

COMPETENCE CONDITIONS ENABLING EDUCATION IN PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENTS: PARENTS' EVALUATION

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Abstract

Competence, psychological and material-organisational conditions determine favourable educational environment for parent education in pre-school education establishments. The aim of this research is - to identify competence conditions determining favourable educational environment for parent education in pre-school education establishment. Competence conditions, determining favourable educational environment for parent education in pre-school education establishments, which are formed of pedagogues and parents' collaboration and parents' communication between themselves, have been examined in the research. One of the determining factors, forming favourable educational environment for parent education is- pre-school educational establishment pedagogues, therefore both professional and personal pedagogues' abilities were analysed to apply the most suitable communication and collaboration forms with parents in a concrete situation, to give parents pedagogical-psychological support. Standardised interview was applied for the research (for gathering empiric research data) and content analysis (empiric data analysis). Parents of the children attending pre-school education establishments participated in the research. The obtained results allowed making concrete conclusions about competence conditions determining favourable environment for parent education and to identify, according to parents, the most necessary for parents' education improvement educational environment area, – pedagogues and parents' communication and collaboration.

Keywords: *competence conditions, educational environment, parent education, communication and collaboration, parent involvement, pre-school education establishment.*

Introduction

Lithuanian and foreign researchers examined parent education phenomenon in various aspects. According to L. Seliokienė (2004), parent education is considered one of the family and education establishment interaction forms. I. Leliūgienė (1997) and K. Miškinis (2003), treated parent education phenomenon as pedagogical impact, by which it is sought to increase parents' pedagogical culture. J. Ruškus and et al. (2012), examining pre-school and before school education establishment and parent collaboration, defined parent education not only as participation collaborating and going deep into the child's education aims and methods, but more as a parenting skill formation on the initiative of pedagogues. V. Aramavičiūtė (2005), having devoted a lot of attention to children emotional education, accentuated the necessity of pedagogical parent education stating, that first of all, parents help to find and cognise the value world, to form objective value evaluation criteria, a positive attitude to values, to start loving them, try to achieve them and to build their life on them. A. Juodaitytė (2003), referring to foreign scientists J. Comer and N. Haydnes (1991), and analysing constructive education in pre-school education, states, that parent education grounded on constructivism philosophy is achieved through education reality perception, which is important for parents. According to L.

Epstein (2001), S. Dapkienė (2002), pre-school establishment and family active and purposeful communication can help eliminate children's destructive behaviour. Constructive parent education is necessary, if it is sought for holistic child's education. So, parent education is understood not as one way education, giving information, seeking effective children's education, but as a constructive activity, grounded on parents and pedagogues' collaboration, parent involvement. Besides, in these scientists' works it is accentuated, that for parent education favourable educational environment is also necessary.

According to P. Jucevičienė (2003), educational environments, guaranteeing education success, are called constructive environments, which have such characteristics: reflection, motivation, context, self-regulation and self-control, collaboration and partnership. This attitude corresponds to the learner enabling educational environment understanding: this is the creation of such an educational environment, whose competence, psychological, material-organisational conditions supply every learner with learning power and have influence on successful learning. It is organised so that an individual in this environment can feel being able for effective personal improvement, realised through learning efforts.

In this environment, pedagogue becomes the main person, implementing various education reforms, encouraging human potential and educating future generations (Tight, 1996; De Kock, Slegers, Voeten, 2004; European Commission. Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, 2005; Lipinskienė, 2002; Brazdeikis, 2009; Jucevičienė et al. 2010). Thus, an educator (a person) should have certain competences, helping the learners to most effectively achieve the learning goals. Assuredly, E. Jurašaitė-Harbison (2004), D. Malinauskienė (2010) stated, that one of the most important professional competences of pre-school education pedagogue is – pedagogical communication and collaboration, which, namely, forms the basis of parent education. Pre-school education pedagogue, having also the leader's traits, knows the art of dealing, is able to control conflicts, to accept effective problem solutions.

Leliūgienė ir G. Simanavičiūtė (2010), discern three aspects of parent education: seeking to communicate with parents; giving information and consultation on various questions; parent involvement in education establishment life.

In scientific works it is also actively discussed not only about the importance of parent education phenomenon, the actuality of pedagogical communication and collaboration competence, but also about the realisation forms of this phenomenon. As the research show (Juodaitytė, 2003; Juodaitytė, Martišauskienė, 2007; Green, Walker, 2007; Sandberg, 2008; Juodaitytė, Gaučaitė, Kazlauskienė, 2009; Leliūgienė, Simanavičiūtė, 2010; Kruger, Michalek, 2011; Galindo, Sheldon, 2012 et al.), pre-school establishment pedagogues apply the most diverse parent education, collaboration with parents forms: giving information, conversations with parents, parent meetings, seminars, lectures, individual meetings and conversations with child's parents or foster parents and so on., which are possible to realise only when parents are in the education establishment.

L. Epstein (2001), S. Dapkienė (2002), R. Kontautienė (2006), A. Valantinas, G. Čiuladienė (2012), and other examined collaboration forms between education establishment as an education service provider and parents as education service consumers. Parents' involvement in education process is possible both through the activities taking place at home and through participation in education establishment activities. Especially effective is such a home and education establishment partnership, in which prevails collaboration and the responsibilities of parents and pedagogues are integrated. Seeing links between parents and education establishment, the child will understand, that education is an integral part of his life, that home and education establishment supplement each other and they are not separate segments (Parent involvement in student education, 2012).

One can assert, that Lithuanian and foreign scientists widely investigated educational environments, guaranteeing successful children's education (Jonassen, Land, 2000; Kowalczyk, 2000; De Kock, Slegers, Voeten, 2004; Surgėlienė, Bankauskienė, 2015; Masiliauskienė, Geležinienė, Kaffemanienė, Melienė, Norkus, Miltenienė, Šiaučiulienė, Vilkonienė, 2015 et al.), the actuality of pedagogical communication and collaboration and its implementation forms, however, there is lack of scientific research about creation possibilities of favourable educational environment for parent education in pre-school education establishments, how the environment could be improved, which could suit not only for the education of the latter, but also for independent learning.

Research object is – competence conditions enabling parent education in pre-school education establishment. Research aim is – to identify competence conditions determining favourable educational environment for parent education in pre-school education establishment.

The main research questions:

1. What is the content of competence conditions enabling parent education?
2. How do parents value competence conditions, enabling education?

Research Methodology

General Research Characteristics

The applied research methods are: scientific information source and legislation content analysis (to reveal theoretical context), standardised interview (to collect empiric research data) and content analysis (empiric data analysis).

For carrying out empiric research, qualitative research method was chosen – a structured interview (a structured open question interview), when the interview questions, their order are foreseen beforehand (Bitinas, Rupšienė, Žydžiūnaitė, 2008; Creswell, 2014; Gaižauskaitė, Valavičienė, 2016). By the applied method it was sought to ascertain the informants' attitude to the created favourable environment for parent education in pre-school education establishment, which their child attends.

The research is grounded on social constructivism attitudes, that construction of reality cognition and thinking is an active process, when the acquired knowledge is applied in various situations and teaching process goes on the basis of the acquired knowledge and experiences (Berger, Luckmann, 1999). It is also grounded on humanism attitudes that every personality itself is active, creative, constantly willing to grow and improve, open to new experiences (Maslow, 2011).

Research Sample

Qualitative research sample contained 11 informants, having agreed to participate in the research – parents of the children attending pre-school establishments. The age average of the informants, having participated in the research is 37 years, all women. All informants have higher education. Research sample is convenience, non-probability sampling.

Research Instrument and Procedure

During the structured interview the informants were given 11 questions. The interview questions were arranged, referring to Lithuanian and foreign scientists' (Jucevičienė, Gudaitytė, Karenauskaitė, Lipinskienė, Stanikūnienė, Tautkevičienė (2010); Tight (1996) theoretical insights about the factors determining educational environment.

The research was carried out in December 2016. The research results are not representative, however they help notice certain actual tendencies.

Ethics of the research

While carrying out the research, research ethics principles were followed: before starting the interview verbal consents were collected from all the informants to record the interview in a voice recorder. All research participants were informed about research aim, confidentiality, interview participant anonymity. It was tried to make close contact with the informant and to keep it throughout the whole session. The questions are presented clearly, giving only one open type question at a time, sequencing the questions (Creswell, 2014; Žydžiūnaitė, Sabaliauskas, 2017). During the research performance, data analysis and result announcement scientific ethics requirements were followed.

Data Analysis

The material, obtained during the interview with the parents of the children attending pre-school education establishments, was analysed in a consecutive order, using inductive method, when semantic units are discerned, formulating them into sub-categories, later on joining them into categories, which are illustrated by quotations from interview protocols. Category is a statement, including a group of sub-categories (short statements), which are related by common content, meaning of the text (Bitinas, Rupšienė, Žydžiūnaitė, 2008).

Research Results

During the empiric research, it was sought to analyse competence conditions determining favourable environment for parent education in pre-school education establishments. The obtained informants' answers helped to identify the factors forming competence conditions: communication and collaboration between pedagogues and parents, pedagogues' ability to apply various education forms and the ability to give parents pedagogical - psychological support. Pedagogues' personal features and professional abilities have also been highlighted during the research.

Seeking to ascertain educational environment areas for improvement in pre-school education establishment, parents were asked, *how kindergarten environment could be improved, that it was more useful for parent education*. Data are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Favourable educational environment for parents in pre-school education establishment improvement.

Category	Sub-category	Extracts from interview protocol	N
Pedagogues and parents' communication improvement	Information devices	"...information channels could be used more actively, information shared more often".	1
	Communication	"Very often there is lack of initiative from class-teachers, head teacher, creating favourable environment for communication"; "Class teachers could take the initiative in sharing information, observation remarks, advice more often".	2
	Parent involvement	"One would like more activities, in which parents were involved as well".	1
	Pedagogical work with parents	"It would be necessary to devote more attention to parent relationship development. It would be necessary to work more with families"; "Consultations for parents also would be worth"; "After them psychologist or logopedist lectures on children bringing up questions and parents discussions would be very useful".	3
Material condition improvement	Rooms for events	"There is lack of space in the establishment, where the events could take place and the group parents would find room and wouldn't be packed"; "A child should grow in a modern, up-to-date environment, to know what is going on in the world. But the toys and environment have to be such that educate child's creative abilities".	2
	Space for parents	"...there has to be some kind of space in any case, because it gives freedom for communication, clearness"; "...there is not even the room, where after taking off clothes you could sit down, heat up water for tea <...> in order not to feel a stranger".	2

Analysing parents' opinions regarding pre-school education establishment's educational environment improvement, categories have been distinguished: pedagogues and parents' communication improvement, material condition improvement. Part of the informants (N=3) think, that nothing has to be improved. Pedagogues and parents' communication has to be improved most. Informants lack more active pedagogues' communication with parents on various matters and involvement of parents themselves in education establishment activities. The participants of the interview accentuated parent education - lecture, consultation, pedagogical-psychological support for families, parent discussion - need.

The interview participants, who accentuated material conditions, named the area that has to be improved in pre-school education establishment – rooms. There is lack of space for parents, where they could meet undisturbed to discuss things between themselves and with pedagogues.

Seeking to ascertain how parents are encouraged to collaborate between themselves, the interview participants were asked, *what possibilities are formed for the parents of your child's attended pre-school establishment to communicate between themselves*. The answer results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Parents' collaboration between themselves possibilities in pre-school education establishment.

Category	Sub-category	Extracts from interview protocol	N
Take place on the initiative of pre-school education establishment	Parents' pedagogical education events	"One can communicate during the sitting meetings"; "...during meetings"; "Only<...> during the meetings"; "The bigger part limit themselves with the parent meetings, during which official matters are discussed, which are foreseen according to the statute, which have to be in the documents. Parent power has to be as one of self-management forms. Here everything ends.	4
	During events for children	"...together went to the theatre (with the class teachers and children)"; "This is only during the events..."; "...during festivals. There are no other possibilities"; "Only during <...> the festivals".	4
Take place on the initiative of parents	Using web. 2.0 tool help	"Parents themselves have created the group social network account".	1
	Active parents communicate between themselves	"The most active parents, willing to discuss the questions that arouse, independently initiate communication with others. Pedagogues do not poke into it".	1

Having analysed what possibilities are formed for parents to communicate between themselves in pre-school education establishment, it was revealed that parents' communication possibilities split into categories: communication, initiated by pre-school education establishment and communication, initiated by parents themselves. From pre-school education establishment initiated parents' communication forms are mentioned traditional parent meetings and sitting meetings, and events for the children, during which parents meet each other. Interview participants mentioned, that quite often parents start communicating during school leaving parties, when this communication already has no meaning.

Analysing interview material, it was also revealed, that parents notice that education establishment sometimes does not initiate parents' communication itself, limit themselves only to giving over necessary information. Interview participants lack organised events by pre-school education establishment for the family, due to which they would start relationship, it would become warmer. Good parents' relations positively affect children's relations among themselves.

Seeking to reveal communication forms with parents, used by pre-school education establishment pedagogues, the informants were asked, *what communication forms do the pedagogues of the kindergarten your child attends use with you*. The informants' defined forms were divided into three categories: individual, group and collective (see Table 3)

Table 3. Pre-school education establishment pedagogues' communication with parents forms.

Category	Sub-category	Extracts from interview protocols	N
Individual parent education forms	Individual communication	"..Verbal – these are conversations"; "The main – verbal"; "Individual conversation".	6
	Informing by telephone	"If don't go – call.."; "...communication by a text message, telephone conversation...".	3
	Information on the notice-board	"...hang information on the stand".	1
	A letter in student's cupboard	"...if need a signature, put a letter in a box or a cupboard";	1
	Using web. 2.0 tools	"Occasionally send photos from various children activities by e-mail".	3
Group parent education forms	Social networking	"Those parents, who wanted, had a possibility to communicate both by electronic form: and on Facebook"; "There is a part of Facebook who have created a group and store photos there".	2
Collective parent education forms	Parents' meetings	"Twice a year organise parent meetings".	2
	Events	"...invite to participate at Christmas party".	1
	Electronic registers	"...information storing in the electronic register".	1
	Establishment internet cafe	"There is establishment cafe, this is compulsory, it is defined by town council. Here, the information is more common. If your child got into trouble in the event, then got into trouble".	1

Most frequently were mentioned individual pedagogues and parents' communication forms: individual conversations after bringing the child to the education establishment or collecting him, by telephone, information on the stand or in the child's cupboard and pedagogues' communication with parents using website 2.0 tools.

According to interview participants, quite a lot of pedagogues for the communication with parents choose only traditional parent meetings, events for children, where parents participate as well, and electronic registers used in the education establishment, and internet café, compulsory for every education establishment, confirmed by the establishment founder-town council.

One can assert, that communication forms, mentioned during the interview, are more traditional and perform more parents' informing and not education functions.

Seeking to ascertain pre-school education establishment pedagogues' discussion with parents themes, the informants' answers to the question *which themes do the pedagogues of the kindergarten your child attends discuss with you*, are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Pre-school education establishment pedagogues' discussion with parents themes.

Category	Sub-category	Extracts from interview protocol	N
Pedagogical-psychological support	Child's feeling in the establishment	"Safety"; "...how the child is doing, how the child is feeling"; "...ask about a previous day, how the child was feeling in the kindergarten"; "...from children health to..."; "...hygiene..."; "...nutrition".	6
	Child's behaviour	"...behaviour"; "...communication style"	4
	Education questions	"...about events. How to prepare" "...till education process moments"; "...creativity (gets consultation, asks for support, advice)";...child's free time"; "...child's achievements ("concentrated, reads", "was absent-minded", "wants to be a leader to everyone" and so on); "On the themes about the coming festivals..."; "...perhaps about education, but about it speak the least".	8
Material support	Devices for education	"...what the child is short of, what devices one has to buy"; "About<...> need of devices, children's outfit".	2
	Child's care	"The most frequent themes are hygiene, nutrition".	1

Having analysed the interview data, it was revealed, that parents' and pre-school education establishment pedagogues' discussion themes split into two categories: pedagogical-psychological support and material support. Most often (N=18) pedagogues communicate with parents on the questions giving the child pedagogical-psychological support. It is very actual for the parents, how their child is feeling in education establishment, what his behaviour problems are. Especially actual for the interview participants are their children's education questions. Without a doubt, parents with pedagogues also discuss actualities of the events for children. Part of the informants mentioned, that apart from the themes about giving pedagogical-psychological support, with the pedagogues it is discussed about various material devices necessary for child's education and on everyday child's care questions.

Parents mostly expect support from the logopedist, psychologist, social pedagogue, working in pre-school education institution, nutritionist, *with whom one can talk about child's nutrition in the kindergarten and at home.*

Most of all, there is lack of psychologist's help: *"come from different families and these needs (namely, social pedagogue's support) are not satisfied", "if the child or the child's family have problems, due to which suffer interests, development - help in the kindergarten is not provided and there is no hint where to apply for it.*

The informants also evaluated pre-school education pedagogue's provided support for parents: *"Verbal, quite domestic pieces of advice, more from personal experiences than professional".* There is lack of positive attitude to a child in these conversations, it is spoken *"about child's bad behaviour habit elimination: as are accustomed to behave in one way or another".*

Referring to concise results, one can assert, that there isn't a created parent education system, not sufficiently are formed stable collaboration possibilities with the other pedagogical-psychological support providing pedagogues. Education training in pre-school education establishments goes not systematically, only when a real demand appears.

Seeking to ascertain the possessed professional abilities of the pedagogues, the interview participants were asked, *what professional abilities do your child's attended pre-school education establishment pedagogues have*. Interview results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Pre-school education establishment pedagogues' professional abilities.

Category	Sub-category	Extracts from interview protocols	N
Pedagogical knowledge	Subject knowledge	"...pedagogues very actively try to prepare children for school"; "They know their work, how to educate children"; "...teach them nice communication skills".	3
	Student cognition	"Understanding about emotional, physical, emotional, social and intellectual children's development"; "Ability to evaluate child's behaviour and achievements"; "...adaptation to subjects: how to get accustomed, how to separate from parents and how to merge into collective".	6
Education process organisation competence	Activity in education establishment	"Able to organise various activities for children well"; "...professionally organising educational activity".	2
	Activity outside education establishment	"...organises activity" outside kindergarten".	1

Referring to research results, two pedagogues' professional ability categories were discerned: pedagogical knowledge and education process organisation competence. Mentioned by interview participants, pedagogical knowledge having pedagogues demonstrated their subject knowledge and students' cognition. Pre-school education establishment pedagogues, having educational process organisation abilities, demonstrated the ability to well organise the activity both in the establishment and outside the establishment. Parents give a very great meaning to pedagogues' ability to facilitate child's adaptation in education establishment.

Informants also mentioned, that though pedagogues have professional abilities, however they lack motivation to suitably realise those abilities. There is lack of pedagogue's willingness "to go deep and analyse how the child feels in education establishment and give this analysis to parents".

Not only pedagogues' professional abilities were researched, but also what personal features demonstrate pre-school education establishment pedagogues, it was sought to ascertain, what features are important for parents. Interview participants most frequently mentioned pedagogue's ability to communicate easily, sincerity, positivity, friendliness and politeness. Thus, for parents it is very important to communicate easily with the pedagogue, to trust him. Informants also mentioned the most necessary personal traits for pedagogue's profession: empathy, openness, tactfulness, calmness, devotion to job, activeness. Especially was accentuated pedagogues' creativity.

Interview participants also accentuated that for them it is very important children's attitude towards pedagogues: "children used to say, that class teacher is the same as mum".

Generalising empiric research results, one can assert, that interview participants mostly accentuate pedagogues and parents' communication and collaboration in the pre-school education establishment that their child attends.

Informants stated, that favourable psychological climate for parent education pedagogues create best. Pedagogues try to initiate dialogue with parents, giving them actual information.

Discussion

Competence, psychological and material-organisational conditions determine favourable educational environment in pre-school education establishments (Jucevičienė, 2008). In this research attention is paid to competence conditions, which have the biggest influence on favourable environment creation for parent education.

The research results revealed, that one of the most important conditions determining favourable environment for parents' education in pre-school education institutions is communication and collaboration with parents (Dapkienė, 2002; Kontautienė, 2006; Green, Walker, 2007; Sandberg, Vuorinen, 2008; Kruger, Michalek, 2011; Galindo, Sheldon, 2012; Valantinas, Čiuladienė, 2012). The performed research revealed, that parents think, that this area needs improvement: there isn't a unanimous parents' education system, parents' education is running spontaneously. Parents' and pre-school establishment pedagogues' collaboration influence on children's holistic education was not investigated in this research.

Collaboration forms with parents, used by pre-school education establishment pedagogues have extremely great importance for creation favourable environment for parents' education. Lithuanian and foreign researchers (Černius, 1997; Juodaitytė, 2003; Juodaitytė, Martišauskienė, 2007; Juodaitytė, Kazlauskienė, Gaučaitė, Ušeckienė, Bakutytė, 2008; Leliūgienė, Simanavičiūtė, 2010; Kruger, Michalek, 2011; Habig, 2015) confirmed this. The research revealed, that the forms used are very diverse, but they perform more parents' information, but not education function. Therefore, it remains not clear, how much the forms used by pedagogues are effective creating favourable environment for parents' education.

Any of parents' education forms is possible to realise only when parents are in education establishment (Comer, Haydnes, 1991; Epstein, 2001; Green, Walker, 2007; Trakšelys, 2010; Galindo, Sheldon, 2012).

Researchers (Lipinskienė, 2002; Kuisma, Sandberg, 2008; Brazdeikis, 2009; Jucevičienė et al., 2010; Urban, Vandenbroeck, Van Laere, Lazzari, Peeters, 2012) accentuate that a very great influence on educational environment has an educator (a pedagogue or another person having educational influence or even the whole establishment). An educator (a person) should have certain competences, helping the learners to achieve learning aims most effectively. The performed research result confirmed, that pedagogues themselves initiate and encourage parents' communication with pre-school education establishment pedagogues. The informants highlighted personal traits necessary for pedagogue's profession: empathy, openness, tactfulness, devotion for job, activeness and creativity. During the empiric research, interview participants discerned two professional ability categories typical of pedagogues: pedagogical knowledge and education process organisation competences. Researchers (Jurašaitė-Harbison, 2004; Malinauskienė, 2010), analysing pre-school education pedagogues' professional competences distinguished five components, therefore in future it would be possible to analyse how much important for parents is prognosticating and planning pedagogues' activity (teleological) and pre-school education change competences. These research results encourage to investigate, why parents, thinking that communication and collaboration between parents and pedagogues is an area for improvement, didn't accentuate their children's attended pre-school educational establishment class teachers' lack of pedagogical communication and collaboration competence.

Generalising one can assert, that competence condition, determining favourable environment for parents' education in pre-school establishment research could be developed going deep into still not analysed aspects: the effectiveness of collaboration forms with parents used by pedagogues, parents' and pre-school education establishment pedagogues' collaboration with parents influence on children's holistic education and other.

Conclusions

Qualitative research analysis allowed identifying competence condition, determining favourable environment for parents' education in pre-school education establishments, forming factors: pedagogues and parents' collaboration, parents' communication between themselves, pedagogues' ability to apply various education forms and ability to give parents pedagogical-psychological support. One of the main factors, determining favourable environment for parents' education is – pre-school educational establishment pedagogues. Interview participants discerned both professional and personal abilities of pedagogues in a concrete situation to apply the most suitable forms of cooperation and collaboration with parents.

The research revealed, according to parents, educational environment area that mostly needs improvement for parents' education – pedagogues and parents' communication and collaboration. Parents' communication between themselves initiate pre-school education establishment pedagogues or parents themselves. Pedagogues communicate with parents on questions giving pedagogical-psychological support for children.

Parents, having participated in the research, discerned pre-school education establishment pedagogue's professional abilities: pedagogical knowledge and education process organisation competence. For the informants important is pedagogues' subject knowledge and the ability to cognise the students, ability to well organise education process, activity both in the establishment and outside the establishment. Pedagogues' ability to facilitate child's adaptation in the education establishment is of great importance for parents. Parents accentuate not only professional abilities but also personal traits actual for pedagogue's profession.

Having identified pedagogues' communication with parents forms, it was highlighted, that though pedagogues use various forms, however they perform more parent information and not parent education functions. There is lack of more active communication with parents and parent involvement in education establishment activity. Education in pre-school education establishments takes place not systematically, but only when there is a demand.

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