

## Values and Values Education in Estonian Preschool Child Care Institutions

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### Abstract

The objective of the study was to provide an outline of the values that principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions consider important to be taught to children, and which activities, in their estimation, should be used to implement values education in child care institutions. A total of 978 respondents from all 15 Estonian counties returned the quantitative questionnaire, including 163 principals, 425 teachers, and 390 parents of preschool child care institutions. The statistical data analysis was applied to process the quantitative data obtained. The values that are more important to be taught to children, according to principals, include sense of humour as well as pride and inventiveness, whereas teachers value patience as a significantly more important value to be taught. Compared to principals, parents consider confidence and commitment more important, while, compared to teachers, parents consider it more important that kindergartens teach the importance of a good education. Values education in child care institutions takes place primarily in adherence to the relevant group's rules in the course of everyday communication and activities. Personal role models are considered to be very important in values education.

*Keywords:* values, values education, preschool child care, preschool teachers, parents, preschool principals

The UNESCO Roadmap for Implementing the Global Action Programme on Education for Sustainable Development has highlighted that “Educators and trainers are powerful agents of change for delivering the educational response to sustainable development. But for them to help usher in the transition to a sustainable society, they must first acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 20). It is also stressed that “Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) encompasses formal, non-formal and informal education and lifelong learning from early childhood to old age” (UNESCO, 2014, p. 33). The UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (2005–2014) Final Report states that “ESD starts with early childhood care and education (ECCE). Reorienting ECCE towards ESD must begin from birth, and not only through pre-primary school settings, but also in the home and wider community” (Buckler & Creech, 2014, p. 10). Therefore, it is vital to start shaping values

and attitudes in early childhood. The importance of values and values education is also underlined in an OECD (2012) report that highlights the fact that a national curriculum or similar must deal with the primary objectives of preschool education and child care, and include applied concepts and values.

Values education is also a core aspect of the programme *Values Development in Estonian Society 2009–2013*. Next to moral education, the central scope of values education is to provide support to a child's development in a manner that would allow the child to develop into an active citizen, and a creative, analytical and enterprising individual. The program supports the notion of a shift in knowledge-based educational institutions to become more values-based educational institutions (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009). Since childhood is when our values largely develop, the role of preschool child care institutions outside the home in teaching children and developing their values is crucial (Sutrop, 2010). Therefore, it is important to pay more attention to values and values education in preschool child care institutions.

Values and values education in organizing and implementing the provision of education and child care in preschool education is highlighted in the Estonian *National Curriculum for Preschool Child Care Institutions* (Government of the Republic, 2008) and its handbook (Kulderknap, 2009). Unfortunately, neither the Estonian curriculum nor its handbooks include a separate chapter for values education. There is also no indication about what values children should certainly be taught in a preschool children's institution. The goals of values and values education are mentioned under general skills and among the goals of different areas of teaching and education as well as among learning skills.

From the perspective of values education it is required that teachers take notice of their own personal values and perceive their role as values transmitters. The national program *Values Development in Estonian Society 2009–2013* points out that teachers with their behaviour serve as role models for children as well as actuators of values-related discussions and reflections. The role of principals of educational institutions is pivotal as they are largely accountable for how much importance is placed on culture-related and values education in a child care institution as an organization. Since parents are also central to values education, values education in child care institutions must be implemented in collaboration with parents (Ministry of Education and Research, 2009).

## Values

Values have been studied extensively over the past decades. Among the most well-known values researchers and definers are Rokeach, Schwartz and Inglehart. According to Rokeach (1973), values are an inherent aspect of culture and the collective perception of a desired state. Rokeach defines values as follows: "A value is an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence" (1973, p. 5). Schwartz sees values as connected to desired goals, which prompt human behaviour. Negotiating core values underlies how attitudes and behaviours are formed, and values are seen as the basis for making decisions about actions, people or events, and what is good or bad, warranted or purely random, what is worth pursuing and what is worth avoiding, given certain options (Schwartz, 1992, 2012; Schwartz et al., 2012). Schwartz

(1992) has created the theory of basic values and finds that basic values are acknowledged by all people in the world. Values differ in terms of the ultimate aims and targets they entail, or are targeted to achieve. Inglehart maintains: “A culture is a system of attitudes, values, and knowledge that is widely shared within a society and is transmitted from generation to generation” (1997, p. 15). Inglehart is the leader of the World Values Survey (WVS) and points out that “these surveys show pervasive changes in what people want out of life and what they believe. These surveys provide valuable information about a crucial component of social change: the values, beliefs and motivations of ordinary citizens” (Values Change the World, 2012).

According to the mentioned authors, values drive people’s behaviour and attitudes, and so it is important to understand values as a universal notion and how values are understood by different people. In the context of teaching values, the design of the learning environment in preschool institutions is important, as are what adults believe the content of such education should be and what they consider should have priority. Similarly, the attitudes and values transmitted by the behaviour of teachers and parents are also important.

Values are always abstractions, functioning as the criteria in the choices made by individuals and groups of individuals (Hirsjärvi & Huttunen, 1998). Individual value preferences determine to a certain degree how the surrounding environment and different situations are perceived (Kera, 2004). Values are not manifest in their pure form, as one thing or one characteristic in all domains of human activity but, rather, latently as an agglomeration of a number of patterns. A part in recognizing right and wrong is played by cultural consensus, whether such judgments are socially shared and their significance acknowledged (Tart, Sõmer, & Lilleoja, 2012).

### **Values Education**

Education has been seen as a domain where intensive efforts are put into values intermediation as well as into cultures that establish new values. The socialization of young children has also been identified as part of the role of public education. The term ‘socialization’ refers not only to the intermediation of knowledge and skills but also to the most important values and norms in society. Educational goals, whether abstract or defined, always attest to certain values (Hirsjärvi & Huttunen, 1998).

When children are born, they are immediately surrounded by values that serve as a guide in a particular culture and society. In various socialization processes, children develop a moral and ethical basis that is built through what is heard, experienced, and reflected by society (Veisson & Kuurme, 2010). Barni and colleagues (Barni, Knafo, Ben-Arieh, & Haj-Yahia, 2014) stress the importance of the surrounding culture in acquiring values. A child develops socially in his/her activity and behaviour wherein relevant objects are appraised. The appraisal is connected to human consciousness and feelings (Kera, 2004). Values do not emerge automatically; they are taught and learned from the moment a child is born (Long Bostrom, 1999). Values that are today passed on to children become most significant as seen from the perspective of future societies. All adults teach children values, whether consciously or subconsciously, making it essential that the process of values education be acknowledged and thought through (Schiller & Bryant, 2009).

Values education may be said to include everything that affects children's value judgments and attitudes. Values education is manifest in practically everything: for instance, next to school classes also in rules, events, social relationships, traditions, and the entire environment surrounding children (Schihalejev & Jung, 2012). Initially, small children learn by following orders and prohibitions as well as by imitating role models. As children grow, awareness of their own values, and discussion of their own values, as well those of others, becomes more and more important (Sutrop, 2009). Johansson and colleagues (2014) have studied values in the routine lives of day care centres, and stress the importance of discussing values and rules together with children. The paramount task of a teacher as the guide in values education is to establish an environment suitable for a child's development (Neeme, 2011). The relevance of environment is also emphasised by Sutrop, Harro-Loit and Jung (2013). They consider it important that children are able to operate in accordance with positive values. Veisson and Kuurme (2010) claim that if one desires to develop values through learning activities, such learning activities must be made as experience-rich as possible; in other words, situations must be established that help convince children of the goodness of certain values, and at the same time, teach children to place value in other people as well as themselves.

The objective of values education is to promote the shaping of values that are the foundation of an inter-functional coexistence of a happy personal life and society; when teaching values, every activity that helps children gather the necessary experience and abilities to utilise and embrace values as a code for functioning as individuals and members of society is of importance. Next to the provision of knowledge in values education, shaping characteristic features is also important, and it is necessary to support the shaping of children into active citizens, and creative, analytical and enterprising people that are not only aware of values but also customarily live by such values (Sutrop et al., 2013). Pedagogical circles are becoming increasingly convinced that values education should be carried out on the basis of a hidden curriculum. This means that values education should be transferred through all the learning and educational activities of an educational institution (Krull, 2000). The Estonian preschool child care institutions are aiming to make values education central to the preschool child care institutions' curriculum and to include values in all learning and educational activities.

In Estonia, Veisson (2009) has explored the opinions held by core stakeholders in general education schools in relation to values. Furthermore, Tulviste and Kikas (2010) examined the views of mothers, fathers and primary school teachers in relation to qualities to be developed at home and at school in Estonia. Moreover, Tulviste (2013) has comparatively studied the opinions of the mothers and fathers of students about what are the most important qualities for children to develop. The Estonian Human Development report provides an overview of values research from the last twenty years that compares Estonia with other countries. The aforementioned studies have asked parents, what values they consider important to nurture in their children. Parents want children to learn determination, stamina, obedience and independence; only a few considered religiosity important (Realo, 2013).

The authors of the current article are not familiar with any comprehensive studies conducted about what values preschool child care institution principals, teachers and parents consider important to be taught and what methods are used in values education.

### Objective of the Study and Research Questions

The objective of the study is to provide an insight into what values are considered important to be taught to children in Estonian preschool child care institutions and what activities are currently used for values education. Proceeding from the objective of the study, the authors posed the following research questions:

- Which values do principals, teachers and parents consider important to be taught to children in preschool child care institutions?
- Through which activities is values education implemented in preschool child care institutions according to principals, teachers and parents?

### Research Methodology

#### Method

The data for this research was collected via a questionnaire, which consisted of two parts. Part A included the Estonian version of Schwartz's Portrait Values Questionnaire (Schwartz et al., 2012), which helped to find out the personal values of principals, teachers, and parents from Estonian preschool child care institutions (Ülavere & Veisson, 2015). Part B included a semi-structured questionnaire about the activities of values education in preschool child care institutions. The current study provides an overview of the answers to the following questions in Part B: Which values do you consider important to be taught to children? Through which activities is values education implemented in the preschool child care institution?

As a basis for the list of values used in part B of the questionnaire, the authors selected 20 values suggested to be taught to preschool children by Schiller and Bryant (2009). Their book about values was chosen because it has been used as methodological material in Estonian preschools. Although the title of the book mentions 16 basic values that should be taught to small children, some of the values have been introduced together (e.g., persistence and dedication are mentioned in one chapter). Therefore, the questionnaire presented these two as separate values. Taking this into account, the authors included altogether 20 values in the questionnaire based on the book by Schiller and Bryant. To the aforementioned 20 values, the researchers added in turn respect for traditions, health, trust, wisdom and good education. Respect for traditions, health and trust are considered important in the Estonian *National Curriculum for Preschool Child Care Institutions* (Government of the Republic, 2008) and its handbook *Areas of Learning and Educational Activities* (Kulderknup, 2009). In the study by Veisson (2009), parents considered academic success most important, and, therefore, the authors also added wisdom and good education to the list. The list of activities used for values education in preschool child care institutions was compiled by taking into account the areas of learning and educational activities of the *National Curriculum for Preschool Child Care Institutions* (Government of the Republic, 2008), as well as activities brought out in the curriculum handbook (Kulderknup, 2009).

The question *Which values do you consider important to be taught to children?* included a list of 25 values (Kulderknup, 2009; Government of the Republic, 2008; Schiller & Bryant, 2009; Veisson, 2009, see Table 1). To each value the respondents had to give an answer on a 6-point Likert-type scale as follows: 1 – not at all important,

2 – not important, 3 – rather not important, 4 – rather important, 5 – important, 6 – very important. If they chose to do so, respondents could specify, which values in addition to the ones listed they consider important to be taught to preschool children.

For the question *Through which activities is values education implemented in the preschool child care institution?* the authors had presented 25 activities through which values education could take place in preschools (Kulderknup, 2009; Government of the Republic, 2008; see Table 2). The answers were measured on a 6-point Likert-type scale as follows: 1 – do not agree at all, 2 – do not agree, 3 – rather do not agree, 4 – rather agree, 5 – agree, 6 – fully agree. Furthermore, respondents could add their own activities to those listed in the questionnaire. All respondents, principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions received the same questionnaire.

### **Sample, Data Collection and Processing**

The questionnaire-based study was conducted in March-April 2013. The questionnaire was forwarded to 1,210 respondents (184 principals, 517 teachers, and 509 parents) at preschool child care institutions. Participation in the study was voluntary. A total of 978 respondents from 15 counties across Estonia returned the questionnaire, including 163 principals of preschool child care institutions, 425 teachers – 5% of preschool child care institution teachers in Estonia as of 2012 (Estonian Ministry of Education and Research, 2012) and 390 parents. Since almost all teachers and principals at Estonian preschool child care institutions are female, as were most respondents among parents (only 34 respondents were men), no comparative analyses were made between genders. Therefore, one can say that the current sample features predominantly the views and evaluations of women.

In compiling the sample, the authors wanted to ensure that all of the counties in Estonia would be represented, and that 5% of preschool child care institution teachers from each county would be included in the sample. The sample included both rural and urban institutions; selection was based on the collaboration of subjects, and the principle of easy access. Questionnaires were completed anonymously, the gained data was analysed and the results presented in a generalized manner.

In the process of data collection, the authors received help from volunteer assistants in all 15 counties of Estonia. They helped to distribute and collect the questionnaires in preschool child care institutions. When necessary the authors called the principals and explained the goals of the study. An introduction to the study, as well as the contact details of the researchers were also written on the first page of the questionnaire. The questionnaires were sent to preschool child care institutions on paper. In order to ensure anonymity, the respondents returned the questionnaires in a sealed envelope. All preschools received the questionnaires for principals, teachers and parents simultaneously.

The following SPSS 14.0 procedures were used in data processing: Frequencies, Descriptives, One-Way ANOVA, Post Hoc tests and Reliability Analysis. MS Excel was employed in preparing tables, verifying and compiling data.

## Results

### Values Considered Important to be Taught in Preschool Child Care Institutions

Principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions consider the following values as most important to be taught to children (see Table 1): honesty (average assessment across three groups ( $M = 5.83$ ,  $SD = 0.41$ )), health ( $M = 5.73$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), helpfulness ( $M = 5.71$ ,  $SD = 0.51$ ), cooperation ability ( $M = 5.66$ ,  $SD = 0.55$ ), tolerance ( $M = 5.60$ ,  $SD = 0.58$ ), trust ( $M = 5.59$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ), sense of duty ( $M = 5.59$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ), and independence ( $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 0.59$ ). Principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions consider the following values as less important to be taught to children: pride ( $M = 4.03$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ), principled behaviour ( $M = 4.90$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ), and loyalty ( $M = 5.14$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ). The respondents added caring, creativity and responsibility to the list of values as very important to be taught to children.

An ANOVA test (see Table 1) indicates that principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions provided a similar evaluation of the following 15 values: honesty, trust, sense of duty, independence, respect, sense of justice, good education, persistence, wisdom, sympathy, courage, patience, loyalty, principled behaviour, and pride.

Principals and teachers of preschool child care institutions provided very similar evaluation of values taught to children in kindergartens. In evaluations provided by the two groups, a post-hoc analysis revealed differences only in the case of four values. Principals consider it more important that children are taught a sense of humour, pride and inventiveness ( $p < .05$ ), while teachers place more value on teaching patience ( $p < .05$ ).

The post-hoc analysis revealed that the assessments of preschool principals and teachers, compared to those of parents, were higher in the case of the following values: empathy, cooperation ability, helpfulness, tolerance and respect for traditions ( $p < .05$ ). In teaching children, principals, in comparison to parents, place more value on sense of justice, sense of humour, pride, respect and health ( $p < .05$ ). Parents, on the other hand, compared to principals, place higher value on teaching children confidence and commitment ( $p < .05$ ). Parents, compared to teachers, consider it more important that kindergartens value good education and commitment ( $p < .05$ ).

There were also those among the respondents, who found some values not at all important, not important or rather not important. The most negative evaluations were given to the value pride. Altogether 21 respondents considered teaching children pride not at all important, 53 found it to be not important and 199 evaluated it as rather not important. Pride was interpreted differently by the respondents. Additional comments highlighted that *Pride should be limited, otherwise one becomes haughty; Pride – is one proud to be an Estonian? Being proud about ones achievements*, and *principled behaviour and pride are values that have both positive and negative sides*. Some respondents evaluated teaching children such values as principled behaviour, commitment, sense of humour, loyalty, persistence, respect for traditions, wisdom and good education as not at all important, not important or rather not important. Commentaries in the case of these values added that *Teaching sense of humour is almost impossible, one either has it or not; Respect for traditions means for me rather that I understand them* and *Loyalty for me is related to submission and is often contrary to courage and honesty*.

Table 1.  
*The Mean Values, SD, F-Value and Significance Level of Values Evaluation by Principals, Teachers and Parents*

	Total		Principals		Teachers		Parents		F	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Honesty	5.83	0.41	5.84	0.40	5.85	0.38	5.79	0.44	2.03	.133
Health	5.73	0.51	5.82	0.43	5.74	0.50	5.67	0.54	5.54	.004
Helpfulness	5.71	0.51	5.79	0.45	5.76	0.46	5.62	0.57	11.11	.000
Cooperation ability	5.66	0.55	5.73	0.54	5.69	0.53	5.60	0.56	4.73	.009
Tolerance	5.60	0.58	5.69	0.50	5.68	0.53	5.48	0.63	14.90	.000
Trust	5.59	0.59	5.62	0.60	5.61	0.56	5.56	0.61	0.91	.403
Sense of duty	5.59	0.59	5.59	0.62	5.60	0.61	5.60	0.57	0.01	.995
Independence	5.57	0.59	5.60	0.60	5.59	0.60	5.55	0.58	0.66	.515
Respect	5.57	0.61	5.66	0.53	5.58	0.62	5.53	0.62	2.40	.091
Empathy	5.55	0.63	5.64	0.59	5.62	0.60	5.42	0.67	12.48	.000
Confidence	5.50	0.66	5.40	0.69	5.47	0.68	5.56	0.61	3.89	.021
Sense of justice	5.53	0.62	5.60	0.56	5.54	0.65	5.48	0.62	2.26	.105
Good education	5.38	0.76	5.34	0.83	5.33	0.81	5.45	0.67	2.71	.067
Persistence	5.35	0.70	5.34	0.77	5.39	0.67	5.31	0.70	1.43	.239
Wisdom	5.33	0.71	5.32	0.83	5.33	0.69	5.34	0.67	0.06	.940
Sympathy	5.31	0.68	5.38	0.75	5.32	0.68	5.27	0.64	1.60	.203
Courage	5.30	0.71	5.38	0.70	5.29	0.71	5.28	0.70	1.37	.255
Commitment	5.24	0.75	5.17	0.76	5.18	0.79	5.34	0.70	5.64	.004
Patience	5.23	0.74	5.11	0.77	5.26	0.76	5.25	0.72	2.36	.095
Inventiveness	5.23	0.76	5.36	0.72	5.18	0.79	5.24	0.73	3.42	.033
Sense of humour	5.22	0.81	5.40	0.79	5.20	0.80	5.17	0.81	4.95	.007
Respect for traditions	5.19	0.75	5.36	0.71	5.29	0.72	5.02	0.77	18.09	.000
Loyalty	5.14	0.80	5.18	0.79	5.08	0.83	5.18	0.78	1.72	.180
Principled behaviour	4.90	0.87	5.01	0.91	4.87	0.89	4.90	0.84	1.64	.195
Pride	4.03	1.12	4.23	1.14	3.99	1.15	4.00	1.06	3.02	.049

Only one parent, one teacher and one principal evaluated as rather not important to teach independence, persistence, commitment, courage, trust, sense of justice and honesty. Therefore, one can say that these values are considered very important to be taught to children. Two values, tolerance and health, received evaluations of 4 to 6 from all respondents, or in other words, they were considered rather important, important or very important.

### Activities for Implementing Values Education in Preschool Child Care Institutions

As estimated by principals, teachers and parents of child care institutions, values are foremost taught to children by adhering to the group's good customs/rules – the average assessment across the three groups was found ( $M = 5.60$ ,  $SD = 0.60$ ) (see Table 2). The transmission of values to children is implemented in the course of everyday communication ( $M = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 0.62$ ) and everyday activities such as eating, dressing, etc. ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ). Personal role models in values education are considered extremely important by principals, teachers, and parents of preschool child care institutions alike ( $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ). Based on average assessments across the three groups, the following are important in values education: traditional events ( $M = 5.46$ ,  $SD = 0.64$ ), children's literature ( $M = 5.4$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ), activities in nature ( $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = 0.72$ ), the field of education and pedagogy "Me and environment" ( $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = 0.71$ ), language and speech activities ( $M = 5.42$ ,  $SD = 0.65$ ), learning games ( $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ), and joint events with the family ( $M = 5.37$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ). As estimated by principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions, values are least transmitted through media education ( $M = 4.37$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), drama lessons ( $M = 4.79$ ,  $SD = 1.01$ ) and sports activities ( $M = 5.13$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ).

All principals rather agree, agree, or fully agree (evaluations from 4 to 6) that values education takes place through music and movement activities, children's free play, everyday communication, the group's good customs/rules, and that values are also transmitted during learning trips and excursions, activities in nature, and language and speech activities. Only one principal did not agree that values education takes place through personal role models, traditional events, morning hobby groups, art activities, children's literature, joint events with the family, sports activities, outdoor activities, celebrating folk holidays, learning games, mathematical activities and everyday activities. Therefore, for principals teaching values takes place through most of the activities in the day care centre.

All teachers rather agree, agree, or fully agree (evaluations from 4 to 6) that values education happens through traditional events, children's literature, everyday communication, the group's rules and through language and speech activities. Among the teachers there were slightly more respondents who answered in the case of some activities that they do not agree at all, do not agree or rather do not agree (evaluations from 1 to 3).

In the case of parents, no activities received only evaluations from 4 to 6. All activities, through which values education could take place, also received evaluations such as do not agree at all, do not agree or rather do not agree (evaluations from 1 to 3). Only one parent rather did not agree that values education takes place through everyday activities and learning games.

Table 2.  
*The Mean Values, SD, F-Value and Significance of Activities of Value Education According to Principals, Teachers and Parents*

	Total		Principals		Teachers		Parents		F	Sig.
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Group's good customs/rules	5.60	0.60	5.72	0.54	5.69	0.52	5.45	0.66	21.38	.000
Everyday communication	5.56	0.62	5.68	0.51	5.64	0.55	5.41	0.70	19.13	.000
Everyday activities (eating, clothing themselves, etc.)	5.50	0.64	5.63	0.60	5.58	0.60	5.35	0.67	17.49	.000
Personal role model	5.50	0.64	5.69	0.53	5.63	0.57	5.27	0.68	44.58	.000
Traditional events	5.46	0.64	5.62	0.57	5.54	0.59	5.31	0.69	19.13	.000
Children's literature	5.46	0.66	5.61	0.61	5.58	0.57	5.26	0.73	30.19	.000
Activities in nature	5.42	0.72	5.56	0.58	5.53	0.66	5.24	0.79	21.54	.000
Field of education and pedagogy. Me and environment	5.42	0.71	5.60	0.60	5.56	0.61	5.17	0.79	39.62	.000
Language and speech activities	5.42	0.65	5.51	0.60	5.51	0.62	5.28	0.69	14.45	.000
Learning games	5.41	0.68	5.48	0.66	5.50	0.63	5.28	0.71	12.35	.000
Joint events with family	5.37	0.79	5.68	0.59	5.44	0.71	5.17	0.89	28.37	.000
Music and movement activities	5.32	0.71	5.44	0.66	5.35	0.73	5.23	0.71	5.64	.004
Children's free play	5.32	0.74	5.44	0.68	5.44	0.68	5.13	0.79	21.48	.000
Morning hobby groups	5.30	0.84	5.35	0.80	5.43	0.77	5.13	0.90	13.06	.000
Celebrating folk holidays	5.30	0.75	5.52	0.64	5.36	0.72	5.15	0.80	16.25	.000
Learning trips, excursions	5.28	0.77	5.39	0.63	5.34	0.74	5.17	0.83	6.99	.001
Outdoor activities	5.24	0.74	5.35	0.68	5.29	0.73	5.15	0.76	6.00	.003
Art activities	5.22	0.74	5.29	0.67	5.24	0.78	5.17	0.73	1.64	.195
Tabletop games	5.22	0.75	5.31	0.76	5.27	0.73	5.13	0.76	4.86	.008
Exhibitions of children's artworks at their kindergarten	5.18	0.84	5.25	0.86	5.19	0.81	5.13	0.85	1.26	.285
Mathematical activities	5.14	0.82	5.25	0.75	5.18	0.82	5.06	0.84	4.00	.019
Teaching folk sayings	5.13	0.87	5.41	0.76	5.26	0.82	4.86	0.90	33.09	.000
Sports activities	5.13	0.80	5.33	0.73	5.16	0.78	5.01	0.82	9.99	.000
Drama lessons	4.79	1.01	5.07	0.93	5.00	0.91	4.42	1.04	43.68	.000
Media education	4.37	1.00	4.59	1.03	4.40	1.03	4.25	0.94	6.63	.001

The ANOVA test indicates that principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions provided similar estimations of values education through art activities and exhibitions of children's artworks (see Table 2).

The post-hoc analysis revealed that the assessments of principals and teachers were very similar in terms of how values education is implemented in kindergartens. Principals and teachers provided different assessments only for joint events with the family, sports activities, media education and teaching folk sayings ( $p < .05$ ). Assessments of principals with respect to the abovementioned four activities, compared to those of teachers, were higher. Assessments of parents with respect to values education were lower ( $p < .05$ ) compared to those of teachers and principals.

### Discussion

The first aim of the current study was to find out which values principals, teachers and parents consider important to be taught to children in preschool child care institutions. The respondents consider the following values as most important to be taught to children: honesty, health, helpfulness, cooperation ability, trust, tolerance, sense of duty and independence. In addition to the provided list of values, the respondents added caring, creativity and responsibility. A study by Tulviste (2013) revealed that parents considered trustworthiness, respect for others, working hard and independence the most important to be taught to children at home. In the present questionnaire, caring, creativity and responsibility were added to the 25 listed values as important to be taught to children. By way of comparison, the results of a recent American study pointed out that the most important value to be taught to children was considered to be responsibility; very important values to be taught to children also included independence, hard work and good manners (Pew Research Center, 2014). The Estonian Human Development Report provides an outline of values studies conducted over the past 20 years in Estonia. In this framework parents were asked which attributes they would like to see fostered in their children. Between 1990 and 2008 the importance of teaching children determination and perseverance has decreased in Estonia, while the number of people who believe that children should be raised to be religious and obedient has somewhat increased. Compared to the first half of the 1990s, the number of people who consider it important to raise children to be independent has decreased almost twice. Compared to 1999, the changes are less apparent. Around ten years later the majority of people still considered it important to teach their children decisiveness and perseverance, these are followed by obedience and independence, while only a small amount (7%) of Estonia's residents believed that children should be raised to be religious (Realo, 2013).

Principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions consider pride, principled behaviour and loyalty as less important values to be taught to children. Based on the results of the study at hand, it may be maintained that according to the mean evaluations, principals, teachers and parents alike consider it important that children are taught all of the values in preschool child care institutions. On a 6-point scale, respondents assessed on average all of the above noted values as rather important, important, or very important. Therefore, it is very important that all values are discussed with children in preschool child care institutions. Furthermore, one should discuss with children what values mean for them and what values they consider important. The respondents added the following comments to values: *Actually all values are similarly relevant; All*

*of them are important and it is even better if one supports the other; All of them are very important and I try to pass them on to children in my daily work and All are important, but some more than others.*

At the same time it is interesting to note that there were also respondents who considered some values not at all important, not important or rather not important. One example is pride, which many respondents considered rather unimportant to teach to children. However, the meaning of values may vary for different people. According to the basic values theory of Schwartz (1992, 2012), some values may be very important for some people, while much less important or even unimportant for others. It should be highlighted that such values as tolerance and health were considered rather important, important or very important by all respondents in the current study.

Comparing the assessments of principals to those of teachers, it may be said that to a great extent both groups consider the same values important. Principals of preschool child care institutions place higher value on sense of humour, pride and inventiveness, while teachers, compared to principals, value patience more. Compared to principals and teachers, parents consider confidence, commitment and good education as more important. Based on the results of other studies, parents have also valued academic success more (Tulviste & Kikas, 2010; Veisson, 2009). Compared to parents, principals and teachers place higher value on teaching children tolerance, traditions, cooperation ability, helpfulness and empathy. In her study, Veisson (2009) also highlights higher assessments on the part of principals for soft values. It appears that principals and teachers value rather softer values, such as tolerance, helpfulness and empathy, among others. Parents consider it more important that the institution gives a good level of education, while soft values are seen as something secondary. Employees of educational institutions consider it probably more important that the development of the child is holistic – knowledge, skills, values and attitudes are developed simultaneously. The results of the current study can be used in educating principals and teachers of preschool child care institutions as well as parents. The results indicate that values hold an important place in learning and educational activities, and adults use various methods and activities for teaching them to children. Such values as honesty, health, helpfulness, cooperation ability, and tolerance received higher average evaluations from all respondents. At the same time it is important that adults discuss the meaning of these values with children and how they are manifested in children's behaviour in daily life. One can conclude from the results that all values should be discussed with children; for example, what is considered good or bad in society and what is right or wrong. Children can also learn various values from free play, but this may also reveal those aspects we do not approve of. Therefore, adults should definitely pay attention to values and talk to children about topics that arise from free play.

The second goal of the study was to find out, as estimated by child care institution principals, teachers and parents, what means are used to implement values education. The respondents are of the opinion that values education in preschool child care institutions is foremost implemented by adhering to group rules/good customs as well as in the course of everyday communication and activities. Johansson et al. (2014) also point out in their study that values are manifested in the everyday life of an educational institution. They also claim that in teaching values, rules are important, and add that it is most essential that teachers involve children in the rule establishing process, and discuss rules and values with children.

The respondents of the current study indicated that personal role models are very important for teaching children values. A personal role model is considered to be very important in values education. Bandura's Social Learning Theory states that "most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling" (1977, p. 22). Sanderse (2013) also emphasizes the significance of role models in teaching.

Based on the mean results of the study at hand, it may be maintained that principals, teachers and parents of Estonian preschool child care institutions are of the opinion that values education is implemented through all of the activities listed in the questionnaire. While principals agree that values education in day care centres takes place through almost all the proposed activities, among teachers there were also such respondents, who did not agree that all mentioned activities contribute to values education. In the case of parents none of the proposed activities received only positive evaluations. Only one parent rather did not agree that values education takes place through everyday activities and learning games. In the case of other activities there were more such parents, who did not agree or rather did not agree with their role in values education.

Consequently, it can be said that values education in preschool child care institutions is implemented through everyday communication, everyday activities, games, traditional events, and all of the applied learning activities. Adult role models are essential in values education. Children follow the example of the teacher as an authority in their general attitude towards life, other people and values related issues. One imitates the realistic behaviour, which is associated and assimilated with the personality of the authority figure. Therefore, in everyday life a teacher must follow the norms he/she considers important, and to give further information about or talk about with the children (Krull, 2000).

So, the general conclusions are that principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions consider the following values as most important to be taught to children: honesty, health, helpfulness, cooperation ability, tolerance, trust, sense of duty and independence. Principals consider it more important to teach children a sense of humour, pride and inventiveness, whereas teachers value teaching them patience significantly higher. Parents compared to principals considered it more important to teach children confidence and commitment. Parents compared to teachers considered it more important that kindergartens value good education. Values education in child care institutions primarily takes place by following the group's rules and in the course of everyday communication and activities. Personal role models are considered to be very important in values education. The results indicate that principals, teachers, and parents should acknowledge that teaching values to children happens through everyday communication and daily activities. All adults display their values by acting as role models, and therefore, principals, teachers and parents should become aware of what values they want to teach children through their role modelling and what communication styles and actions they should use. It is important to discuss the rules one has to follow in a group or in society with children. The rules that adults intend to use with groups of children should be formulated together with the children.

## Validity and Reliability

Reliability was measured separately for the two questions used in the current article. The question – *Which values do you consider important to be taught to children?* (values 1–25) – had a Cronbach’s Alfa of .930, and the question – *Through which activities is values education implemented in the preschool child care institution?* (activities 1–25) – had a Cronbach’s Alfa of .949.

The current study has several limitations, which should be taken into account. One of the limitations is that no pilot study took place for the questionnaire. Another limitation is that the majority of the respondents were women and to a great extent the results reflect women’s opinions and evaluations. Yet another limitation to be considered is the fact that the majority of the values in the questionnaire were psychological features of individual personality. In future the questionnaire should include different values featuring the characteristics of democratic society. In addition, the questionnaire could include work education, religious studies, and ethics, among others. To gather further evidence, a qualitative study should be carried out in order to ask preschool principals, teachers and parents to express their views on the results of the current study. It would also be interesting to find out why preschool principals, teachers and parents consider group rules as most important in teaching values. When possible, interviews should be conducted with principals, teachers and parents, as well as observations and case studies about how values are taught to children through various learning and educational activities. The results of the current study can be implemented in training teachers for preschool child care institutions.

The research at hand is to be continued. The personal values of principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions were ascertained according to Schwartz’s Portrait Values Questionnaire (Ülavere & Veisson, 2015). This article provided an insight into those values that principals, teachers and parents of preschool child care institutions consider important to be taught to children, and through which activities values education is implemented in preschool child care institutions. The researchers are now planning to analyse the connection between the personal values of principals, teachers and parents and the values education related activities in child care institutions.

In conclusion, as stated in the UNESCO Roadmap (2014), in order to guarantee the sustainable development of society, it is first necessary to acquire values and attitudes, knowledge and skills. Shaping values and attitudes starts in early childhood; therefore, values education plays a vital role in learning and educational activities at preschool child care institutions.

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