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EFFECTUATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS IN PRESCHOOL INSTITUTIONS OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO

SUMMARY

Constant and necessary need to coexist with others is present in every human being. The quality of social life organized in the frame of particular society is determined by numerous factors and mainly is gained due to planned and organized effectiveness by society itself. Such a quality of life, of any level, shows a certain social experience which somehow differs from lots of other life experiences. Such a peculiar experience of unquestionable value in early childhood is developed through organized and programmed educational process. Currently organized educational program offers different experiences depending on the philosophy of education and methodological foundations of the work. The child centered program brings varied educational experience which differs from traditional mode. Thus the aim of this research is Comparison of the effect of child centered program in interrelation with traditional educational work, in creating the opportunity of effectuating democratic spirit in preschool classes. Elaborated results of the systematic observation show that application of the child centered program increases possibilities for effectuation of democratic process in preschool classes.

Keywords: democratization, child centered program, early childhood

INTRODUCTION

Organized and programmed educational work promotes and cultivates particular social values which precede realization of social ideal, determined by necessities of the time.

With the purpose for educational process to gain in quality, in the process of the realization of general social objectives by all means together with the achievements based on psychological-pedagogical circumstances certainly the support should also be looked for in creation of the “humane and democratic spirit”

(MAEST, 2006:10) which “Promotes free development and socio-cultural emancipation of each child in any social environment he lives” (MAEST, 2006 :10)

But the reality shows that regardless the testified rationale, such a process which would bring desired changes often is not easy at all.

Inherited value system from socio-cultural circumstances; the period of social transition which brings into perspective lots of new values yet unconfirmed as well as not quite reliable future lead to that that lots of features belonging to democratic personality continue not to be nurtured enough, although they'd necessarily be supportive to an effective functioning of our society. In this case, it had been in great measure affected by family structure and it's functioning by authoritarian attitudes but meanwhile also by the reflection of educational praxis which comes with reflected experiences from monist ideological system of the past. In such cases the importance of listening and understanding of individual's or participant's needs in the group was disregarded, and the protection of the interests and the needs of a group as a whole was a priority.

Such data preoccupies us with finding the most suitable way to help new generation in the process of growth and development, in developing their authentic features which would serve to achieve celebration of a new reality of the third millennium in constructive cooperation spirit.

Effectuation of democratic process in educational environment is a moment of crucial relevance for a society which invests in the future of that society. The idea to effectuate democratic spirit in the classes and broader through the educational process is connected to several factors. Management of educational process in the class among numerous needed segments necessarily has also to deal with the right given to the children *for free expression, acting and making of decisions* in several segments of realization of educational process.

Selection and decision which at the last instance are promoted values by democratical social order, necessarily testify to be a result of free expression, and conditionally support establishment of partnership relations in the class, but it should be understood as quite a sensitive process that very often would face lots of difficulties while implemented. Confrontation with problems of such a nature is worthy to start since early childhood; eventhough children are not yet aware what are expected results from this way of expression, functioning and acting.

By believing that development of competent wounts for effectuation of democratic process is achieved by establishing concrete possibilities in the environment of the classroom, in a such a context here was challenging the comprehension on how this democratic proces proceeds in different educational environments that differ in the manner of organization and programming of educational process in the frame of preschool institutions.

Since peculiar specifics of work offer different life experiences of a child, we should accept the fact that in Republic of Kosovo kindergartens by implementation of a child centered program it is offered a new educational working experience that differs from traditional educational praxis. In this context was also

defined this studies' theme as "effectuation of democratic process in early childhood according to a child centered program" **Such defining of a problem lets us understand that the object of this study** is the research on the impact of the Child Centered Program in implementation of the democratic process in the classroom environment in Early Childhood.

The purpose and tasks of the research

By defining very clearly the object of research it seemed reasonable to also define as a purpose the Comparison of the impact of the Child Centered Program in relation to traditional educational work, in effectuating the democratic process in classroom environment, in preschool institutions.

Fulfillment of such a purpose had also determined the need which is conditionally represented as our task as well and that is:

1. *To identify differences in implementation of democratic process, in experimental group, where Child Centered Program is applied, and controlling group, where is applied educational work in traditional manner.*

Hypotheses

A comparative study anticipated for this study in fact was in the service of verification of **the basic hypotheses** dealing with the conviction that **"implementation of the child center program increases possibilities for effectuation of democratic process in preschool classes"**. Such propounded basic hypothesis is followed by secondary hypotheses;

A child centered program:

- Creates possibilities for the development of free expression and acting.
- Stimulates development of partnership among the children and between the children and adults
- Gives range for decision making

Independent variable in our research appears to be *methodology of educational work*. As dependant variable in this case do appear *positive effects in effectuation of democratic process in classroom,* between subjects involved in research, as a result of implementation of Child Centered Program.

METHOD

a) Participants

On the basis of statistical data researched by the MEST department for pre-school education, a total of 33 public kindergartens are registered in the Republic of Kosovo. A total of 166 groups operate in these kindergartens, incorporating 3440

children aged 3-6. Of these, 65 groups include children aged 5-6 which is the base population of our study, from which our representative research sample was taken.

Two groups of children make up the sample of children - the experimental group and the control group from public kindergartens in the Republic of Kosovo. The experimental group was made up of 5-6 year olds from 5 classes where the 'Step by Step' program is implemented, while the control group was also made up of 5 classes who are following a traditional education program.

Our study thus includes 10 groups of children, or 6.02 % of all the pre-school classes in kindergartens, or 15.38% of the groups working with 5-6 year olds.

Since the creation of education groups is dictated by the reality of life in the Republic of Kosovo (a small number of pre-school settings and a great demand for children wanting to attend these settings), the number of children in each group is about 25. Approximately 250 children are included in our research, representing 7.26% of all children in kindergarten and 15.38% of children aged 5-6.

With this number of groups and of children we aim to achieve the highest objectivity in research data and the highest level of precision in the results obtained from the research. In the experimental groups we choose only teachers who had finished all the training organized by the Step by Step Kosovo Education Centre (KEC), while the teachers included in the control group sample weren't trained in any child-centered program.

The sample of teachers was 20 teachers (2 teachers work in one group), 10 from the experimental and 10 from the control group.

This means that of the 332 teachers teaching in kindergartens, the group of teachers included in the research represents 6.02 % of the total number of teachers in kindergartens, or 15.38 % of teachers in classes of children aged 5-6 in the Republic of Kosovo.

In selecting the pre-school settings we were careful to have equal representation of different socio-cultural contexts. Since our kindergartens exist in cities and towns, we selected three city kindergartens and two town kindergartens.

Theoretical analysis methodology - Theoretical analysis helps and clarifies a range of approaches to the problems as well as drawing out particular conclusions on important issues linked with particular problems relevant.

Comparative method - through this comparative method we can compare data collected in the experimental group classes and the control group classes.

Statistical method - this is deployed during the research in numerical statistical processing of data gathered through appropriate techniques and instruments. Drawing out of relevant indicators in research, expressing data in tabular form, graphic representation and the quantifying of expression in values which prove the stated hypotheses is made possible through statistical methods.

Descriptive method - used in describing the number of kindergartens, children, teachers and data by which we gain a general idea of pre-school educational practice in the Republic of Kosovo context. The descriptive method is also deployed in using the results of the research, through which we arrive at a

number of generalizations which are interpreted on the basis of evaluation, comparison and discovering the shared characteristics of phenomena. Representing and commenting on these results in a descriptive way helps with drawing out conclusions and recommendations for future practice.)

b) Research techniques and instruments

Systematic observation-is central to research. It is applied during the monitoring of education work in early childhood with a purpose of collecting data for implementation of concrete actions which at the same time are indicators of democratic process effectuation in the groups where Child Centered Program and Traditional program are attained. Through this technique we aimed to precisely evidence effectuation of democratic process in controlling group and experimental one

c) Procedure

While researching the problem, the planned work fell into three phases. The first phase was the preparation phase.

In the preparation phase preliminary research was done in two different contexts where a child-centered program is being successfully implemented The implementation phase: was the longest phase of the research. It began with the organization of systematic observation.

During the organization of systematic observation, it was planned to follow teaching and learning activity. The observation of children's interpersonal communication and between children and teachers was carried out during teaching and learning activities in both groups (experimental and control).

Analyses of research results

Research results deal with the level of presentation of several indicators which we consider to be visible in effectuation of democratic process during fulfillment of educational process. With the purpose of verification of the laid hypotheses, in the *observational protocol*, we determined indicators that would give valuable and sustainable information for us.

During observations, *in experimental groups and control groups* selected within *kindergartens* of the Republic of Kosovo, it is achieved the collection of considerable data regarding working reality based on these programs. *Statistical processing* enabled to draw up concrete ascertainments on addressed problem. Presentation of data was made through the table and graph icons.

T- Test of the proportion was selected among observation results of educators, comparing proportion (relation) of the modality *Oftan* with modalities

Sometimes and *Rarely*. Verification of the tests was done by credibility of 95% and 99%, respectively $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$.

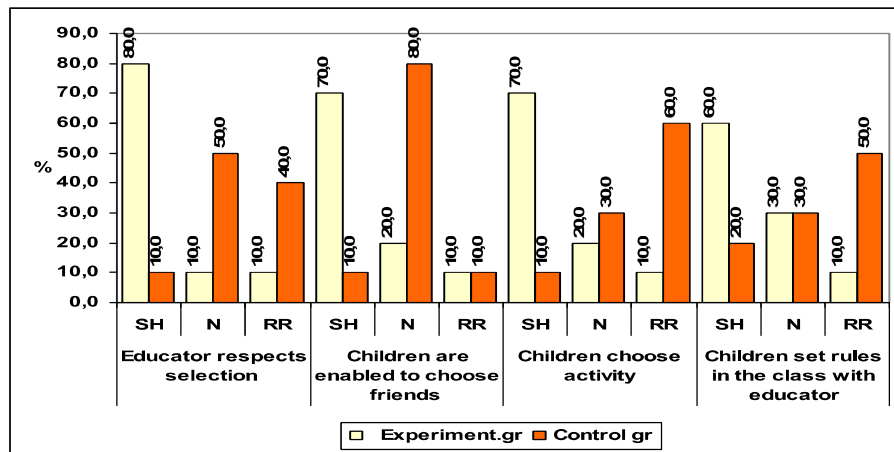
Comparing entire statistical data during realized research we ascertain that obtained values by statistical tests, during implementation of certain actions which at the same time are indicators of the effectuation of democratization process, show a visible difference between experimental group and control group.

By analyzing statistical results on each addressed problem it is especially shown that such a difference is sensitive, and it is given to comment that we are dealing with the apparent advantage in experimental groups.

Our approach attests that realized research supports basic hypothesis that: ***“implementation of child centered program increases possibilities for effectuation of democratic process in preschool classes”***

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Analyses of results on effectuation of democratic process during learning in preschool institutions makes us understand clearly differences in development of democratic spirit, depending on methodology implemented in experimental group and control one.



1. Creating opportunities for children to choose activities freely

Planning of educational work by the educator always implies readiness of the teacher to prove and guarantee effectiveness of educational work which serves to entire development of child’s personality. Thus planned activities by educators, mainly are focused in realization of the objectives of governmental curricula in which case it is aimed to “ cover the curriculum “ (Bredekamp, 1986:63) which no

doubt is a orientation bases for each educator in order to help in each segment of child's development through particular fields. But the issues of fulfillment of activities anticipated according to the fields which are of special relevance for child's development in his/her special segments often happen not to be easy and pleasant since those might not be attractive and pleasant for all children.

The fact that "children's learning, like developmen, is integrated during the early years" (Bredekamp, 1986:63) conditions the need for an organized and planned approach of educational work which will have very natural flow and manifestation. This is possible when we really are guided by the idea that "Integrated curriculum may also be facilitated by providing leraning areas in which children plan and select their activities" (Bredekamp, 1986:63) Planning of an integrated learning necessarily implies such a learning; when chosen by children it helps really natural and un-imposed development of a children. This makes us understand that the quality of working process is insured by a natural flow of fulfillment followed by pleasure and attractiveness, thus not being experienced as something imposed and never stressful.

Thus, in general, research results show that 45% of children in Preschool Institutions often do choose freely activities planned by educators while 30% of them sometimes. Lately it is seen that 25% of them are children which very rarely have the opportunity to choose their activities in the classroom.

Even though these results are facts which give room to ascertain that the situation is not favorable with the principle promoted by NAYEC nevertheless in this aspect results shown in experimental group look very hopeful when observing that in 80% of cases children often chose activities planned by educator, while in control group children chose activities only sometimes in 50 % of cases. Such a drastic difference is believed to be a result of traditional approach in giving priorities to some activities for children, which children have no chance not to choose them since they are considered very necessary, whilst in child centered learning program, by fulfillment of successful integration in learning, there cannot be discussion about activities of greater or less priority.

Thus it is reasonable that in child centered programs for early childhood learning is thought to be fulfilled through un-imposed orientation and guidance of children, by accomplishing activities chosen by children.

2. Choosing a friend with whom to play

Regardless accentuated egocentric nature of the children at the age of early childhood, it is noticed that exactly at this age" are becoming intensely interested in peers. Establishing productive, positive social and working relationships with other children close to their age provides the foundation for developing a sence of social competence "Bredekamp(1986:64) This data resulting from many effective praxis

as well as researches makes it acknowledged and promoted as “ relevant principle of practice is that teachers recognize the importance of developing positive peer group relationships and provide opportunities and support for cooperative small group projects that not only develop cognitive ability but promote peer interaction.” (Bredenkamp, 1986:64) Observance of such a valuable principle is possible to achieve at this age if during the organization of children’s work it is always left a room to choose friend with whom they will interact initially.

In control group it is observed that during planned activities most of the time all the children stay together and work quietly, each of them on their own or in the work which is lead by educator. Special cases in creation of social relations and choosing a friend happen in play yard when educator is more a custodian and doesn’t interfere much. This thus justifies gained results which are so varying between experimental and control group, since in experimental group are being developed activities supported on the bases of children’s interest, and hence children in natural way chose each other mainly because of the support of a common interest in fulfillment the activity. In experimental group there is often made possible to them to choose friends to play in 70 % of cases, sometimes it happens in 20 % of cases, whilst rarely in 10 % of cases. In control group it is often made possible to choose friends only in 10 % of cases, sometimes it happens in 80 % of cases, whilst rarely in 10 % of cases.

3. Choosing activities according to children’s interest

Choosing of activities in the frame of planned activities by educator for realization of the curricula necessarily is a step of particular relevance in child centered programs since it consists in ensuring the feeling of competence in decision making among children. The idea on the feeling of competence by choosing activities according children’s interests presents a very advanced step in educational work, thus it entails a preliminary activity of the teacher for planning based on the needs and interests of developing children. Planning of activities based on their expressed wishes and interests presupposes readiness for activity of higher intensity, for greater concentration, as well as highlighted feeling of responsibility. All this makes comprehensible consideration of the idea that a child of this age, initially, by making a democratic choice when taking responsibilities and obligations in realization of certain goals corresponding to his/her interests in the process of education actually is being helped to be introduced with the feeling of responsibility and obligation in quite constructive way. Thus here by supporting the concernment of choosing activities according to interests, it had created a possibility of negation of any feeling of refusal and irritation toward educational work.

Such an affirmative idea realized in practice shows relatively satisfying results in experimental groups, in which case it is ascertained that educators in the frame of systematic observations according to the observation protocol have much more room to understand children’s interests in the classrooms which they use while

doing individualized planning, whilst in controlled group since observation of educators is done sporadically chances for planning based on children's interest are very rare. This is understood also from our results where it is seen that in experimental group it is often made possible for them to choose their activity according to the interest in 70 % of cases, sometimes it happens in 20 % of cases whilst rarely in 10 % of cases. In control group, it is often made possible to choose activity according to their interest only in 10 % of cases, sometimes it happens in 30 % of cases, whilst rarely in 60 % of the cases.

4. Establishment of rules of conduct/behavior and action in the class

Possibility to establish rules of conduct and action at the age of early childhood is quite specific. Considering intellectual maturity of children it often seems reasonable appearance of an amount of skepticism regarding the consequence of the acceptance and respect of established rules in the classrooms, but reality shows that such encouraged initiative doesn't remain without effects.

Considering that during all-day stay in the classroom children have various activities requiring them to actively participate in different ways (individual, group, frontal) of work; using different materials; moving through the classroom while doing different activities; necessarily there could be created obvious difficulties both in discipline and work efficiency, which usually are manifested also by conflicts between the children. Thus it is more than necessary to think about democratic approach in order to help children to contribute in establishing positive discipline in the classroom.

By establishing possibilities for children to talk about "behaviors which disturb in the classroom"(Zabeli, 2008:95) and in meantime to " propose rules of behavior in the classroom"(Zabeli,2008:95) independently, because of development nature of children it doesn't mean they're expected to be fulfilled by great sustainability, but nevertheless continuous endeavors of educators do create tendency among them for trying to find solutions of conflict situations or other decision making situations due to interpersonal communication between peers and educators, and not through violent or enforcing manner.

Establishment of classroom rules by the children together with the educator, presented as another value of effectuation of democratic spirit in the classroom, in foreseen research groups offers different experiences. Results show that: while in experimental group children often do establish classroom rules together with the educator in 60 % of the cases, it happens sometimes in 30 % of the cases, while rarely in 10 % of the cases. In control group children often establish classroom rules together with the educator only in 20 % of the cases, it happens sometimes in 30 % of cases, while rarely in 50 % of cases. From this we ascertain that even though in experimental groups it is observed an encouraging initiative nevertheless in both groups there is left enough room to work in this aspect.

Ascertains from result analyses

During the research, it is ascertained that: **“implementation of child centered program increases possibilities for effectuation of the democratic process in preschool classrooms”**.

In child centered program:

- **Freedom of choosing activities** during educational process among the children and between educator and the children, as well as the right to exchange ideas, thoughts and knowledge between themselves makes them be very independent in making initiatives which bring changes in classroom environment and in the future as members of society.
- **Choosing a friend** with whom they'll learn and play during educational process makes possible for children to create a qualitative interactive relation which ensures a good foundation for successful partnership.
- **Decision making** by children in harmony with their developmental potential and their age characteristics **for fulfillment of their interests** in the frame of learning activities and creation of functional environment due to **classroom rules** enables them not only cultivation of skills of particular relevance for their development, but makes possible also creation of a positive climate for working in the classroom.

Recommendations

- To provide literature, easy riders, and professional sources for knowing the role and importance of effectuation of democratic process in educational circumstances of institutions of different levels
- To plan special programs for special courses in the frame of the University which would help professional preparedness of teaching staff and broader, on knowing possibilities of effectuation of democratic process in educational working environment.
- To organize special trainings for training of educators to efficiently fulfill child centered programs by highlighting the management of educational program in the spirit of democratization
- Child centered program to be more broadly extended in educational institutions dedicated to early childhood age.

CONCLUSION

Acceptance of democratization in any educational environment and especially in the classroom, as a microstructure in educational system, is possible only if preliminarily it's achieved to plan several work phases which in the meantime enables increase of general awareness for rationality of such functioning. Such planning is required to be multidimensional, which should necessarily be preceded by academically preparation of educators in knowledge of the Philosophy of child centered education, skills to plan and implement interactive methods, and above all also professional skills to manage the classroom with democratic spirit.

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ANNEX



Figure 1. Work in the classroom of control group
(impossibility to choose activity)

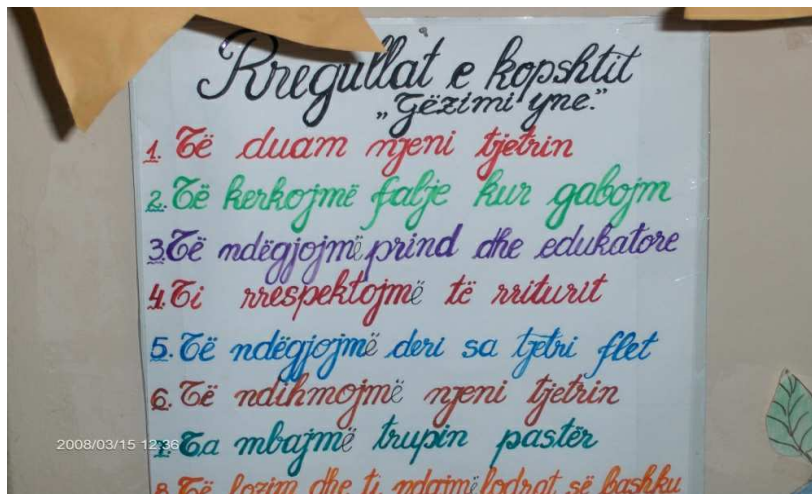


Figure 2. Rules of class in experimental group

Table.1. Result in observing the managing of educational process as possibility to effectuate the democratic process in the classroom

Modalities	Experimental Gr.		Control Gr.		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Total	10	100.0	10	100.0	20	100.0
Educator respects free choice of activities by children						
Often	8	80.0	1	10.0	9	45.0
Sometimes	1	10.0	5	50.0	6	30.0
Rarely	1	10.0	4	40.0	5	25.0
Children are enabled to choose friend with whom will play						
Often	7	70.0	1	10.0	8	40.0
Sometimes	2	20.0	8	80.0	10	50.0
Rarely	1	10.0	1	10.0	2	10.0
Children choose activity according to their interest						
Often	7	70.0	1	10.0	8	40.0
Sometimes	2	20.0	3	30.0	5	25.0
Rarely	1	10.0	6	60.0	7	35.0
Children decide about the classroom rules together with the educator						
Often	6	60.0	2	20.0	8	40.0
Sometimes	3	30.0	3	30.0	6	30.0
Rarely	1	10.0	5	50.0	6	30.0



Figure 3. Choosing a friend to play



Figure 4. Choosing activity according to the interest of a child

OSTVARENJE DEMOKRATSKOG PROCESA U PREDŠKOLSKIM INSTITUCIJAMA REPUBLIKE KOSOVO

REZIME

Konstantna i neophodna potreba za suživot s drugima je prisutna u svakom ljudskom biću. Kvaliteta socijalnog života organizirana u okviru određenog društva je determinirana brojnim faktorima i uglavnom je dobijena pomoću planirane i organizirane efektivnosti od samog društva. Takav kvalitet života, bilo kojeg nivoa, pokazuje određeno socijalno iskustvo koje se na neki način razlikuje od mnogo drugih životnih iskustava. Takvo posebno iskustvo od nesumnjive vrijednosti u ranom djetinstvu razvija se i preko organiziranog i programiranog edukativnog procesa. Sadašnji organizirani edukativni program nudi različita iskustava, ovisno od edukativne prakse i metodološke baze rada. Cilj ovog istraživanja je: poređenje efekata programa usmjeren na dijete u usporedbi s tradicionalnim obrazovnim programima, u stvaranju mogućnosti ostvarivanja demokratskog duha u predškolskoj nastavi. Elaborirani rezultati sistematskog posmatranja pokazuju da realizacija programa usmjerenih na dijete povećava mogućnost za ostvarenje demokratskog procesa u predškolskoj nastavi.

Ključne riječi: demokratizacija, efekti programa usmjerenih na dijete, rano djetinstvo.