Journal Plus Education, ISSN: 1842-077X, E-ISSN (online) 2068 – 1151 Vol XXVII (2020, No. 2, pp . 172-199

IMPLICATIONS OF THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT ON EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES IN EARLY EDUCATION

Daniela Mihaela FLORESCU, Ph.D.,
- Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences – „Transylvania" University, Brasov
Daniela.florescu@utb.ro

Abstract: *According to Albert Einstein, the environment is „everything that is not me". His perspective on the concept of environment is broad and comprehensive and is applicable to educational contexts. In this vision, the environment designates the learning taken together with the whole physical, socio-cultural framework in which it takes place.The concept of learning environment, as stated in a report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) dedicated to this issue, is an „organic, holistic one that includes the learning processes and the contexts that host them; it is an ecosystem that integrates learning activity and outcomes." (OECD, 2013, p. 22) Some clarifications are required for the clearer delimitation of the term stated above: The term speaks about the socio-educational space and not only about the physical one, although this limiting perception is very common. The concept also refers to classrooms, furniture, arrangement of walls and centers of interest, their ability to provide healthy learning contexts that respect the rules of hygiene and ergonomics, the possibilities of positive interaction. Without all this, based on the pyramid of needs in a kindergarten, it is difficult to build effective teaching approaches that facilitate the socialization and preparation of the child for school as part of the preparation for social life. In this sense, the concept does not only refer to „spaces", „facilities", „material base", but also their integration in relevant activities in order to ensure the well-being of children and reach at the end of preschool the competence profile of the child ready for type learning school and the success of the later adult.*

Keywords: *learning environment; educational practices; early education; kindergarten.*

Introduction. That is why the physical learning environment is closely related to the learning environment - called by Loris Malaguzzi „the third teacher" - which implicitly and explicitly creates teaching options for teachers and children. Space makes tacit but visible statements, „space speaks", as E.T. Hall, speaks in front of teachers and sometimes in their place. The same theory is supported by Maria Montessori whose philosophical essence in this consists in the idea that „the environment / space instructs".

And according to ISSA, the learning environment greatly influences the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of children. By creating a stimulating and safe physical and mental environment, the teacher encourages children's learning, through independent exploration and group play. The environment influences kindergarten practices and affects children's learning.

In the UK, responsible pedagogy is used to enable every child to demonstrate learning in the fullest sense. It depends on the use of information assessment to plan relevant and motivating learning experiences for each child. This approach to improving the learning environment is specific to all countries, but also to our country; however, there are major principles that can lead to the creation of more child-centered, efficient and innovative environments. The World Bank and its partners in the OECD Center for Effective Learning Environments have extensive experience in middle-income countries in reforming countries approaches to learning environments. The new pedagogy of the educational environment would propose substantial reconsiderations, made „with meaning and purpose", not only to „decorate" classes, to organically introduce modern technologies in teaching, not just to add them artificially as „otherwise" options. And all this in order to activate the environments in order to ensure the formative experiences and for the preschoolers to feel good in kindergarten, to feel safe not only physically, but to feel „at home".

Educational practices - learning in early education

Research shows that teachers have the greatest influence at an early age on children's learning. If we want to optimize the results of our children, we must improve the teaching process by developing and supporting a professional teaching staff.

ISSA's pedagogical definition of the quality of teaching practices consists of seven main areas that „reflect ISSA's core beliefs about quality pedagogy and identify ways to aspire to excellence: 1. Interactions: Interactions between adults and children, as well as peer interactions, are of crucial importance for supporting and influencing children's physical, social, emotional and cognitive development; promoting their learning

continuously. The teacher's role is to provide children with opportunities to engage in interactions, to participate in knowledge-building and understanding-based processes, and to become self-confident and contributing and caring members of society." (Dawn Tankersley, Ed.D — Lead Author: Sanja Brajkovic l Sanja Handzar l Queen Rimkiene Queen Sabaliauskiene l ZoricaTrikic l Tatjana Vonta, Ph.D, Putting knowledge into practice. A guide for educators on ISSA principles of quality pedagogy, P. 9).

The teacher for early education uses teaching strategies that facilitate a quality pedagogical process, is based on the belief that care, learning and cultivation form a coherent whole and that the well-being and commitment of each child are prerequisites for learning. Recognizing that learning occurs in different ways and in different situations, the teacher uses planned, diverse and meaningful teaching strategies that promote active learning.

It is important that our kindergartens are safe, healthy and optimally designed to contribute to learning. However, there are other key factors that determine how well children learn, how good their interactions with teachers are, mediated by the use of pedagogy. In this section, we discuss educational practices, the implications of pedagogy, the appearance of the institution and design.

Teachers professional practices include both classroom teaching practices and broader professional practices that shape the learning environment. Both types of practices have their roots in the philosophies of education and in the empirical research of educational effectiveness. The instructional quality is complex: there is no single optimal way of teaching, and teachers must continuously adapt their practices to meet the needs of the specific context, class and students. A combination of a constructivist and a more direct approach to training is needed. Classroom teaching practices can also be developed through professional development, as well as through constructive feedback and appreciation from the principal or colleagues, and have been shown to be associated with teacher beliefs.

In many educational institutions around the world, children are still traditionally taught using didactic pedagogy. Teachers are in front of the classroom, and children sit in rows in front of them. This is how many teachers have been taught to teach and can be an effective way to convey facts. Towards the other extreme, a 2013 OECD study on innovative learning environments (OECD 2013) was based on seven principles that should guide these learning environments (Dumont, Istance and Benavides 2010): recognizing children as key participants, encouraging their active commitment and the development in them of an understanding of their own student activity, „self-regulation"; building on the social nature of learning and actively encouraging group work and well-organized collaborative

learning; hiring learning professionals who are in line with children's motivations and the key role of emotions in success; children's particular sensitivity to individual differences, including the type and extent of their prior knowledge; developing programs that require hard work and challenge everyone, without overburdening them.

So, from a practical point of view, pedagogies can be seen to extend from a pure didactic model, through combined approaches, to child-centered learning models. The mixed approach typically involves table islands with four to six children along with a number of learning areas (Barrett et al., 2015), such as a reading corner and an area with sand and water. This approach supports occasional learning from the front, but normally allows children to work in groups or pairs and carry out self-directed activities in a learning area, as well as individual interventions by the teacher. Obviously, these different approaches require different space configurations (Güney and SELDA 2012), and this has been illustrated in the Russian Federation (Shmis, Kotnik and Ustinova 2014). Where a distinction is made between "institutional typologies" that reflect didactic approaches and are clearly more open and flexible to support more complex, child-centered pedagogies

Educational practices are also a subject of an immensity of information, culture and experience, which cannot necessarily be expressed in words. However, the experts present innovative ideas such as the realization of a special program by the Municipal Library of Graz, for children entitled "LABUKA - the island of books". LABUKA is a fun and adventurous learning environment for children. Trainers and educators help young learners in courses and workshops. Special holiday programs are also offered.

Then the Roald Dahl Museum and Story Center, is a museum and story center recognized in the UK as one of the most innovative projects in terms of learning activities and basic skills, and the activity within the project can be seen as a good example that sets high standards for the learning environment.

The ULISSES Program: Developing Information Literacy Skills in the Lisbon Municipal Library Network exists in Portugal. This program, designed to be used as a role model, aims to provide users with opportunities to develop information literacy skills in an informal environment. The development of basic ICT skills is one of the learning areas covered by the ULISSES Program.

The influence of the learning environment on early education practices

The learning environment created decisively influences the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of the child. By creating a safe

and stimulating physical, psychological and social environment that provides a variety of materials, tasks and situations appropriate to development, the educator encourages the child's learning activity through independent and group exploration, play, access to various resources and interaction with other children and adults.

When educators create an atmosphere in which children are free to express themselves, children have opportunities to represent their thinking, opinions in many ways, develop better self-understanding and greater empathy for others, develop independence, self -motivation and self-expression, can significantly integrate their experiences and can represent them, plan and work independently to create their own expressions, develop appreciation for music, dance and movement, plays, stories, visual arts, develop curiosity, skills problem solving and verbal and non-verbal expression of their experiences and feelings, develop feelings of pride and self-esteem, feel encouraged to freely share their thoughts and ideas with others.

The educator creates an environment that encourages the child to take appropriate risks for development and learning, and the classroom serves as an appropriate developmental learning environment that supports children's initiatives to explore, investigate, and develop. observe and experiment, allowing appropriate risk-taking within safe limits. Educators create an receptive intellectual, social, emotional and physical environment to promote each child's learning and development. This environment fosters self-esteem, self-concept and social competence by providing safe learning opportunities that differentiate learning activities so that all children have a strong chance of success and challenges at a level that matches their qualities. Differentiation promotes the possibility of each child to start the activity within his area of proximal development. This means that children can work at a level where they feel comfortable or competent and where they need only a little support to acquire these skills. When teachers specifically prepare the context for success and learning, children know that it is an environment built and made especially for them. I know everything is serious, as if the teacher were telling them, „I respect you as a learner." (Dillon, 2016, p. 8).

International research has shown that there is a direct relationship between classroom culture and its intrinsic aspects: the learning environment in which the teacher treats all children respectfully, uses positive language with children, responds to children's needs, the teacher does not present gender prejudices and challenges gender stereotypes in class, has positive behavioral expectations; the environment in which the classes are bright, attractively arranged, properly ventilated, individualized, personalized and effective learning with the following practices:

• **Facilitating learning** (Teacher sets clear behavioral expectations for classroom activities and / or routines, recognizes positive behavior of children, Teacher redirects wrong behaviors and focuses on expected behavior rather than unwanted behavior, explicitly states what activity they will do children and the objective of the activity, explicitly states what activity the children will do and the objective of the activity, makes connections in the activity that refers to other knowledge of content or daily life of children, models by acting, assisting or thinking out loud);

• **Ensuring understanding** (Teacher uses questions, prompts or other strategies to determine children's level of understanding, monitors most children during independent / small group work, provides specific comments or prompts that help clarify children's misunderstandings, provides specific comments or requests which helps to identify children's successes, adjusts children's content);

• **Ensuring positive feedback** ((The teacher provides specific comments or prompts that help clarify children's misunderstandings, provides specific comments or requests that help identify children's successes, provides specific comments or requests that help identify children's successes);

• **Critical thinking** (Teacher gives thinking tasks, Children ask open-ended questions or do thinking tasks);

• **Autonomy** (The teacher offers children choices, offers children opportunities to take on roles in the activity, children participate voluntarily in the activity);

• **Perseverance** (Teacher recognizes children's efforts, has a positive attitude towards children's challenges, encourages children's ideas and creates projects based on them);

• **Formation of social and collaboration skills** (The teacher promotes children's collaboration through interaction between colleagues, promotes children's intra- or interpersonal skills, children collaborate with each other through peer interaction).

RESEARCH ON THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ON EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES IN EARLY EDUCATION

Research objectives and hypotheses

General hypothesis:

• If there is a favorable learning environment, then educational practices can develop children's socio-emotional and cognitive skills in early education.

Specific hypotheses:

• We assume that practitioners can create a learning environment conducive to children's development;

• Teachers in preschool education use innovative educational practices in teaching activity favored by the learning environment created;

• We assume that the learning environment has a positive influence on educational practices

Objectives:

- Hierarchy of educational practices used by educators in activities;
- Identifying the main factors that influence the quality of educational practices for the overall development of children;
- Determining the influence of the learning environment on educational practices;

Research sample:

This research has a sample of 150 early childhood teachers. The research was carried out in kindergartens in urban and rural areas in Romania.

The data collection took place between 06.01.2020-30.04.2020.

Methodology used:

In the present research we chose the survey method. This is an interactive method and is based on the direct exchange of information between the researcher and the subjects of the investigation, through which data are collected regarding certain situations, phenomena and manifestations (T.Pălășan, 2011, page 53).

The tool of this method is the research questionnaire which: „Represents a technique and correspondingly, an investigation tool, consisting of a set of written questions and possibly graphic images, logically and psychologically ordered, which self-administration, determines from the investigated persons answers to be recorded in writing." (S.Chelcea, 2001, p.177).

Presentation of questionnaires

The purpose of the study was to determine whether the learning environment of preschoolers supports the emotional, social and physical needs of children, but also the influence it has on the quality educational practices used by teachers.

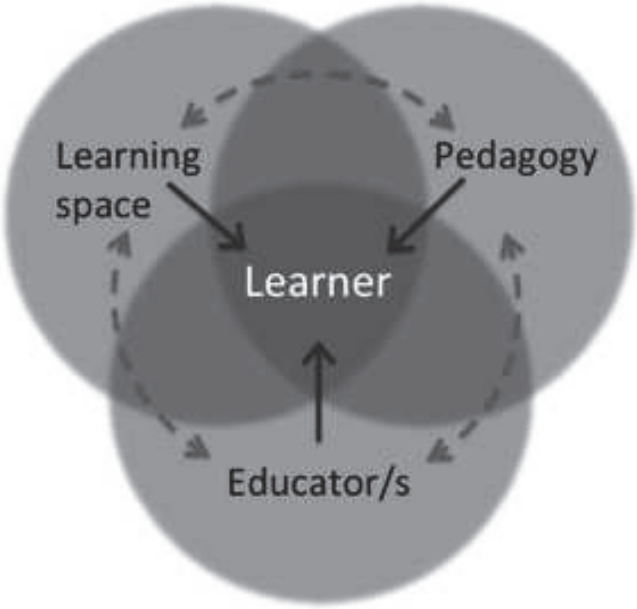
The present research was conducted based on two questionnaires, one of which aims to identify the relationship between physical environments / learning infrastructure, teachers' educational practices and children's outcomes, and the other aims to identify the main factors influencing the quality of teaching practices development. integral parts of children.

The first of the questionnaires mentioned is based on a neutral model for optimizing learning spaces called SIN and based on environmental and behavioral factors:

• Stimulation: complexity, color;

• Individualization: flexibility, ownership, connection;

• Naturalness: light, air quality, temperature, noise, connection with the natural environment.



Naturalness: Air quality

• Wide and varied openings are preferable, especially on the upper floors

• Significant improvements in the learning process in conditions of a high level of air ventilation

• The large volume of space can contribute to increasing the level of naturalness (Bako-Biro et al, 2011).

• In institutions with several floors and few exits, the ventilation of the spaces becomes more difficult;

• In kindergartens that have classes with triple functionality or that work in shifts, the use of spaces is made difficult by overcrowding and relatively short breaks, so the ventilation of the spaces is not efficient;

• Some of the highest levels of CO2 were recorded in classrooms where AC was on (possibly, teachers considered ventilation to be provided by AC);

• There is a certain reluctance among teachers to open windows.

There is clear evidence of the negative impact of poor air quality on visual memory and word recognition.

I. Naturalness: Brightness

• The glazed surface indicates an adequate level of natural light, but excessive use of blinds / flags significantly obstructed the light, a fact found in many classrooms;

• Artificial light used in many classrooms is insufficient and inadequate for activity.

• Classrooms facing east, southeast and south directly benefit from natural light during the morning

Noise

• In larger classrooms, the noise made by children was less concentrated, but teachers had to raise their voices to be heard.

Temperature

• In general, classrooms with a temperature of 18-20 degrees Celsius are optimal for children.

II. Another parameter is Individualization which comprises

Flexibility:

• Separate spaces / areas attached to classrooms are adequate

• Exposing the materials on the walls proved to be beneficial

• Complex plans that include different learning spaces are beneficial, because they stimulate „learning through play".

Property:

• The results showed the importance of a series of factors in two aspects: aspects related to the identification of children with their own class and those related to the sensitivity of the student.

• Materials made by children exposed on the walls;

• Customized elements;

• Well-designed furniture that allows the creation of a child-centered learning space;

• Comfortable, interesting and ergonomic benches and chairs and suitable for the age of the children.

III. Stimulation:

The appropriate level of stimulation is non-linear in terms of the learning process - neither too stimulating nor very boring

Complexity: Stimulation level: Color

The second questionnaire addresses the main factors that influence the quality of teaching practices in order to form the socio-emotional and cognitive skills of children. The questions used in the questionnaire correspond to the Good Practices dimension and emphasize knowledge of the concept. From the questionnaire you can see how these practices are used and how important teachers are to strategies for improving practices in activities with preschoolers, but also to know the aspects that influence the quality of practices in early education, the role of teacher, creating a

beneficial, stimulating climate, observation the teacher's concern for better professional training.

Data analysis and interpretation

After applying the questionnaires and centralizing the answers, the data were processed and interpreted statistically for each dimension and item separately. We present below the analysis and interpretation of the data obtained, supported and illustrated by relevant graphs.

The tables include the number of valid answers, the number of respondents (educators) who did not answer (Missing) and the average of the answers. It can also be said that after introducing all the items from the two questionnaires, the SPSS and Google Sheets program validated all respondents' answers, also having a maximum of answers ranging from 1 to 5, depending on the particularities of each question.

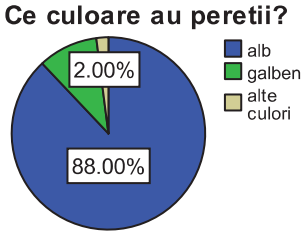
The educators who expressed themselves on the visual complexity of the classrooms in proportion of 88% stated that the classrooms have an average visual complexity, which means that the classrooms are not very crowded, and on the complexity of the materials and images from 96% of the rooms considered it optimal, and the remaining 1% too many and too few.

The existence of purposefully placed materials, at the children's visual level, was followed, and (92%) of the educators, consider that there are materials placed at the children's visual level, (8%), consider that there are no or do not have the materials placed in this way. .

Another item aimed at the existence of activity rooms as being arranged to support the involvement of children in the activity. Out of the total number of respondents (60%), there is a very large existence of such a special space (30%), they claim that such a space is largely organized that stimulates the involvement of preschoolers in activities.

Items concerning the classroom, in terms of height and the possibility of using materials for display, 94% of educators work in high classrooms, 6% work in low classrooms and also 94%, answered that in classrooms exposure materials are used.

For the Color parameter, it was found that the optimal use of colors is to color a "didactic wall" or a corner of the room and furniture with lighter colors.



Kindergartens in Romania, where the surveyed educators teach tend to be rather monochrome in proportion of 88%, but there are also kindergartens that have yellow walls, generally in light colors in proportion of 94%, but also strong colors, in proportion of 6%. All these values being represented by a sample of 50 educators from Romania.

The floors are not specially colored either, the educators stated this, in proportion of 84%, the existence of the colored floor is stated in a small number of classes, only 16% have a colored floor of the activity rooms.

The principle of Individualization

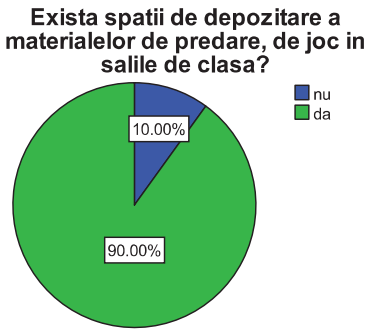
a. Flexibility

It is observed that out of the total of 150 educators who answered this question in proportion of 80%, they stated that the classrooms, where the activities with the preschoolers are carried out, are rectangular in shape. Next, 16% stated that the activity room is square, and the rest, 1% are „classic" or U-shaped. Thus, through the answers received it can be seen that the predominant form of groups, rooms in which the activities are rectangular, a rather advantageous shape for carrying out various activities with preschoolers.

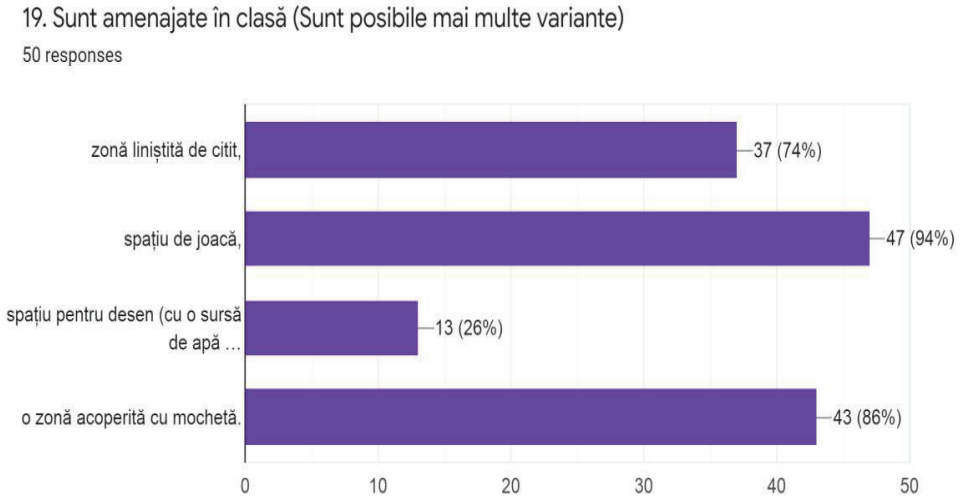
In this study, the size of the classrooms was also taken into account, in order to know how much space there is, for the development in optimal conditions of the activities with the preschoolers. Thus, it benefits from standard halls, is 50 sqm, in proportion of 44%, from large halls between 70 and 80 sqm, works in proportion of 36%, and from very large halls, over 80 sqm, in proportion of 14% and from halls small, less than 50 sqm., in proportion of 6%. Also, depending on the size of the classroom and the number of children enrolled, the area (sqm) for each child is (typical area is 1.84 sqm / child) optimal in proportion of 74%, among educators believe that the area of the classroom, which they have is optimal, but (26% of educators say that the area they have available is small.

Then it can be said that the existing spaces in the classrooms allow children a wide variety of learning methods in proportion of 80%, according to the answers provided by educators, in this regard, but the remaining 20% say that they do not benefit from such ideal spaces.

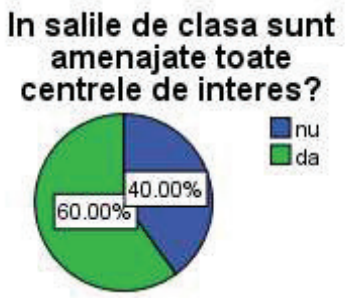
The ideal spaces, which allow children a variety of ways to learn, often have „corners" for storing materials, both teaching and play. Of the sample presented, 90% benefit from material storage spaces. In addition, there are 10% of educators who do not benefit at all from such a space or these spaces may not be enough.



Next, the possibility of rearranging the tables for group work or other forms of organization in the classroom was addressed. Thus we found that there is this possibility in proportion of 100%. Also, if we have space and we can arrange children's meals, we may or may not have different areas / centers of interest in the classroom. Thus, following the results obtained in this respect, the educators benefit from an area covered with carpet in a proportion of 86%; of a playground, in proportion of 94%; a quiet reading area of 74%; of a space for art, with a water source, in proportion of 26%.

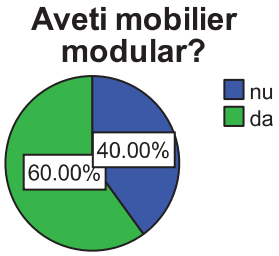


The space is organized in favor of children, so the educators stated, in proportion of 60%, that they can arrange in the classroom all the centers of interest, for freely chosen activities, and the remaining 40%, can not arrange all these centers.



The educators are responsible, because they chose to be able to arrange all the centers, except the „sand and water" center.

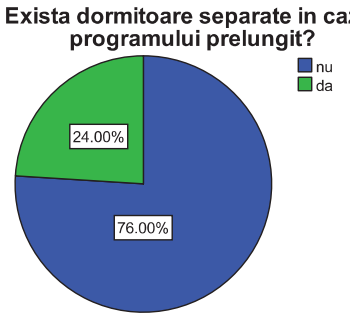
In the classrooms there is modular furniture, in others it is not. Thus, out of the total of 50 educators (60%) they gave an affirmative answer, and 40% gave a negative answer. Which means that in most rooms there is modular furniture.



The presence of relaxation spaces in the classroom represents 60%, of the educators have or create this beneficial space, but there are also educators who do not have this space in proportion of 40%.

The existence of spaces for both relaxation and recreation and for carrying out various activities with preschoolers are particularly important. That is why the study aimed at the existence of recreation spaces, which would allow the realization of group activities. It can be seen that 58% of the educators gave an affirmative answer, and 42% answered in the negative and do not seem to have such spaces.

In 76%, there are no separate bedrooms from the classrooms in the case of the extended program, most of the classrooms having triple functionality. It can be said that there are separate bedrooms, only in 24% of cases.



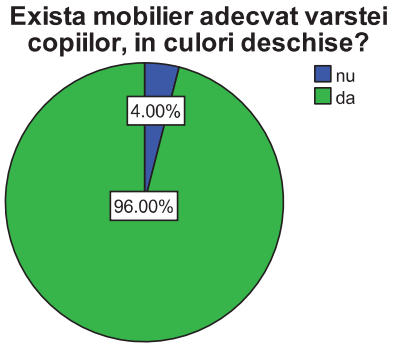
The learning environment also refers to the physical environment in which the activities take place, so the educators were asked if they think that the classroom space is crowded. They provided answers as follows: 22% to a very small extent, 22% so and so, 22% to a large extent, 20% to a small extent and 14% to a very large extent. Most educators do not have problems with space or are not convinced (22% answered: „so and so"), how much space they should have and only 14% say that the space in the classroom is crowded.

It is necessary to observe the existence of space outside the classroom. Thus it can be said that 28% of educators need more space outside the classroom to a large extent, 20% need very much, 22%, respectively 20% do not need more space.

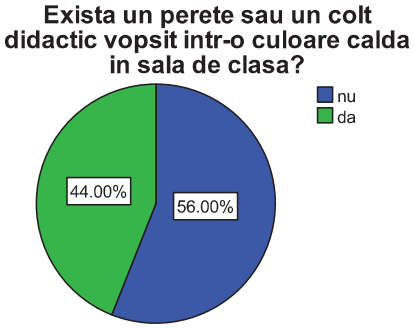
b. Property

The property emphasizes the extent to which children feel belonging to the classroom, to the environment in which they work.

The educators state that there is furniture suitable for children, even in light colors, in proportion of 96%, except for the 4%, that there is a library for children in each classroom, so 88% of educators answered in the affirmative and 12% of educators gave a negative answer. Therefore, in most kindergartens, where the surveyed educators work, there are libraries for children.



Another element is the „corner / didactic wall" painted in a warm color and highlighting certain activities / works, etc. 56% and 44% said they have such a wall in the classroom.



The elements presented can lead to the creation of children's life experiences. These experiences are found in the arrangement of the space according to the answers provided by the surveyed teachers. Thus, 40% of educators are not convinced of this, 22% consider that the arrangement of the space contributes to the formation of life experiences of children to a large extent, respectively 20% to a very large extent; 8 teachers challenge this idea.

Life experiences can also be formed by using sources relevant to all children, even those from other cultures: 36% are undecided, which means that there are not many such materials; 18% and 16% respectively gave a negative answer. To a large and very large extent, 18 (9 educators) and 12% (6 educators) responded respectively.

Arranging the educational space according to the project carried out with the group of children contributes to the development of children both cognitively and socio-emotionally. Teachers arrange the space according to the project they carry out, in proportion of 38%, and largely 30%; 20% arrange the space sometimes, and to a small and very small extent 6%, respectively 4%.

The walls are actively used to display children's work, because 76% of teachers answered in the affirmative and 24% said no.

The high level of display of works on the walls, the existence of age-appropriate furniture, the existence of specific libraries, the arrangement of the space according to each project, all lead to a high level of sense of ownership over the space from the perspective of each child.

Connection Size

In Barrett et al. (2016), this factor correlates with the creation of small accessible libraries, some sensory walls on the halls of kindergartens. This dimension aims at connecting spaces. In fact, following the answers of teachers in preschool education, it can be said that 90% gave a negative answer, regarding the existence of a library in the kindergarten hall. Also, regarding the display of the rules of movement through and outside the classroom, in the common spaces of the kindergarten, according to the answers of the educators, there are 86% in their kindergartens.

With the arrangement of the space in a stimulating way, it helps to develop the children's autonomy, there is a strong agreement in large and very large measure, in proportion of 40%, respectively 60%.

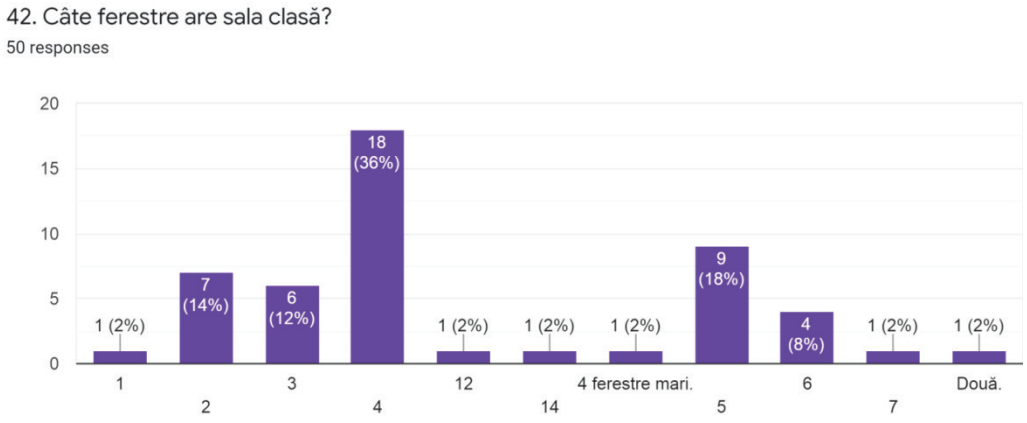
„Light" size

Good natural light is generally a positive feature of a classroom design, and artificial light must be of good quality and sufficient.

We focused here on the considerations of teachers in preschool education regarding the existence of classes with sufficient natural light. 98% answered that they work in bright classrooms, and 2% that they do not have enough natural light in the classroom.

In (56%) of the rooms there is additional natural light (it can be obtained by making small windows that allow light from the hallways or directly from the roof to enter the classroom), and 44% there is no such light source.

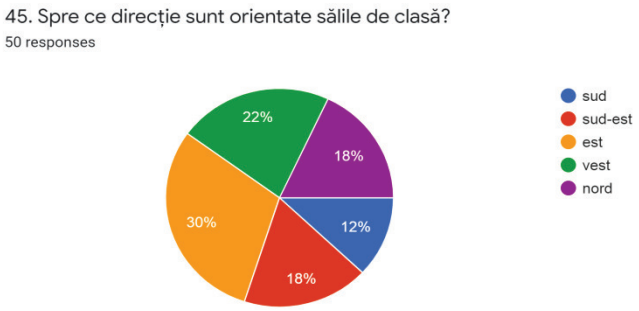
Natural light comes from windows, so it seems that kindergartens have 4 (36% of answers) and 5 (18% of answers) windows.



It was found that the size of the windows, through which light can enter the classroom, also matters a lot. 54% of the educators answered that the windows are suitable in size and 46% that they are large and the surface

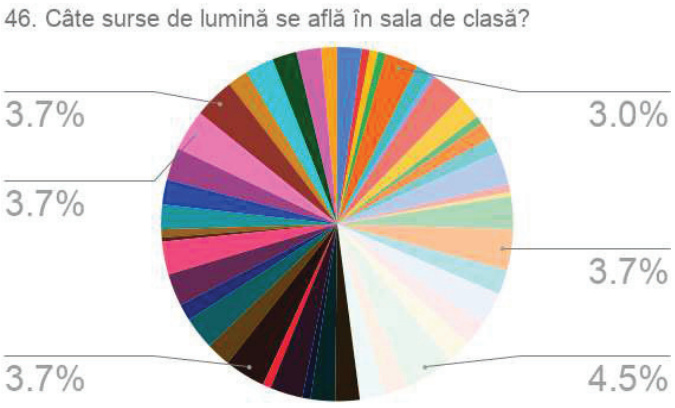
of the windows represents 10% of the developed surface of the classroom - 94% gave an affirmative answer.

The orientation of the classrooms on coordinates aimed at obtaining as much natural light as possible, obtained through windows. 30% say that the classrooms are oriented towards the east, 22% say that the classrooms are oriented towards the west, and towards the southeast and north respectively 18% of the educators, 18% educators and 12% educators work in classrooms facing south. What is good to consider is that the rooms facing east, southeast and south directly benefit from natural sunlight during the morning.



The existence of artificial light sources is also important the place of their placement on the ceiling and the quality of lighting fixtures.

The educators gave a personal answer, about how many light sources they have in the classroom. Thus, the average is 4.5% and represents the existence of 12 light sources, 3.7% represents 10 light sources, 3% represents 8 light sources.



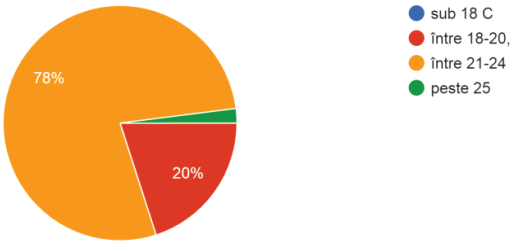
Regarding the place of placement of artificial light, 94%) of educators have in the classroom artificial light at the level of the high ceiling and only 6% have artificial light in the classroom far below the level of the high ceiling. However, it seems that the light placed at a very high height tends to decrease the light intensity. And the teachers say that they have new lighting fixtures in a percentage of 54%, the remaining 46% do not have them.

Parameter: Air quality

Good air quality is essential for the efficient functioning of the brain. We also monitored the frequency of classroom ventilation, which is not at all a suitable option, this being several times a day for 54%, however 40% of educators ventilate the classrooms after each activity, which is a very important habit for a good concentration of children in activities, and 6% of educators ventilate the rooms before the rest or relaxation period.

Temperature parameter

In general, classrooms with a temperature of 18–20o C are optimal for children. To measure the temperature, 68% of teachers denied the existence of thermostats in each classroom or at each radiator, 32% said that there are thermostats in each classroom, or at each radiator. The average temperature in the classrooms in the cold / hot season is between 21-24oC, and this is confirmed by 78% of the educators; between 18-24oC in proportion of 20%, with variable above 25oC confirmed 2% of educators.



The quantity and quality of solar heat in the classroom is considered optimal by 78% of educators, it is considered high for 12% and low in proportion of 5% of educators.

Noise parameter

Unwanted sound or noise can disrupt the learning process. It can come from outside, from other rooms of the kindergarten or from the classrooms where different activities take place.

72% of teachers say that the noise level is optimal for learning, 10% say that the noise level is high, and 18% have no problems with noise, its level is low.

It can be seen that, from the multitude of answers of the 50 educated respondents, we can present the sources of noise, which affect the development of activities. The highest values are represented by children 24%, they are considered the biggest source of noise in the classroom, next to it are external sources 4%, such as passing cars, building an attic, musical toys, a neon that probably does not work correspondingly, and even a desirable answer: „There is no source of noise in the classroom."

It can be said that the noise coming from the classrooms is largely caused by the structure of the materials and finishes used. Acoustic panels are mounted on the ceiling (false ceiling) in the classrooms. The floors are quite well structured, 48% of the rooms have triple-layer laminate flooring, 44% have wood flooring, 8% have modular carpet.

Although these children hear clearly what the educator says in 98%, 2% consider that they cannot hear it clearly.

„Connections with the natural environment" parameter

This connection exists when the classrooms and the kindergarten yard have trees / trees and various plants, mini-gardens, equipment that stimulates sensory development.

78% of teachers say that there is no exit from the classroom directly into the natural environment (yard, garden, park). Only 22% have direct access to the kindergarten yard or a park.

Only 4% of educators say they have learning spaces that offer additional learning opportunities, reading spaces, a living corner, a multimedia room, a room for personal development and even in the hallway of the kindergarten arrangements that represent a continuation of the learning environment arranged in class.

Playgrounds are arranged by age levels only in kindergartens where 56% of respondents work. 44% answered that they are happy that they have playgrounds or that they are not arranged by age.

Thus, it can be said that these differences are significant and not at all gratifying, because we want the positive and safe development of children, according to the particularities of age and in accordance with them.

Placement of playgrounds is important, but only 46% of educators responded that playgrounds are in the vicinity of classrooms.

Playgrounds organized by age and located on the ground floor, come in favor of small groups, but only half of the educators who have a small group also have the room on the ground floor.

The presented results provide a basis for developing a strategy for investment in preschool infrastructure, for an informed analysis that takes into account the particularities of the current situation in Romania and creating a learning environment conducive to learning and development of children and improving teaching practices used by teachers , from preschool education.

The following is the questionnaire, which focused in this research on the quality of teaching practices used by educators in the educational process.

This questionnaire presents 3 dimensions: The quality of teaching practices, The role of educators and their relationship with learners and Training.

Dimension Quality of teaching practices

This dimension primarily presents educators' knowledge of what the phrase „good practices" means.

What do you think of when you hear the phrase „good practice"? Educators know the phrase. I obtained the most diverse answers: I am thinking of an efficient teaching, of new methods, strategies, projects and teaching materials, of modern, innovative methods, of continuous learning; „Useful practices", „intervention", „any materials, methods, applications that support and improve the education system", „things useful for the education of the child", „Active learning based on the use of active, active-participatory teaching methods and interactive", „Education practices with positive results and positive feedback", „Actions that lead to positive results", „The best methods that a teacher can use in the learning process", „arranging classrooms class to stimulate the child", „intervention", „1) identifying successful initiatives on important issues, 2) learning what works and what doesn't work in different contexts and 3) inspirational landmarks for decision making", „Effective ways to which we can approach in the improvement of the educational act", „Unique teaching methods to the liking of children, didactic materials, but also optimal learning strategies for the harmonious development of the preschool act its extrinsic motivation", „Innovative ideas that can improve the quality of education", „experimentation, exploration, play."

Obtaining these answers it can be said that there is no correct answer, all the above mentioned are elements of the concept of good practices, which each teacher can adopt at a given time.

The description of the phrase „good practices", from the perspective of the questioned staff, highlighted relevant answers, which indicate that educators know and can describe what a „good" teaching practice means, with positive effects on preschoolers' practice. answers: „A quality teaching practice

involves an organization of time, objectives and quality materials, as well as clarity and complexity of explanations. A good practice is „Efficient, clear with a well-defined purpose." A good practice could be: „Exploration - involves the child's attempts and attempts to know and discover new things, it allows the conquest of the world around and stimulates motivation, is one of the fundamental actions of the child's development."

„A good practice means what works well in kindergarten or on a larger scale. If you were to make a top 3, what examples would you choose? Please specify the field / problem to which it responds, the period of development". The educators offered the most diverse answers, and the most relevant are :. The use of modern technology in teaching activities in kindergarten, followed by demonstration activities is a good practice that must be practiced, because it represents the future. The present, the context, also tells us."

The teaching-learning-assessment process at preschool age has known new dimensions, the use of new technologies in education representing an extra experience gained by preschoolers, a specific closer connection with practice, because they act at the same time, which will lead them in the future to an efficient training in accordance with the requirements of an increasingly digitalized society. Knowing the fact that all activities in kindergarten are based on the game, this being the main form of organizing the instructive-educational process, we used modern strategies, respectively interactive toys.

„Starting from the fact that in preschool education, but also at other levels of education, the use of modern technology helps children to have a greater degree of concentration during activities, by increasing their stability and more effective engagement in teaching tasks, we designed a math activity in the middle group, using in one of the activity sequences, to ensure retention, an interactive bee-bot toy, which the preschoolers were very excited and interested in. Thus, during the mathematics activity with the preschoolers from the group we found that the learning of the contents was done in an actively participatory manner, the children being put in the situation to practice within this activity of consolidating the numbering within the limits 1-4, with with the help of the interactive toy „bee", didactic tasks regarding the reporting of the number and the number to the quantity, by pressing the keys to move the toy from the number to the symbol that was represented by an image, corresponding to the quantity. (ex: the number 3 corresponds to the image with three tulips, the number 4 corresponds to the image with four ladybugs, etc.). The use of the interactive toy „bee" in the math activity, which had the role of an element of play, contributed to engaging children in playful tasks, problem solving, which immediately resulted in learning math in a fun, engaging way. and dynamic. This modern

means of education can be introduced in the education of preschool children in the activity of mathematics on consolidating the number and within the limits 1-10, with didactic tasks differentiated according to the purpose pursued.

The development of activities based on concrete action with objects, the use of modern technology, respectively interactive toys in the instructional-educational process arouses the interest of preschoolers in educational activities in general, stimulates their thinking, creativity, initiative, they experience positive emotions by engaging in pleasant tasks, which makes them participate with pleasure, joy and satisfaction of the pleasure of learning by easily settling on their faces.

„In order to meet the needs, current needs of children in today's society, we, the teachers, can design and carry out teaching activities, using interactive toys in most areas of experience and development. In language education activities, interactive toys can be used in certain sequences of the activity by performing didactic tasks of associating initial sound - word, identifying the singular and plural form of objects, by identifying the singular-plural image with the help of the interactive toy, in the formulation of sentences, based on the image that stops the „bee", which was previously activated by pressing the scroll keys, but also in the integrated activities. Interactive toys are modern, attractive teaching aids, which we can successfully introduce in educational activities with preschool children in the group, stimulating the creativity of learners, initiative, thus encouraging didactic communication between teacher and children."

It can be said that good practices can come from the multitude of factors that influence both children and teachers in the educational process, factors that determine the choice of the best ways to organize learning activities with schoolchildren.These practices can be obtained through personal experimentation or taken as a model, and to know the source from which these „good practices" come, which teachers use, we used the item: „What was the source of inspiration for these practices?". From the answers obtained it can be said that most sources are represented by training courses, for example: training courses, Erasmus + projects, but also specific books, personal experience and sources of documentation. It follows that there is a wide range of resources for obtaining the most effective pedagogical practices.All of these practices have an impact on both parents and teachers. The surveyed educators consider as an impact of the educational practice on both parents and teachers, 16% "child-centered educational approach" and „children have acquired skills to manage emotions, to initiate social interactions and to and manage their own behaviors according to a set of rules; 16% also chose: „parental involvement" and „children have acquired skills to manage emotions, initiate social interactions and manage their own

behaviors according to a set of rules." 12% chose all four response options: „child-centered educational approach", „parental involvement", „skills acquired through training activities", „children acquired emotions management skills, initiate social interactions and to manage their own behaviors according to a set of rules;" The responses highlighted that practices have a significant impact on the child-centered educational approach, but also on the acquisition of skills „to manage emotions, initiate social interactions and manage their own behaviors according to a set of rules." Most teachers were confronted with the non-involvement of parents in the activities carried out together: child-parent-educator, lack of materials for each child, „accommodating children with the new style", „how to organize the learning environment", but there are also 12 % of teachers surveyed who did not encounter difficulties. 68% of teachers reveal aspects that influence the quality of practices in early education consider that a relaxed, relaxed atmosphere is an aspect that influences the quality of practices, 66% of educators consider the clarity and complexity of explanations an aspect that influences 61.7% chose as aspect the interest of parents for the progress of children and for the quality of teachers' practices, 59.6% of educators chose to offer opportunities for participatory learning, 59.1% of educators highlighted the quality of teaching materials, 48.9% of educators chose to facilitate understanding subjects, concepts appealing to children's life experiences.

The aim was to take into account the space in which the activities are to be carried out, when choosing a quality practice. 68% of educators take into account the learning space, to a very large extent, 26% are concerned with the learning space, to a large extent, and 4% and 2% of the educators, respectively, do not take into account the allocated space.

But also what is accentuated, by the educators in the activity carried out in the group. Thus, it was found that 11 (22%) educators, out of 49 emphasize the development of new skills of children, 20 (40%) of educators focus on training and development of skills, practical skills of children, but also training, development of attitudes and children's behaviors, only 12% of educators emphasize the transmission / assimilation of information and knowledge to children and 32% emphasize interpersonal communication.

Dimension The role of the teacher and his relationship with students

Within this dimension, it was studied what is the opinion of the educators regarding the role they fulfill, in the activity they carry out in class. 95.7% of educators chose the role of coach, 74.5% of educators chose the role of counselor, 42.6% chose the role of leader and 40.4% chose the role of supervisor, the role of external factor 8, 5%), 6.4%) the role of friend, second parent only an educator 2.1%

We also studied the positive behaviors and good practices that teachers develop and promote in their relationships with students during the daily program: educators chose empathy, respect and kindness, communication, cooperation, collaboration, understanding, spirit team, responsibility, independence, creativity, assimilation of new knowledge, playful spirit, fairness, constant feedback, development of new skills, stimulating children to complete the task correctly, positive-assertive language, critical thinking, permanent communication, emphasis on rules, play free, responsibility, fairness, understanding, managing emotions, respecting the person, the identity of each child, mutual help, courage, involvement, free expression.

„List the three most important strengths of your teaching activity, in terms of classroom management and educational practices:" For me the classroom atmosphere is: - cooperative - 63% totally agree, 30% are agree, and 2% educators disagree; -it is encouraging for 78%: totally agree - 20% agree; -is friendly for 78%) totally agree- 18%) agree and 2% educator disagree; „It is safe and relaxing" for 70% „allows children to share their opinions", for 78% "allows children to learn", 84% „expresses clear, positive behavioral expectations" for 68% and 2% of children do not -they expressed.

The affective attitude environment is directly related to educational practices and involves: „providing additional attention to children in need," said 85.1%; „Understanding and emotional support for children" - 83%; „I encourage children's self-confidence" - 80.9%; „Use positive language" for 78.7%; 76.6% „provide permanent feedback and encourage children's autonomy and perseverance" - 68.1%; „I remove inappropriate behaviors and evaluate objectively", answered a percentage of 51.1% of educators; „I stimulate critical thinking and pursue persistence in children's learning tasks", in a percentage of 42.6%; „I discourage indifference and non-involvement", 40% (19 educators). Thus, it can be said that most educators provide attention, understanding, emotional support and use positive language, encouraging children's self-confidence in classroom practice.

Teachers emphasize that classroom management is important in having effective educational practices and refers to a set of activities and behaviors of the teacher that aim to maintain an atmosphere of cooperation and emotional involvement of children in learning tasks.The priority way to improve vocational training is training focused on the development of practical psycho-pedagogical skills-59.6%) chose as a priority the training focused on the development of specialized practical skills, and 57.4%) chose as a priority training focused on enriching theoretical and practical information on the learning environment.Following the application of the two questionnaires, which aimed at both the learning environment and teaching practices, we found out what the implications are, each dimension. Also, the general hypothesis, which aimed at the existence of a favorable,

stimulating learning environment and good educational practices for the global, harmonious development of children at an early age is mostly confirmed, because preschool teachers use various educational practices, in the didactic activity favored by the created learning environment. The structure of the kindergartens, in the care of the surveyed teachers' activity, is optimal for learning, from the point of view. There are all the weaknesses on artificial brightness parameters, thermostat lip temperatures and air measurement arrangement and care space to provide greater learning opportunities, and the playground outside the classroom is not designed to be age-appropriate.

Teachers in preschool education use various educational practices in the teaching activity favored by the learning environment created. And the learning environment has a positive influence on teaching practices to a great extent, a statement provided by the results obtained by the responses of respondents in preschool education, which in organizing activities and choosing best practices take into account the learning environment created.

References:

Barrett, P.S., Y. Zhang, F. Davies, and L. Barrett. (2015). Clever Classrooms: Summary Report of the HEAD Project, Salford, University of Salford.

Boca C. (coord.), Bucinschi M., Dulman A., (Education 2000+, 2009). Early education and the specifics of child development: the general way for kindergarten staff, Bucharest.

Curriculum for early education (2019), MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION

Dumitrana, M. (2009). Construction of the educational space - component of the management of the educational process, Scientific Journal of the State University of Moldova, no.5 (25), p. 94)

Hanna Dumont, David Istance and Francisco Benavides (eds.), (2010) The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice, OECD, Publications.

Kokko, S. and P. Dillon (2016), Engaging Trainee Teachers with Crafts and Cultural Heritage, International Journal of Education through Art, 12 (1): 21-3

Legendre, A. (1999), Interindividual Relationships in Groups of Young Children and Susceptibility to an Environmental Constraint, Environment and Behavior, Vol. 31, No. 4, pp. 463-486

Nedelcu, A., (2018) Pedagogy of the learning environment. About the welcoming school and the “third teacher” p. 50. Paper published in the Wellness Education Guide. According to a Romanian-Danish recipe. Nedelcu A., Ulrich Hygum C., Ciolan L., Ţibu F. Bucharest, 246 p

Nicolae I. (2015). Expert in Early Education - CLIL Curriculum, Edition I.

Stamm, M. et al., (2009), FrühkindlicheBildung in der Schweiz: Eine GrundlagenstudieimAuftrag der UNESCO-Kommission Schweiz. Friborg: University of Friborg

Stan, L., (2014). The pedagogy of preschool and small schooling, Polirom Publishing House, Iaşi.

Support for explaining and understanding some concepts and tools with which the early education curriculum operates (2019)

Transforming European ECEC, (2017) services and Primary schools into professional learning communities: drivers, barriers and ways forward, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Webography

AH. MASLOW (1954). The Instinctoid Nature of Basic Needs https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-6494.1954.tb01136.x , accessed on 20. 02.2020

Couglin CA, Janani P. Ghetti S (July 2016) The Neurocognitive Development of Episodic Prospection and Its Implications for Academic Achievement: Neurocognitive Development of Episodic Prospection https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305820120_The_Neurocognitive_Development_of_Episodic_Prospection_and_Its_Implications_for_Academic_Achievement_Neurocognitive_Development_of_Episodic_Prospection Accessed 12.02. 2020

Criffitt, W, &Veltch, R. (1971), Hot and crowded: Influence of population density and temperature on interpersonal affective behavior: Ambient effective temperature and attraction. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. 17. 92-98. https://books.google.ro/books?id=Ugh7AgAAQBAJ&pg=PA454&dq=Griffitt+%C8%99i+Veitch+1971&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjpgsXp3Y7qAhUmAhAIHcm0DhkQ6AEIQjAD#v=onepage&q=Griffitt%20%C8%99i%20Veitch%201971&f= false Accessed on 21.11.2019

ECEC (2018): Contemplating and Probing Issues of Conceptualization, Measurement and Policy of ECEC Quality in Europe and in the USA, Volume 188, - Issue 5 https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03004430.2017.1403431 Accessed on 24.03.2020

Güney and SELDA, (March 2012), Effective Learning Environments in Relation to Different Learning Theories, Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 46: 2334-2338, 2012 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/271609829_Effective_Learning_Environments_in_Relation_to_Different_Learning_Access 16 .2019

IuliannaIuzu, THE CONCEPT OF THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT AND ITS SOCIAL FUNCTION, "Bogdan PetriceicuHasdeu" State University of Cahul, Department of Pedagogy and Psychology. https://ibn.idsi.md/sites/default/files/imag_file/14on % 20de% 20mediul% 20scolar% 20si% 20functia% 20sociala% 20a% 20acestuia.pdf Accessed on 23.01.2020

Jadranka D. (January 2006) Educational system in developing countries. Country https://www.researchgate.net/publication/236031583_Educational_sistem_in_developing_countries_Country Accessed on 18.12.2019

Jesús Lau (July 39, 2006) Associations - Guidelines on Information Literacy for Lifelong Learning, Universidad Veracruzana, Boca del Río, Veracruz, Mexico https://www.researchgate.net/publication/246350946_Guidelines_on_Information_Literacy_for_Lifelong_Learning Accessed 26.03.20

Michael F. S. Kinsey K. (January 2012). The Importance of Early Childhood Education https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233763048_The_Importance_of_Early_Childhood_Education Accessed 17.02.2020

OECD (2013), Education at a Glance 2013: OECD Indicators, OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/eag-2013-en

Rivera-Batiz, FE, and Marti, L (1995). Overcowding in New York City Public School (UME Research Report No. 95-1). New York: Columbia University, Institute for Urban and Minority Education. https://books.google.com/books?id=dleNNr9ICc8C&pg=PA72&dq=Rivera-Batiz,+Marti+1995&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwjD9IPo3o7qAhXElIsKHarNB3wQ6AEIODAC#v=A dated 11.12.2019

Shmis, Kotnik and Ustinova (August 2014) Creating New Learning Environments: Challenges for Early Childhood Development Architecture and Pedagogy in Russia Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences 146: 40–46 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265416146_Creating_New_Learning_Environments_ChallengDC dated 30.01.2020

Stankovic and Stojic (2007) Remodeling of the interior of preschool institutions in the context of improving ambient value and quality of space https://www.researchgate.net/publication/275921767_Remodeling_of_the_interior_of_preschool_institutions_in_the_context_of_improvement_of_spient_val 28

The Ministry of Social Affairs in consultation with the Ministry of Education, (2000) Early Childhood Education and Care Policy in Denmark, Copenhagen

https://www.oecd.org/education/school/2475168.pdf,https: //www.tandfonline .com / doi / full / 10.1080 / 03004430.2017.1403431 Accessed on 24.03.2020

Tichá R. Brian A., Kincade L. (November 2018). Educational practices and strategies that promote inclusion: Examples from the U.S. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328942995_Educational_practices_and_strategies_that_promote_inclusion_Examples_from_the_US Accessed on 11.02.2020

Tomasz L. (2020) International Sailing School Association http://issa-schools.org/ Accessed on 15.11.2019

Vieluf S., Teaching Practices and Pedagogical Innovation: Evidence from TALIS, OECD Publishing, 2012 https://www.oecd.org/education/school/TalisCeri%202012%20(tppi)--Ebook.pdf accessed on 28.01 .2020

Wilfried S. (April 2018). Early Childhood Education and Care in Austria: Challenges and Education Policies https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320921006_Early_Childhood_Education_and_Care_in_Austria_Challenges_and_Education_Policies Accessed 10.11.2019