category for the theory and practice of upbringing and education as a process realizing the potential of human development.

The Scientific Committee included: Dr hab. Lucyna Dziaczkowska, prof. KUL; Dr. hab. Jacek Jaśtał, Politechnika Krakowska; Dr hab. Krzysztof Kalka, Professor of Elbląg University of Humanities and Economics; Prof. dr hab. Barbara Kromolicka, Dean of Humanities, University of Szczecin; Prof. dr hab. Zdzisław Kroplewski, University of Szczecin; Prof. dr hab. Mirosław Mróz, UMK in Toruń; Prof. dr hab. Marian Nowak, Director of the Pedagogical Institute KUL; Prof. dr hab. Alina Rynio, KUL and Prof. dr hab. Andrzej de Tchorzewski, the Jesuit University Ignatianum in Krakow.

The meeting was chaired by Dr hab. Iwona Jazukiewicz, Prof. US – the president of the conference and Rev. Dr hab. Kazimierz Dullak, Prof. US – the Dean of Theology, University of Szczecin. The conference was opened by His Magnificence, the Rector of the University of Szczecin, Prof. dr hab. Edward Włodarczyk. Plenary sessions were initiated by Prof. dr hab. Andrzej M. de Tchorzewski, the Jesuit University of Education and Philosophy Ignatianum in Krakow, with his paper entitled: *Virtue, Value and Efficiency as Moral Categories of Pedagogical Sciences*, then the papers were delivered by Prof. dr hab. Barbara Kromolicka, University of Szczecin – *The Moral Dimension of "Szlachetna Paczka"*, Prof. dr hab. Zdzisław Kroplewski, University of Szczecin and Prof. dr hab. Urszula Ostrowska, Millennium College of Further Education in Gnieźno and the University of Humanities and Economics in Lodz.

There were six thematic sections: The Efficiency of Moral and Mercy and Faith; The Efficiency of Moral Values and Conduct; Shaping the Efficiency of Morals; The Efficiency of Moral and Pedagogical Spaces; Dimensions of the Efficiency of Morals; The Efficiency of Moral Education.

The members of the Department of General Pedagogy and Theory of Education of The Jesuit University of Education and Philosophy Ignatianum in Krakow presented their articles: Dr Janusz Mółka – *Recognizing the Value Factor for Success in Life*; Dr Aneta Kamińska, *Moral Values Recognized by Parents of Gifted Students on the Basis of the Own Research*; Dr Marzena Chrost – *Moral Abilities in the Process of Spiritual Formation of the Pupil*; Dr Ewa Miśkowiec – *The Role of Punishment and Rewards in Shaping the Moral Abilities* and Dr Renata Królikiewicz – *The Development of Moral Abilities of Children Educated at Home*.

The whole session was completed with a formal discussion and then the guests were explored the issues together. The purpose of the conference was the exchange of information, including reports obtained from research and the collection of literature.

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Review of publications: Dziecko i nauczyciel w procesie poznania i działania [Child and the Teacher in the Process of Learning and Action]

Reviewed publication: Dziecko i nauczyciel w procesie poznania i działania [Child and the Teacher in the Process of Learning and Action] (2016), ed. K. Kraszewski and B. Nawolska, Cracow, Publishing House of Pedagogical University of Cracow, ISBN 978–83–8084–013–3, total number of pages – 176.

The education of the child in the early school age is a major challenge in both the dimension of the individual and social life. Its current shape is determined on the one hand by the development of science, mainly educational psychology, pedagogy and didactics and, on the other hand, by the changing socio-cultural, political and economic reality. These changes set new trends in early childhood education and a completely different perception of two entities – the student and teacher in the educational process. Therefore, this difficult, complex and constitutive stage should now be perceived in a multilateral, complex, multi-purpose manner, taking into account the many interpenetrating factors. Constructivism is a broad perspective combining innovative ideas concerning education and thinking about education, on subjectivity and individualization. Constructivism is based on the creative and multi-cognitive activity of students, on their knowledge and specific beliefs, creating opportunities and conditions for exploring, creating, experimenting and the critical verification of undertaken activities. Early education as an educational work requires teachers to have psychological knowledge regarding child

development – its correctness, conditions, potential opportunities, stimulating and directing this development, teaching in the form of “searching of a trace” formulating the principles guiding the learning process, creating a student as an individual who is educated in a culture that goes beyond the basic information provided and based on the events surrounding the modern world. With a predisposition to learn – (individual factors, motivational and cultural) and the factors conditioning learning, children learn to think and express their thoughts, seek out and discover new things, explain, classify and interpret different phenomena, relationships, dependencies, they learn to act, make decisions, solve problems and tasks. In contrast, school education is intentionally planned and organized, taking into account the principles of teaching, based on different methods and forms of work, on arranging conditions for learning and the use of attractive means of teaching which allows for the acquisition of knowledge by students from many areas, the transfer of key concepts, development of skills: ability to manipulate, perception, creating ideas and making symbolic operations. Therefore, this significant passage for the further biography of the individual’s life requires a high quality of education, competent teachers, optimal solutions and organisational-methodical-programmatic and systematic preparation for its active and continued participation in the real socio-cultural-information world. Early modern education will again have to face new challenges, among other things, the reduction of school age, requiring ingenious solutions in the field of educational practice. Its current status requires a thorough modification and, above all, changes to the existing teaching model used by teachers in Polish schools. This rigid and uniform style of work of teachers does not create harmonious development opportunities for pupils, just the opposite – it reduces and inhibits them, contributing to the formation of many difficulties and school failure.

In the context of the above cognitive reflections and thoughts of the authors of specific articles relating to educational theory and practice in classes I-III, an extremely interesting collective monograph was created for readers entitled *The Child and the Teacher in the Process of Learning and Action* edited by Krzysztof Kraszewski and Barbara Nawolska. The volume

consists of fourteen compatibly and interdisciplinary presented texts. The authors have taken the trouble to analyse several areas of education, i.e. language, literature, mathematics, social-natural, technical and presented opportunities to support pupils with special educational needs.

This publication begins with a very interesting text by Anna Zadęcka-Cekiera entitled *Humour in the Written Statements of Students of Classes II and III of Primary School*, concerning the subject of humorous texts and methods for inducing humour in the written statements of students in grades II-III. They were shown as the sender and recipient of humour. As senders they adopted the profile of humourists, authors of funny expressions. By contrast, the perspective of receiving is presented by the author in the results of her empirical research. The analysed subject of texts is varied, revealing a world which is fascinating and attractive for a child. The respondents have used different techniques for achieving comic effects and humour is achieved by repeating the words, sentences, actions and situations. I consider it important that the humour and comedy are present in the language of the respondents, activating creative attitudes, fantasy, creativity, motivation for observation of reality and develop creative thinking. The research is interesting and broadens the issues proposed by the author. In the second article: *Language Efficiency of Students – Future Teachers of Early Childhood Education in the Field of Storytelling* Anna Zadęcka-Cekiera assessed the language skills of students according to the characteristics, properties of exercise in speaking and writing, composition, linguistic correctness, spelling, punctuation and originality. She analysed 112 texts of students of the specialties: preschool and early childhood education, using an interesting method – the practice of writing. In light of modern Polish education methodology, much attention should be focused on practicing language skills (system, social, situational, pragmatic) obtaining interesting results. Students demonstrated a comprehensive imagination and fictional stories dominated. The article of Katarzyna Slana, *Horror Children on the Example of the Novel Ewelina and Black Bird and Do Not Wake Me Up Yet by Grzegorz Gortat* introduces the reader to the extremely interesting world of children's horror. The author focused on the summary of the two works that are presented to the

reader in a very precise, intriguing and inspiring way. She used a number of stylistic means, fuelling the imagination while reading them. Magic is a universal phenomenon with the two points of view. According to M. and W. Buchowski and W. Burszta, it constitutes a specific way of thinking and acting, a type of social and cultural practice. The child is here the subject, an active and passive recipient and sender of cultural texts. The world in the texts written by children received the power of action, as it was before and today. Magic does not disappear, but takes different forms in which it occurs. Jolanta Machowska-Goc in her very fascinating text – *Motive Powers Established in the Texts of Students of Classes II and III* – examines the motive powers contained in the works of the students of classes II and III on the enchanted plants. The presented research material includes texts – 165 works. The author has identified superior categories of motive powers in the area of the plants which the students possess, namely: magical aspect, mental-axiological and the category of ecological aesthetics of nature, which includes the following models of motive powers: verbal-action, pragmatic, imaging, play with convention, the world turned upside down, the absurd and the shortcut, spatial and temporal.

The verbal-action model includes new behaviours referring to magic in various forms. The pragmatic model focuses on the activities of the characters associated with archaic and modern forms. The pictorial model refers to the linguistic picture of the world in the form of categorization. The model of the play with convention, the world turned upside down, the absurd and the shortcut includes student performances, in which there is a language play. The last two models – the spatial and temporal concern timeframe, real and fantastic places. The plant created in the student texts has been subjected to the process of anthropomorphisation on which the possibility of magic operations were directed. An analysis of the work indicates that there is a coexistence between the human world and the natural world. Causative powers in the works of children are a blending of many cultural texts with their creativity. The world of student texts is structured in an imaginary way, which allows for a sense of security and how to reflect the magical entity. The article is very valuable and original in terms of science. Jolanta Machowska-Goc is also the au-

thor of the second text: *In the Circle of Para Literal Types of Speech at the Level of the Discourse of Early Classes I–III*. The presented text is “addictive” and motivates the reader to its acceptance by its attractive theme, the nature of the thoughts expressed in it, its competent erudition and a high scientific level. It attempts to describe the para literal types of speech on the basis of the written discourse of students in grades II–III. When it comes to written discourse, I also have doubts, perhaps a bit smaller than before. I’m not an advocate of the use of this term, especially in obscure methodological and problematic aspects, which does not mean that the author should abandon it. In the article J. Machowska-Goc uses discourse as a text category (Labocha), you can also include verbal discourse, referring to the spoken and written text, in the context of the area of education in the Polish language classes in grades I–III. Furthermore, she subjects the various types of student texts of classes II and III on enchanted plants to a thorough analysis, in which verbal behaviours on magic and dreams in their various forms are visible. They are associated with presuppositions, and mental creations have the potential significance with which you can create imaginative schemes for speech acts in subcategories. This interesting empirical material, subjected to a thorough analysis, leads to very interesting conclusions. According to Barbara Nawolska, the purpose of the contemporary teaching of mathematics is to prepare children to take up challenges and the self-construction of knowledge. The author rightly notes that the role of the teacher in this regard is to overcome the contradictions arising from the abstract character of the area and specific-figurative thinking of students starting school. At the stage of early childhood education, the student individually develops knowledge through active cognitive and creative activity. To be able to get it in a coherent and structured way, science should be in accordance with the stages of M. Hejne. The duration of this study should be adapted to the individual characteristics of the unit. This process should not be accelerated by force, because of the threatening degenerated formalism. This type of phenomenon is fully detrimental to the child due to the lack of sufficient knowledge about the importance of the use of mathematical symbols and terms. B. Nawolska’s text shows a curiosity,

clarity and integrity in making competent generalisations and drawing accurate conclusions. In the second article entitled *The Role of Illustration in Solving Mathematical Tasks in Early Childhood Education* B. Nawolska draws attention to the fact that mathematics as science requires abstract thought and deductive reasoning. Solving tasks requires language, as a thinking tool for a child and knowledge of the development stages of the language by the teacher. For students at a younger school age who are just entering the various phases of gradual possession and use of language code, the most accessible way and a great help in solving tasks are pictorial presentations of their content. Solving mathematical problems is difficult not only for students but also teachers, who, as a result of ignorance, cannot competently teach this sphere. The author assigns an important role to illustrating tasks. In her view, an accurate figure can in an accessible way express the content of the task, so that one can more quickly notice the relationship between the data and the unknowns, seeing a solution. It should be emphasized that the concreteness of the image shows the advantages and disadvantages, it facilitates thinking on issues of general and complex, but it can also make it difficult to use abstract thinking. Creating images and pictorial simulation is correlated to the knowledge, expertise and experience of the man who creates it. It is therefore necessary to verify the accuracy of the results obtained in this way. The author, by revealing the role of drawing in solving the tasks, presented some examples of tasks and their solutions. The author concluded that the need for simulation depends on the type of tasks and competences of the person solving. During solving difficult tasks simulation drawings may be necessary, the students then demonstrate the independence of action and their effective execution. I find the text interesting, precise and clear and it will certainly expand the existing knowledge of teachers of early childhood education in this field.

On the other hand, Joanna Żądło in the article on: *Support for Pupils with Special Educational Needs* presents the relevant aspects concerning support for gifted and weak students. The school as a social and at the same time open institution should comprehensively develop the child's personality of students, especially those with special educational needs,

adapting the teaching work to their development opportunities. What is important here is that the diagnosis of a child's development, determination of their strengths and weaknesses, stimulation and support, cognitive abilities, environmental conditions, relationships and interactions, cooperation with the family and the institutions that support development. In the second text entitled *Interactive Diagnosis in Supporting Pupils with Special Educational Needs* Joanna Źądło takes up interactive diagnosis issues emphasising its conditions, the effectiveness of the course, taking the appropriate factors supporting the development of the child and systematics. The author, having in mind special educational needs, very rightly emphasizes that for the students belonging to the group, a specialized support and assistance should be organised, appropriate teaching methods suited to their needs and psycho-physical capabilities should be used and individualized learning programs, taking into account the indication of diagnostic tests should be created. J. Źądło suggests a method of individual cases in order to be able to recognise the accurate child's situation, which will enable the reliable assessment and taking up a specific work with a specific case. The effects of the diagnosis are presented in the description of a specific case of a student of class III – Adrian, showing a lower than average level of intellectual development. The article is clear, interesting and valuable, showing the right approach and solution to the problem. I read with great interest the article written by Krzysztof Kraszewski on *Environmental and Technical Education in Preschool and Early Childhood Education*. The author brings us some "otherness" in the realisation of two very inspiring educational areas – environmental (today, the area of natural-social education) and technical (currently technical classes). In the introductory part we learn about multilingualism and multiculturalism, treated as an opportunity for common and mutual learning, occurring in kindergartens and schools in South Tyrol. We familiarise ourselves with the school system, as well as the changes concerning the functioning of these institutions. A major role is given to the co-operation of kindergartens and schools with the local University, educating candidates for the teachers of kindergartens and schools and improving already those who have a university degree. K. Kraszewski shows the multicultural world

in which culturally socialized children develop and educate, equipped with intercultural competences, getting to know the surrounding world of nature: plants and animals, neighbourhood, family, school, occupations, landscape, protection of the environment. The author demonstrates the compatibility of the natural and general technical areas which I think is completely accurate. This is because children acquire multifaceted experience through contact with reality – they work, manipulate and create through the use of various technical products, including information technology. Further part presents the objectives, tasks, educational content and curriculum framework plans obtained from local institutions. When making the reader acquainted with the various thematic circles, it underlines how important the constructive and creative activity of the child is in modern education. On the other hand, Ingrid Paško in the article titled *How to Discover and Develop Children's Interest in the World of Nature and Science* shows the essence of the teacher's work, systematically developing children's interest in nature. Students as a result of the activities are to explore the world of nature and science. The teacher, by the proper impact of education in school and excursions, walks and other interesting forms, stimulates their cognitive activity, through which they discover specific possibilities and ideas in the reporting area of learning through exploration, direct contact with reality, experimentation, problem solving, putting independent questions. Furthermore, they strengthen cognitive and emotional interests and deepen their knowledge about the surrounding world. A child learns primarily how to construct a kind of identity, consciously tries to guide their own behaviour, he/she becomes an autonomous unit, makes decisions and can justify them, shows the cognitive curiosity, self-criticism, takes new challenges, shapes norms and social attitudes, engages in a dialogue and tries to make choices. Interests, as the author rightly says, are the basis of learning and the effect of the results achieved by the child functioning in contemporary culture. In the second article, Ingrid Paško takes up such issues as: *Activating Students in the Early Childhood Environmental Education*. By referring to the methods of active learning, she indicates that the development of children's multilateral cognitive and creative activity

builds a profile of a small explorer, exploring the world in a natural, social and cultural environment. Very rightly and aptly she highlights the importance of learning through exploration and discovery in the implementation of the program content of science education and the role of the teacher – facilitator and mentor, granting conditions for the experimenter's activity. The text is a great pleasure to read, containing content which is extremely useful in work with children in classes I–III. The problem of traffic education of children in early school age in a forthcoming volume deserves special attention because it is the subject undertaken usually cursory or randomly, so the empirical research presented by Katarzyna Turaczyk in the article *Activities of Teachers Undertaken to Improve the Safety of Children on the Roads* widens the range of knowledge on the subject and complements a “gap” in research in this area. Indicating the essence of communication education and its importance, the author oscillates around the pragmatic nature of the program content and the role of teachers whose major task is to systematically equip and deepen knowledge in this area. After researching, K. Turaczyk noted the views of teachers, who, in the vast majority, recognized education of communication as a difficult and lengthy process, requiring triple subjective cooperation, purposeful and conscious activities in the transfer of knowledge on safe participation in traffic, taking various concrete initiatives and their implementation. Another also valuable cognitive reflection in the undertaken empirical studies, closely related to the merger of cognitive activity with a practical action is presented by Magdalena Burkat in the text *The Essence of Productive Tasks in Early School Teaching*. The author shows in an interesting way the role of manufacturing tasks in general technical education, being fundamental and multi-faceted, exemplified in practice, requiring a specific cycle of organisation, usage of appropriate methods or the application of the relevant phases – stages – cells from the teacher. Technical classes require students to exercise intellectual, emotional, verbal, sensorial, practical and technological skills. M. Burkat presented the results of empirical research aimed at determining the role of the productive tasks in shaping the technological skills of children. From the presented conclusions it emerges that the students

during the course of production are very active, learn new concepts and shape and improve basic technical skills.

To sum up, I believe that the choice of the subject of publication and the undertaken issues is current, valid and interesting. All of the presented articles are of interest in the cognitive sense. The content ranges between reports and scientific studies and the presented results of empirical studies, which are a valuable source of information for early school pedagogy. The authors of the volume presented an innovative look at the student and the teacher, presenting a multi-faceted issues relating to the process of learning, teaching and education, the paradigmatic transformations and the actual socio – cultural facts. The content indicates a competent knowledge of the subject matter and the specific meaning of the phenomena which are reflected in both the theory and practice of education. Coherence, legibility, clarity and precision of communication are among the advantages of this book. This publication will become a complement to existing studies for recipients. Its readers could be candidates for teaching profession, those professionally active in pre-school education and early childhood teachers and everyone who is interested in this subject.

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Review of monograph: Komparatívna analýza primárneho matematického vzdelávania na Slovensku a v zahraničí [Comparative Analysis of the Primary Mathematical Education in Slovakia and Abroad]

Reviewed publication: Scholtzová Iveta (2014) *Komparatívna analýza primárneho matematického vzdelávania na Slovensku a v zahraničí [Comparative Analysis of the Primary Mathematical Education in Slovakia and Abroad]*, Prešov, University of Prešov, Faculty of Education, ISBN 978-80-555-1204-4, total number of pages – 386.

Slovakia is a member country of the IEA Study and participates in the testing of population 1 – ten year-old pupils. The international IEA TIMSS assessment is conducted in four-year cycles and concentrates on collecting detailed information about pupil's numeracy, fundamental mathematical knowledge and problem-solving strategies as well as information about the curriculum implementation, the instructional practices and school resources. TIMSS 2015 is the sixth cycle of the IEA TIMSS study. The results of these measurements are going to be published by December 2016 according to the research schedule. In the period of time of the TIMSS 2015 test administration, a volume was published which is worthy of note for both scientific and professional circles. It can make them think about what and how to modify the Slovak mathematics curriculum and schoolwork to help Slovak pupils show improvement in the mathematics achievement displayed in the international tables. The answer for the question *why are changes in the curriculum and education ap-*

proach in Slovakia necessary is clear – the long-term results reached in international measurements are below the average score reached by other countries of European Union and OECD.

The reviewed monograph *Comparative Analysis of the Primary Mathematical Education in Slovakia and Abroad* is a team effort of the Department of Mathematical Education members at the Faculty of Education, University of Prešov in Prešov. The monograph is an output of the research project VEGA 1/1230/12 *Comparative analysis of selected aspects of mathematics in Slovakia and abroad in a context of curricular transformation of primary education and international researches PISA OECD and IEA TIMSS*. Using the scientific methods of comparative education, the authors present some original information about the mathematics curriculum of primary education in the selected countries, namely Australia, Finland, France, Croatia, Ireland, Japan, Germany and Italy. The mathematical curricula and education recourses of these countries were compared to Slovak, in consideration of the mathematical knowledge level of ten year-old pupils reached in international research IEA TIMSS in recent years in the selected sample of countries.

The publication contains ten chapters. The first and the tenth are focused on a description of the research methodology as well as the summarization of comparative findings relevant to mathematical education in Slovakia. In chapters two to nine, the education of content domains *Numbers, Geometric Shapes and Measure, Data Display* (defined by the TIMSS study) in the selected countries are presented. The reader can obtain a relevant insight into the school system, the structure and the content of the elementary mathematical curriculum, the didactic tools and methods mostly used in the mathematical education of primary school pupils aged 5 to 10 years in the countries of the research sample. The analysis of the pedagogical interpretation, the range of mathematical concepts and problems suitable for younger schoolchildren in the eight selected countries can lead to reflections concerning what can be changed in the Slovak educational system in relation to its geographical, historical, political or social conditions. After consideration of this it is possible to obtain some inspiration from the educational strategies

found abroad for necessary modifications in the implementation of the mathematical curriculum in the local educational context. Some new educational strategies can help Slovakian ten year-old pupils to obtain better results in international statistics tables in further cycles of the TIMMS study.

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