

Parents' views on preschool care and education in local community

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Abstract: In this text, the authors are analyzing preschool care and education in local community. They are focusing on the problem of information transfer between the kindergarten, parents and local community, as well as the model of relationship participation. Cooperation between parents, kindergarten and local community is an important element in the preschool institution quality, because it changes inner relationships, climate and culture. Expectations about cooperation in some authors' views (Resman, 1992; Schleicher, 1989; Coleman, 1998; Ryan, 1995) depend on tradition, objectives, social context, legal framework and situational demands. The research data show that Slovene kindergartens have more consumer-like relationships with parents instead of partnership. Kindergartens are clear about important information concerning their pedagogical work and organization, but they do not include parents in making decisions about the developing and executing of programs. 92.3% of parents think that the information they receive is clear, understandable only 89.6% think they are frequent. More than half of the interviewed parents frequently or always participate in kindergarten life and work, only about 43% believe that they can co-influence the development or realization of the programme. Parents also think that the local community is not giving them enough information about preschool care problems, because only 10.2% are included in solving current preschool care problems in their municipality.

Key words: preschool education; cooperation; local community; parents; curricula

1. Introduction

The main objective of preschool institutions is to support parents in bringing up their children and improving the quality of family life, as well as creating good conditions for the development of their physical and intellectual abilities. The preschool law (1996, 2nd and 3rd part) subscribes that preschool care and education is an integral part of the education system, based on the principles of democracy, pluralism, autonomy, professionalism and responsibility of preschool teachers, equal rights for children and their parents while recognizing the differences between children, freedom of choice, being different and balancing various parts of child's development. But preschool care and education what's the connection with local community and cooperation with parents concerned is also specific. The preschool law (1996) and curriculum for preschool care and education (1999) are the two main national documents, which appoint the course of preschool care and education along with the law of organization and finance in care and education (1996), as well as the cooperation with parents and the local community as founder of preschool institution.

The intention in this text is to show the importance of cooperation among parents, the kindergarten and local community to determine a way, the time and reasons of each creator cooperating.

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2. Starting point

Preschool law (1996), and law of organization and finance in care and education (1996) determine the paragraphs, which appoint parent-kindergarten cooperation and parents' rights and duties. In the preschool law (1996), it is also written that the kindergartens appoint organization and a detailed content of life and work along with the annual work plan (para. 21)¹, which must determine parent cooperation, too. Kindergartens must also present themselves to parents in special publication (para. 11), where they introduce programs and their goals, contents and procedures. Three representatives of parents are engaged in Council of public kindergarten², which competence comprise appointment and dismissal of headmaster, accepting of development programme, accepting of annual work plan and report concerning his realization, treatment concerning educational problems and also treatment concerning parent complaints about educational work in public kindergartens (ZOFVi, 1996, para. 48). There is also the council of parents formed in public kindergartens for the organized implementation of parents' interests, in which every department has one representative elected by parents at parental meetings. The council also suggests aboveboard programmes, gives agreements to headmaster's proposals as regards aboveboard services; moreover, gives opinions concerning proposals of development programs and annual work plan, discusses reports concerning educational problems, and deals with parents' challenges and elects representatives for the council of public kindergarten (ZOFVi, 1996, para. 66).

The first pages of the curriculum for preschool care and education (1999) show the principles of cooperation with parents and the community, which determines the conditions of cooperation as we believe them to be the components of partnership.

Parents do not only have the right to be given information concerning the programs and their children, but also the right for cooperation in planning life and work in kindergarten and its departments, as well as a right for active cooperation in educational activities. The kindergarten must also assure parents the systematic information about their rights and responsibilities. Cooperation is appointed as an important viewpoint of quality of preschool care and education, while the importance of this relationship is being emphasized through division of responsibility and competence, which will later be presented as a base for partnership. Taking into consideration the diversity and possibilities, to use natural and socio-cultural sources of education is the principle of cooperation with the community, along with specific children's environmental backgrounds.

3. The history of cooperation and the meaning of formal and informal forms of cooperation among kindergarten, family and local community

A demand for active cooperation with parents has had quite a long history; changes were mostly reflected regarding the social changes (Dolch, 1971; Schleicher, 1972). Already in the seventeenth and eighteenth century Comenius and Pestalozzi emphasized the meaning of cooperation with parents. Afterwards Dewey and Petersen

¹ With the annual work plan the kindergarten has to determine organization and working hours, programmes, care and education in educational families, department distribution, experts and other kindergartens, workers' work, cooperation with parents, cooperation with educational, health and other organizations, trainee mentorship, activities for implementing kindergartens in environment, cooperation with schools, which educate workers for kindergarten needs, programmes of professional training for kindergarten workers, work programme for professional kindergarten councils and personnel, material and other conditions needed for implementing the educational procedure.

² The council of public kindergarten is composed of three representatives of the founder (local community), three representatives of kindergarten staff and three representatives of parents.

(Schleicher, 1989) also emphasized that the impact of parents' cooperation is indispensable at establishing education that derives from children. The conditions in terms of parent cooperation changed in time of WWII, because of the breaking of educational system. But soon after its re-establishment, the importance of cooperation showed important submission. Around 1960, the citizen inclusion became important in all aspects of life, even in educational system. In many countries a view on cooperation with parents and its effect on children's personal and social development changed in the middle of 1970s. If we look at this as a whole, we can say that there are three different views on parent cooperation (Schleicher, 1989). On one hand, the top priority was parents' rights to choose education for their children (private schools, home schooling), while on the other hand, it was about active cooperation (around the 1960s, the era of democratic reforms); however, cooperation was emphasized only when traditional methods in achieving parents educational demands failed (the era of progressive pedagogy). Regarding the cooperation there were already differences concerning legal frames of cooperation (the level of parents' engagement in decision-making) and organizational structures (formal and informal forms) of cooperation. We can claim that forms of parent cooperation depend on social and political systems, ideological context and, of course, individual kindergarten educational concept.

Even pedagogical classics were marking the relationship between children's parents and professional educators as prerequisite for possibilities of care and education outside the family. Co-creation of life in kindergarten is a task of everyone involved (children, parents, professional educators). Respecting the differences, assuring possibility of choice, respect of family and its values and considering conflict interests are possible only if we can establish and protect an open space for conversation, in which one of the participants always renews and guards a dialogue and cooperation. Parents can be initiators of a conversation, but the basic responsibility for establishing and maintaining relationships is being left with educators, who actually make the cooperation possible in the first place (Dolar Bahovec & Golobič, 2004). Professional educators must assume the existent structures of attitudes with good communication and correct position, which enable parents to influence their children in advance. A basic "media" that helps to establish suitable relationship between a child and preschool teacher is not only emotional warmth, but also evidently stated and expressed anticipations towards children, which are coherent with parents' anticipations (Kroflič, 2001).

Ethics of cooperation, of which Hoffman (1994) speaks, guides us from objective observers (parents) towards cooperation in which no one has a final word. An agreement is that to allow the next step. Open questions concerning everyday life and work in kindergartens are characterized as working situation, as the starting point of a conversation. All what matters is that professionals withdraw from using strength and replace it with sensitive common search and co-interpretation. If we take this to a kindergarten level, we can say that educators are specialists mostly responsible for the establishment of a dialogue and cooperation.

Today, the importance of parent cooperation is widely known. Schleichter (1989) says that cooperation with parents is especially important with younger (preschool) children, with those having trouble being introduced to kindergartens and transferred from the kindergarten to school. The organization of cooperation and acceptance from home and the kindergarten mainly depend on tradition and goals of cooperation in different countries and also from social context, legal frames, ideological beliefs and situational needs. Because of exceptional meaning of cooperation with parents, the declaration of Council of Europe (Van der Eyken, 1982) states that all institutions (health, educational, social) that have an impact on children's development must cooperate with parents to assure the continuity of children's development.

The cooperation with parents in public kindergarten takes place at both formal and informal levels.

Parent-teacher meetings, parental appointments, the council of public kindergarten, the council of parents, written notes, telephone conversations and electronic messages are formal forms of cooperation. The most common and used forms of informal addressing are kindergarten publications for parents, conversation with parents upon arrival and departure from the kindergarten, unplanned talks, bulletin boards, where parents get important information (like parental and children's rights), boxes for parental suggestions, open kindergarten days, theme days, schools and workrooms for parents, projects, picnics, cooperation at exhibitions, trips, sports activities, celebrations, above board activities and more (Strojin, 1992). These are the so-called alternative forms of cooperation that depend on individual kindergarten and preschool teacher. In Slovenia these forms of cooperation first appeared at preschool level and went up to first grades of school. Informal forms of cooperation are more common in the first few years in school, but they decrease slowly and emerge again in last years, when the guidance for next levels of education starts.

In pluralistic countries they are mainly ascribing three functions of parent cooperation. Some face cooperation with parents as cooperation with citizens. Such type of cooperation works as a possibility of increasing education and political competence through the so-called cooperation learning, which also influences democracy of educational institutions and the improvement of cooperation with a wider community. Parents have different submission, when their cooperation is considered as supporting institution. Such manner of cooperation was a top priority in the late 1960s, when parents were made responsible for homework control and didactic plays. The third type of cooperation can be called child centered cooperation. Such manner demands more open and flexible relationships and continued cooperation in the long term not guided by "crises" situations only. Such manner of cooperation derives from recognition that kindergartens and schools need a better understanding of overall children's life experience and that parents need to get their own kindergarten experience. It is important for all forms of cooperation that all participants know the expectations and goals of cooperation (Schleicher, 1989).

Communication wise, we can speak about indirect and direct relationship between preschool teacher and parents. In an indirect way, the preschool teachers takes an advantage of their own superior submission and thus giving instructions, setting demands, evaluating. However, the direct way treats parents as equal partners (Pšunder, 1998). Considering relations between educational institution and parents, authors (Munn, 1993; Bastiani 1993; Whalley, 1997; Meighan, 1989; Macbeth, 1993; Schleicher, 1989) often speak about partner, consumer and paternalistic relations (and also about manager relations). When they are talking about consumer like relations, the top priority is a parent's right to choose a kindergarten. Parents as managers are mostly considered in countries (like Portugal), where parents' representatives are included in all major councils. M. Resman (1991) speaks about paternalistic relations, where experts "teach" parents—for instance in mixed school bodies, where parents and experts sit together, time is being lost several times, because experts must explain their standpoints to parents and convince them of the importance of professional decision-making. This relation does not put parents in equal position—they can not be equally included in discussions and decision making in situations, where professional knowledge is required. Concerning partner relations, authors emphasize different components. J. Bastiani (1993) believes that partner relation includes sharing of responsibilities, power (of course in case of kindergarten and school power cannot be equally distributed), showing of inclination, setting common goals and collaborative work. M. Golby (1993) states that partnership implicates equivalent contribution of something worth to accomplish a common goal. C. Raab (1993) includes a possibility of formal decision making, duties and interaction in partnership. He thinks that the achieved goals are a result of common articulated contributions from both sides of partners, who are not necessarily equal. Whichever definition of partnership or partner relation we choose, we can

conclude that they include active participation in setting and achieving goals. A. Macbeth (1993) also finds it elementary to find the right relationship among all participants.

4. Problem definition and methodology

The intent of this research is to find answers to empirical questions like: (1) Are parents introduced with forms of kindergarten cooperation considering educational problems and if they play an active part in preparing the life in work for current kindergarten year (cooperation in Council of parents and council public kindergarten, annual plan, implementing curricula)? (2) Is information they receive clear and accurate? (3) Does the kindergarten management consult parents about decisions, which effect children's wellbeing and successfulness in achieving curricula goals? (4) Do parents have a possibility to effect the monitoring and assuring preschool education quality and are they included in solving the child care problems in local community (facility, staff, working hours, finance, etc.)? Before the research we had presupposed the following hypotheses: (H1) We anticipate that parents have a more active submission in preparing kindergarten life and work than in implementing the programme; (H2) We anticipate that the information given to parents is clear and up-to-date; (H3) We anticipate that kindergarten management consults parents in decisions which affect children's wellbeing and their successfulness in achieving curricula; (H4) We anticipate that parents do not influence directly the assuring quality of implementation of life and work in kindergarten; but we anticipate that municipality has a well-organized child care, but it does not acquaint parents with its problems.

Empirical research was based on quantitative pedagogical research; we used descriptive and causal-unempirical methods. We included the parents (n=93) of preschool children from 43 kindergartens across Slovenia. The questionnaire was partly a close and partly an open type, and was distributed in year 2007 among two or three different parents in individual kindergarten department, which included children aged from two to six. The data were processed by statistical software package SPSS-X PC and Excel.

5. Results and discussion

5.1 Informing parents about manners of cooperation with kindergarten considering educational problems and their submission in kindergarten life and work programme preparation

H1: We anticipate that parents have a more active submission in preparing kindergarten life and work than in implementing the programme.

We asked children's parents in individual kindergartens across Slovenia, if they are acquainted with forms of cooperation with kindergarten concerning educational problems and if they play an active part in preparing current kindergarten life and work plan—we mostly wanted to find out the ways of operating in formal and informal forms of cooperation, like parental appointments, parent teacher meetings, the council of parents and the council of public kindergarten, work. Assertions A and B together check parents' information about realization of educational goals, principles and kindergarten work, which show the implementation of publicly valid programme—curriculum for kindergartens in Slovenia. We were checking through listed assertions, if and how parents are acquainted with rights, written in preschool education legislation (assertion A) and what is parents' role in preparing and implementing kindergartens' life and work programme. The following data are encouraging more than 87% of parents believe that the kindergarten often or always informs them about all they must know to ensure their children's well being (A1), although only 67% of parents believe that kindergarten informs them

about rules and regulations (A2) which they must know to exercise their own and their children's rights and only a bit more than half of parents (53%) know how to act and who to intercede important information about their children (A4). On the other hand, parents seem to be well informed about ways of communication with preschool teachers, their assistants and other professional kindergarten workers, because only 1% of them believe, that they are not well informed and 11.5% believe that kindergarten rarely informs them about that. One of the main kindergarten objectives is supporting parents in bringing up their children, improving the quality of family life and creating good conditions for child's physical and mental development. In order for this child to feel really good in kindergarten, professional workers must know and consider individual differences in child's development and learning, be familiar with a child's way of comprehending and experiencing the environment and kindergarten, which must as an institution must provide equivalent conditions for optimal development of each individual, consider individual differences, assure conditions for inclusion of children with special needs and consider diversity and multiculturalism kindergarten can gain much information for optimal and successful work from parents. Kindergarten gets certain information at children's enrolment, but it can get more quality information through interpersonal meetings with parents. Formal and informal forms of cooperation can be a treasure of data for successful educational work and they can at the same time allow partner relationship with parents. Parental meetings, as one of the formal ways of cooperation, enable direct communication considering individual child, his specialities, abilities and environment (see Table 1).

Table 1 Informing parents about rights, which are written in legislation referring preschool education (assertion A) and parents' role in preparation and implementation of kindergarten life and work programme (assertion B)

Assertion	Never		Rarely		Often		Always		Together		Average
	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	
A 1	0	0.00	11	12.50	46	52.30	31	35.20	88	100.00	3.23
A 2	7	7.90	22	25.00	29	33.00	30	34.10	88	100.00	2.93
A 3	1	1.10	10	11.50	29	33.30	48	55.20	88	100.00	3.45
A 4	11	12.50	30	34.10	25	28.40	22	25.00	88	100.00	2.66
B 1	19	22.10	30	34.90	31	36.00	6	7.00	86	100.00	2.28
B 2	10	11.60	14	16.30	33	38.40	29	33.70	86	100.00	2.94
B 3	15	17.20	24	27.60	24	27.60	24	27.60	87	100.00	2.66
B 4	17	19.30	24	27.30	18	20.40	29	33.00	88	100.00	2.67
Average A	19	7.20	62	23.48	83	31.44	100	37.88	264	100.00	3.00
Average B	42	16.09	62	23.75	75	28.74	82	31.42	261	100.00	2.75

Notes: A 1—Kindergarten informs me about things which affect my child's kindergarten wellbeing; A 2—Kindergarten informs me of rules and regulations about exercising my own and my child's rights; A 3—Kindergarten informs me about communication with preschool teachers; A 4—Kindergarten informs me how to act when mediating information about my child; B1—Kindergarten management considers my initiatives when preparing a current year programme; B 2—Kindergarten considers parents' financial possibilities when paying contributions; B 3—I can efficiently mediate my remarks and proposals concerning kindergarten work through our representative in council of parents, who deals and rules about them; B 4—I am informed about the work and resolutions of the Council of parents and kindergarten.

A good third of parents included in this research believes that kindergarten management often considers their opinions (36%) in preparing the programme (B1) but more than half of them (57%) believe that kindergarten rarely or never considers their opinions and suggestions in current years programme. This data is not that much reassuring. Why? With preschool law (1996), and Curriculum for preschool care and education (1999) the foundations for partner relationship with parents, mutual cooperation and active submission in preparing

kindergarten life and work programme were laid down. Successful realization of goals, principles and preschool curriculum depend on parents' active cooperation. When we speak about active cooperation, we do not believe that it affects preschool teachers or kindergartens autonomy, but we mean "something more in education", homogenizing educational approaches, open curriculum, democracy and pluralism in preschool care and education.

Good data show that two thirds of parents (over 72%) believe that kindergarten at contributions calculation considers different parents financial abilities (B2). The law of organization and finance in care and education (1996) anticipates that local community, as kindergarten founder anticipates different parental financial abilities when calculating programme economic cost. On average, local communities cover 70% of economic cost per individual child; the other 30% is parental financial obligation. In school year 2008/2009 the changed legislation will allow parents to enroll their second (third or more) child in kindergarten for free.

Parents are more critical considering formal forms of cooperation. More than half of the interviewed parents (55%) believe that they can (often or always) efficiently submit their complaints and suggestions about kindergarten work to their representative in the Council of parents, where these complaints are addressed and dissolved (B3). A good third of parents (33%) believe that they are always informed about council of parents and council of public kindergarten resolutions (B4). Is that a big percentage or not? Can we be satisfied with this data? There is only one representative of parents from each age group in council of parents and even they do not have the right for decision-making. That right falls only to three representatives of all parents, who are included in the council of public kindergarten, where they sit with three representatives of kindergarten staff and three representatives of founder—local community. In this council there is often a web of interests of individual group and individual problems which frequently push educational problems in background because of financial or other, more acute problems.

We can confirm the first hypothesis, where we anticipated that parents have a more active role in preparing the kindergarten life and work programme (curriculum) than in implementing it. Kindergarten informs parents about important data, which effect preparation of kindergarten life and work programme (join average A=3.00), however their impact on implement curriculum is smaller (join average B=2.75). The results of z-test ($z=2.78$ and $\alpha=0.05$) prove, that there are statistically important differences between groups of assertions A (1-4) and B (1-4).

5.2 Precision and accuracy of information

H2: We anticipate that information given to parents is clear and up-to-date.

With most parents, the information obtained in kindergartens is up-to-date (88.5%), clear and easy to be understood (90.8%) as we anticipated in the first place. The legislation designates that every kindergarten must make it publicly the work in kindergarten already at the beginning of school year. Publication must include programme description, staff, additional programme (foreign language courses, computer, dance and drama courses) and other important information about kindergarten life and work, such as celebration, excursions, museum, gallery, theatre and home for senior citizens visits and many more. The kindergarten currently informs parents through bulletin boards (in kindergarten concourse or/and in front of every playroom), in writing (at home or in hand of parents when they pick up their child), by telephone and/or by kindergarten web page. Information concerning individual child preschool teachers mainly intercedes personally at parent meetings but information concerning all children in one group is interceded at one group's parent-teacher meetings or joint meetings for all parents (see Figure 1).

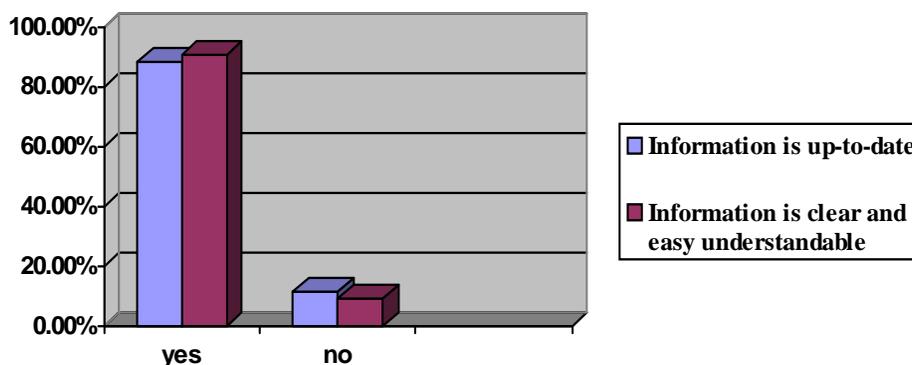


Figure 1 Clear, understandable and frequent information

5.3 Parents' role in preparing kindergartens annual work plan and consulting with parents in decisions affecting their child's wellbeing and successfulness

H3: We anticipate that kindergarten management consults parents in decisions which affect children's wellbeing and successfulness' in achieving curricula.

With the annual work plan, the kindergarten determines organization and working hours, programs, care and education in educational families (if they are organized in kindergarten assembly as determined in legislation), department distribution, experts and other kindergarten workers work, cooperation with parents, cooperation with educational, health and other organizations, trainee mentorship, activities for implementing kindergarten in environment, cooperation with schools, which educate workers for kindergarten needs, programs of professional training for kindergarten workers, work programme for professional kindergarten councils and personnel, material and other conditions needed for implementing the educational procedure. The kindergarten usually prepares a long-term development plan together with the founder, local community. It involves planning for necessary investments, new buildings or constructions, facilities rehabilitations, heating devices, modernizations of outside surfaces and playgrounds, etc. As we can see from the data above, only 13.6% of parents believe that kindergarten management always consults them about decisions which affect their children's wellbeing and circumstantially their successfulness in different activities. 38% of parents believe that kindergarten rarely consults them and the same percentage believes that they often consult them. Such data diversity can be ascribed to the role of headmaster and their work vision. Some kindergartens exceedingly include parents in their life and work, not just by informing them, but also considering their opinions, suggestions and standpoints (see Table 2).

Table 2 Consulting in decision-making

Assertion	Never		Rarely		Often		Always		Together		Average
	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	
C 1	8	9.09	34	38.64	34	38.64	12	13.60	88	100.00	2.57
C 2	9	10.40	15	17.20	16	18.40	47	54.00	87	100.00	3.16
Average	17	9.71	49	28.00	50	28.57	59	33.71	175	100.00	2.86

Notes: C 1—Kindergarten management consult parents in decisions, which effect their child's wellbeing and successfulness in different activities; C 2—When kindergarten plans activities, which require extra payment, they always ask parents first who must agree on that.

Good three thirds of parents (76.1%) had the opportunity to learn about kindergartens annual work plan, a good half of them (54.7%) believe that it does not include their suggestions and that they are not familiar with the kindergarten's development plan in the long term (67.1%) (see Figure 2). Kindergarten's annual work plan is confirmed at the beginning of every school year by the council of public kindergarten so we are surprised by the data that only three quarters of parents knows about it. Due to these results, we can ask ourselves many questions like: How is annual work plan created? Does kindergarten management present the parents with the draft of annual work plan? Do they consider parents suggestions? What roles have the parents in council of parents, where they should consider it and in council of public kindergarten, where they confirm it?

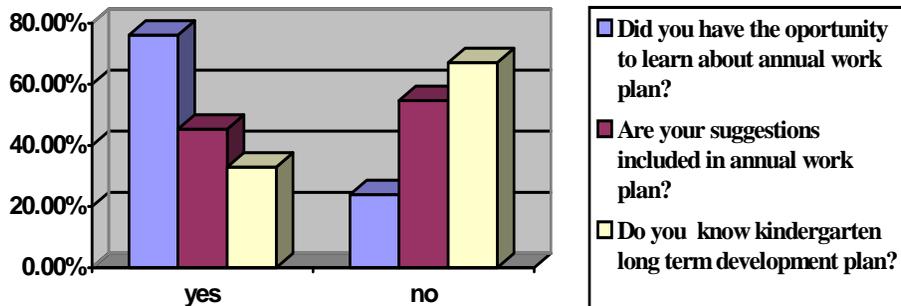


Figure 2 Planning kindergarten work

Results show that there will have to be some work done in the area of advising about parents' rights. Kindergarten management consults parents about decisions, which affect their children's wellbeing and their successfulness in achieving curriculum goals. There are some differences, of course. The kindergarten and local community management should encourage parents' involvement and interest of all involved parties for active role in preparing, implementing and evaluating kindergartens annual work plan, as well as formulating the development plan. We compared the average values of the first question assembly, where we asked parents if the kindergarten advised them about planning kindergarten life and work (average A=3.00) and third question assembly, where we asked them if kindergarten consulted them on important decisions about kindergarten life and work (C=2.86). Z-test results ($z=1.44$ and $\alpha=0.05$) show that there are no statistically important differences between the two groups. We can claim with certainty that the kindergarten management not only informs parents about preparing kindergartens life and work, but also consults them.

5.4 The possibility to affect the monitoring and assuring preschool education quality and parents incorporation in solving child care problems in local community

H4: We anticipate that parents do not have direct influence on assuring quality of implementation of life and work in kindergarten; but we anticipate that municipality has a well organized child care, but does not acquaint parents with its problems.

We asked parents how often the kindergarten asked them about the quality of their service. We were surprised by the results, because 70.5% of parents answered that kindergarten never or rarely asks them about satisfaction with their services. 35% of parents believe that kindergarten never asks them about compliance with their working hours. But the parents are very positive about preschool teachers. 95.4% of them believe that preschool teachers are often or always available to talk about their children's conducts or educational problems. When we asked them about satisfaction with preschool teachers work (using ten level scales) only 3.5% of them were not satisfied, 38.6% of them were satisfied and 59.7% of them were very satisfied.

Table 3 Parents' views on monitoring kindergarten quality and cooperation with local community

Question	Never		Rarely		Often		Always		Together		Average
	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	F	F%	
D 1	24	27.30	38	43.20	21	23.90	5	5.70	88	100.00	2.08
D 2	0	0.00	4	4.60	25	28.40	59	67.00	88	100.00	3.62
D 3	30	34.90	29	33.70	15	17.40	12	14.00	86	100.00	2.11
E 1	32	41.60	36	46.80	6	7.80	3	3.90	77	100.00	1.74
E 2	27	35.10	22	28.60	14	18.20	14	18.20	77	100.00	2.20
E 3	35	44.90	19	24.40	11	14.10	13	16.70	78	100.00	2.03
E 4	50	64.10	20	25.60	4	5.10	4	5.10	78	100.00	1.51
Average D	54	20.61	71	27.10	61	23.28	76	29.01	262	100.00	2.61
Average E	144	46.45	97	31.29	35	11.29	34	10.97	310	100.00	1.87

Notes: D 1—How often does kindergarten use questionnaires, round tables or discussions for its quality check? D 2—Are preschool teachers available when we want to learn about or submit child's conducts and problems (telephone or other)? D 3—How often does kindergarten ask about compliance of their working hours? E 1—How often does the local community inform you on child care problems? E 2—Does the local community inform you about their contribution of financial means contribute for child care? E 3—Does the local community inform you about parents' contributions for child care? E 4—Does the local community collect parents opinions about child care problem.

We assumed right that parents do not have direct influence on kindergarten life and work quality. Kindergarten management does not spend enough time evaluating its own work. A result of z-test with the first (informing parents about important kindergarten life and work information, $z=4.36$ and $\alpha=0.05$) and third question assembly (kindergarten consults parents about important kindergarten life and work decisions, $z=2.52$ and $\alpha=0.05$) show that there are statistically important differences between them. Maybe the reason is the small size of kindergarten, which does not include many alternative programs and competition. In Slovenia there has still been a shortage of kindergarten positions for children.

Parents are most critical toward the founder of preschool care centers. Our assumptions of parents' beliefs that local community organizes child care well, but does not include them enough in problem solving was therefore right again. As much as 41% of parents believe that local community never informs them of child care problems, although every local community in Slovenia has its own local newspaper and web site and many other ways to inform them. Good two thirds of parents (75%) believe that local child care is well organized, four fifths (80%) of them are not satisfied with involvement in local child care problem solving and almost 60% of them believe that local community should take more steps in determining and assuring preschool services. Determining and assuring preschool care quality should be a priority for all included in the process of preschool care and education, the founder—local community, parents—as users and all kindergarten staff—as performers of preschool care and education.

6. Conclusion

Considering research results we can conclude that kindergartens in Slovenia are on a good way towards assuring partnership relationship with parents. They are aware that communicating with parents can assure them a lot of information, which help to achieve basic tasks and that informal forms of cooperation are those allowing partnership, and offering a treasure of data for successful preschool work. Bases for active cooperation, like

homogenizing educational approaches, openness and democracy already appointed with legislation in Slovenia, are getting in foreground and allowing parents for more active participation in preparing kindergarten life and work. But why only allow? More than half of the interviewed parents still believe that kindergarten never or rarely considers their opinion when preparing the programme, which led us to believe that there are still problems with reducing preschool teachers or kindergarten autonomy. We believe that there will have to be a transfer made from feeling endangered because of parents' active roles to "that something more in care and education", which mostly considers preschool curriculum openness. Of course we cannot neglect the important headmasters and local community in assuring the kindergarten quality. It turns out that parents do not have a direct influence on quality assurance, because kindergarten management and local community do not pay attention to self evaluation. Determining and assuring quality in preschool care and education should be a common goal for all the involved, who are not only informed about the programme preparation but considered, as well.

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