

## IDENTIFYING THE PRESCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDS ON TRANSVERSAL COMPETENCES TRAINING CAREER USING THE QUESTIONNAIRE

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**Abstract:** *The purpose of this study is to investigate pre-school teachers' training needs according to the actual early childhood curriculum. Using the questionnaire, we draw the recent theory and research of the preschool curriculum that outlines the main teacher's role on personal professional training. This tool should analyse the educators six professional competences - three transversal competences according to the European Qualifications Framework descriptors and minimal performance standards for competences evaluation and RNCIS grid as well. We use the questionnaire to investigate the role of acquiring and developing transversal competences of the educator's profile process who teach in early childhood stage. This will get statistic results regarding their initial and professional training and also of the proces of their self-evaluating performance and the need of improving competences. Teacher's professional development represents as far as the teaching career the context of Romanian sistem education, legislation and pedagogical science theory and school practice. Professional initial and continue teachers training process always had continuity elements of changing world of teaching and remained open-ended and competency based.*

**Key words:** *professional training; competences; self-evaluation; early- childhood curriculum;*

This study aims to identify the level of the acquiring transversal competences in forming the competences profile of educators, who teaches in pre-school.

The National Preschool Curriculum is designed to meet the needs of earlychildhood and preschool education care stage. Preschool teachers also need an appropriate training for teaching and caring for children from 2 up to 5 years old. RNCIS requires preschool teachers who are highly skilled, knowledgeable, and experienced in teaching and learning to provide knowledges, specific behaviour experiences and required competences. (professional Competences, didactical competences, care and protection children competences). So the effectiveness of teaching and learning in preschool stage depends on the implementation of teaching which involves preschool teachers who really understand, appreciate and able to carry out the teaching and learning as intended. To ensure that teachers in the profession of preschool education have the needing skills this study should be apply to obtain the information on competencies that must be acquired whe attending in earlyhood period.

The problem of initial and continuous tranning that requires teachers teaching for implementing The National Preschool Curricullum should be a priority on proffessional development for everyone. So there is a permanent challenge for improving the level of proffessional and didactic aproaches on earlychildhood teaching.

Also the Teaching-Staff Resource Centers as Didactic Corp Houses are authorized to offer professional development courses that regard the system of professional and transversal

skills (RNCIS professional frame standards) necessary to teachers due to the national and european policies and strategies in the field of education.

To ensure that the preschool teachers have lifelong learning competences they should attend initial and continuous training to achieve new teaching approaches and transversal competences. Lifelong learning is focused on the acquisition and development of key competences and of competences specific to an area of activity or to a qualification in this case early childhood period. Also with the fact that the main goals of lifelong learning are concerned with the full development of a person and the sustainable development of society including multiple perspectives as: civic, social, personal professional or occupational ones.

Competence or skill delimitation is viewed on different abordation Rothwell (2002) ``is a feature that predisposed individuals toward certain behaviors and skills to achieve exemplary performance``. Tobias Ley and Albert Dietrich (2003) stated that ``the skills and competencies that are used in the organization is to reveal the characteristics of an individual in order to utilize their expertise effectively and smoothly``. Spencer and Spencer 1993 define competencies as ``the capacities that exist within a person and which predict superior performance and according to (Lawler and Ledford 1992), a certain combination of individual skills was seen as the determinant of competent job behaviour``.

## Background

The study was organizing on the developing preschool teachers lifelong learning competences thru continuous training for better implementing pre-school curriculum. For a point of view Didactic Training House ``Alexandru Gavra`` from Arad uses questionnaire to get certain information for designing training programs or courses. This investigative tool offers a certain information of education field regarding their level of personal and professional development. So transversal competences or lifelong learning competences as: communication in mother tongue, science, civic, arts, cultural and learning to learn are always to be improved for offering suitable approaches for each children and for ensuring an integrated learning. The findings will provide new teaching approaches that may help increasing the quality of preschool education and care in our educational system. The quality in preschool education depends most on teachers. Pre-school teachers should be given adequate training before they undertake the responsibility of nurturing and guiding students. According to Fullan (2000), ``teachers are the heart of educational change and teachers are also the most significant agent``. Their role is to develop the main objectives of the National Preschool Curriculum into integrated learning experiences.

Preschool teachers need to acquire knowledge and improve skills in all child development stages and new teaching approaches in according to the scope and frame objectives that accentuate holistic development providing basic skills and look after positive behaviours of children. They also are responsible for offering the best learning opportunities for children holistic personality development because they are the main decision growers in their classroom. Gaudelius and Speirs (2002) expose that teachers are responsible for implementing the curriculum effectively.

Teachers are the most important education factors along with the family environment as they directly contribute and develop children behaviours and skills. So improving teacher professional competences is really relevant to this research objective because the findings may reflect the competency-based profile possessed by trainees in providing professional teachers in early childhood. Lihana (2005) found that preschool teachers' pedagogical practices are alarming. Also preschool teachers face some problems with the important role to be the first modelling factors upon young children behaviours.

### **Aim of the study**

The main preoccupation of the Didactic Corp Houses Alexandru Gavra of Arad Romania is to identify the training teacher needs to authorize training courses for all teachers in this case for pre-school teachers who have to be "competent" to deliver the pre-school education and care on this educational segment.

This study describes the process of analyzing and interpreting the applied questionnaires on a preschool teachers category who teach in urban and also in rural nursery schools.

### **Study Objectives**

The questionnaire was designed to collect certain information upon their need on professional development stage regarding : ability to plan own professional development, knowledges of the system of preschool and care education, professional competence for planning (monitoring and documentation of educational activities), organizational skills and pedagogical guidance of groups, knowledge of developmental and learning needs of children, ability to use information and communication technologies in education, specific competences, knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health competence, social inclusion, difference and diversity, transversal /transferable skills. The questionnaire aims to identify the appropriate developing needs of preschool teachers for improving their classroom activity. There have been consulted 240 pre-school teachers and 12 managers of 12 different nursery schools.

### **The objective of this study**

The objective of the study was to identify the early childhood preschool teachers needs educational segment developing specific competences according to children needs using as a tool the questionnaire.

### **Study Questionnaire**

Are students at The Teacher Education Institute of Malaysia have competence in teaching, management, communication, professional development, and the care and protection of children.

### **Research Interests**

According to the identifying needs of preschool teachers CCD "Alexandru Gavra" of Arad institution thru its educational specialists as *methodists* teachers will design training courses related to their competence development needs.

This study shows on how transversal and professional competences can play an important role in teacher's career and also classroom activity in determining the success on their education intervention.

The findings are also reliable on the development and for improving teaching professionalism at preschool teachers. The results of attending training courses specially designed will indicate later the competences improvement thru children performance.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Professional competences development***

According to (Brooke, 1994) "a professional educator needs to develop, to improve, to learn, to inquiry, and to make a research". He says that "a professional competence development involves self-development, attend any new knowledge and research, and create a reflection on how the experience of teaching should be checked and fixed in the practice of teaching".

Early childhood teachers always need to improve their professional competences through early childhood courses or to participate at workshops and specific seminars. Barich (2007) notes that "the professionalism must be customary for teachers with more experience and practice of those who have a willingness to evolve and change".

Education training courses increase reflective thinking, facilitate the development of self-reflective thinking related to professional competence that will increase the teaching qualities of the future classroom. Christensen, and Moravick (2005) emphasized with the idea that the most important tasks of professional teachers of early childhood education segment must ensure the safety and health of children, which is also the most important aspect that parents and the community ask for teachers.

Bloom (2005) emphasized the idea that "the teacher is responsible to the curriculum, supervision, communication with family and provides a safe learning environment for children". He acts responsibly and requires a continuous professional knowledge base. Bloom (2005) also states that children who have a safe learning environment also showed the better development of cognitive and social skills.

### ***Professional competence for organizing, planning, monitoring of educational activities***

Preschool teachers will improve their organizing, planning and monitoring competences by applying knowledge of planning and implementation of educational training programmes in pre-school classrooms. They will monitor and document the development of individual and groups of children either alone or in teams or small groups. Teachers will have the appropriate knowledge and skills to stimulate curriculum that enhances children integrate learning (cognitive, emotional, social, physical learning). They will be able to link knowledge skills and abilities to specialized fields and develop communicative skills in the context of comprehensive children's development. Preschool teachers will be able to create educational conditions that will integrate all communication activities (oral communication, language, role-play activities, drama play activities). Teachers will also manage knowledge of how to plan and organize pre-school documentation and children portfolios.

### ***Organizational and pedagogical skills guidance of groups***

After teachers attending specially training courses designed for the identified teachers needs, they will be able to use various teaching strategies for planning activity and realization of pre-school educational programs. Improving pedagogical skills will help on group learning while recognizing the individual needs of all children within groups so able to manage inappropriate behaviour in children. Developing organizing competences will be valuing the needs and contributions of parents/careers in their child's learning.

### ***Social inclusion development competences***

Attending this area of training courses teachers learned on showing much respect for differences in family structures different cultural origins or ethnicities also beliefs and ways of life. They were able to integrate pedagogic and methodical procedures for small groups of children from diverse backgrounds for designing the future classroom. There was created a supportive learning environment for children which respects differences and diversity as well. They learned and experienced context for engaging with the principles of diversity and multiculturalism in education. It was trained the respecting of the individual socio-cultural backgrounds of children, children with special needs, and their parents or carers.

### ***Transferable /Transversal Skills***

Teachers were able to read analyze and to integrate and transfer in academic literature. Also they improved communicative competence in differnt contexts to a high standard in relation to speaking, presentations and online contexts. They were able to apply critical reasoning to practice evidence and research within the field of early childhood studies. Senior teachers possessed high-level skills in group work and also the capability to work independently on projects. Practicing with PDP plan (Developing Professional Plan) they were able to plan professional and career engagement within the field of employment. There were improved the abilities to use ICT, the Internet and social media, in professional, for research activities and for knowledge updating contexts.

### ***Method of Study***

This study is based on quantitative and calitative information. In this study, was used a questionnaire to identify the needed competences of pre-school teachers. We used questions with five type of answers. CCD Arad always use this tool as an investigative method also most used for education research. The sample was selected from teachers who attend urban and rural nursery schools from Arad, Romania. There were involved 128 teachers and 12 nursery school managers. Respondents involved in this study have the same background identifications (they are qualified or unqualified teachers, debutants and senior teachers)

Assessment Instrument Researcher used was a Likert scale assessment based on the concept of developing professional competence in order to identify the the needed ***generic area competences*** as : ***professional competences development / professional competence for organizing, planning, monitoring of educational activities / knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health competence / social inclusion development competences / organizational and pedagogical skills guidance of groups.***

The answers were collected directly from the respondents that were assessed. This type of instrument is accepted to address the quantitative questions to be assessed, to obtain direct information from the respondents and also a descriptive answer. Likert scale is a flexible tool for analyze and have the capacity to contain many answers (Adam and Schvaneveldt, 1991). Babbie (1995) also described that ``Likert scale as a useful instrument to determine the extent to which a particular respondent attitudes and perspectives``.

### **Data Analysis**

This was carried out to identify the professional and transversal competence of preschool teachers from earlychildhood of Arad. It was used SPSS version 16.0 pack tfor the data analyzed. Also on Zikmund (2003) SPSS was used a lot and accepted as a technique for analyzing quantitative data. All respondents were asked to give feedback through "Likert scale" with "5" indicates strongly agree and "1" indicates strongly disagree.

Table 1 ***Interpretative results***

- ***professional competences development***
- ***professional competence for organizing, planning, monitoring of educational activities***
- ***knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health competence***
- ***social inclusion development competences***
- ***transferable /transversal skills***

<b><i>professional competences development</i></b>	N	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Undecided/ Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
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Able to address clear rules to create and maintain appropriate and known behaviour in the group	240	0,85,	1,25	2,84	2,38	2,44
Able to adjust selected teaching methods to learning aims within child-integrated learning	240	0,01	1,45	2,12	2,01	5,14
Able to create a stimulating social and physical learning environment in the nursery class	240	1,21	0,21	0,12	2,12	4,14
<b>professional competence for organizing, planning, monitoring of educational activities</b>	240					
Applying knowledge of organizing planning and implementation of educational courses in pre-school classes	240	1,21	0,47	1,45	5,24	4,51
Organizing and monitoring the development of each individual and small groups of children either alone or in teams along with their colleagues	240	0,12	0,15	1,58	3,45	2,55
Able to integrate knowledges skills and abilities in specific fields and understands	240	1,25	1,24	2,15	3,45	3,14
<b>knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health competence</b>	240					
Able to integrate skills and knowledge in their own subject areas specialization to enhance pupils learning experiences	240	1,54	2,15	1,28	1,25	3,45
Able to understand and recognise the impacts of socio-cultural factors as they are related to health, well-being and children care	240	2,14	2,14	1,34	3,41	4,47
Able to understand the need of arts, music, speech, drama or texts in the classroom to meet children learning	240	0,14	0,58	0,25	4,25	3,45

needs						
<i>social inclusion development competences</i>	240					
Able to create a supportive learning environment for children and to accept the differences and diversity	240	1,25	0,25	1,54	5,25	5,48
Able to respect and understanding of, the individual socio-cultural backgrounds of children their parents or carers.	240	0,56	0,57	1,56	5,48	4,14
Able to design and integrate in the teaching classroom pedagogic and methodical procedures or strategies for individuals or small groups of children from diverse backgrounds or with special needs	240	0,12	0,35	2,45	3,14	4,25
Transferable /Transversal Skills	240					
Able to communicate in diverse settings enviroments to a high standard in relation with family or comunity educational contexts	240	0,54	0,14	0,35	4,25	5,14
Able to apply critical reasoning to practice evidence and researches within the field of early childhood stages studies	240	0,64	0,65	0,45	4,35	5,17
Able to planning professional development plan and career engagement within the field of employment	240	0,54	0,46	0,02	5,47	5,24

## Findings

Descriptive statistical likert scale results showed that most of beginner teachers group were interested in delevoping competences from all the given five professional areas but with higher scor on transversal skills, communication competences, social inclusion development competences and professional competences. Senior teachers were interested on developing

knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health competence, speaking competences and transversal competences too.

Management and leadership competences (organizing, planning and monitoring in education activities field) had the highest score. The professional and teaching competences categories had a lower score due to the training experiences and practices that senior teachers were attending more.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, there were statistically significant issues on designing and attending training courses for developing professional and didactical competences. Beginner teachers considered an opportunity for their self-management career so all the educational development fields on preschool education were interested on. They passed all the activities proposed with a lot of energy and interest. They manifested the ability to transfer the training context situations into various classroom teaching experiences.

Senior teachers were interested on developing management competences and thoughtful on tools for organizing their classroom management. Also senior teachers have manifested an obvious interest on social inclusion and strategies for improving collaborative teaching.

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