

# INTERCULTURALISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF PEDAGOGICS AND INTEGRATION IN PRESCHOOL WITH EMPHASIS ON COOPERATION WITH PARENTS

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## **Abstract**

*The central point of the article is the study of interculturalism in preschool. The latter is given special attention, as it is the framework within which the authors present the importance of preschool teacher's approach to intercultural communication, both with children and with parents. The empirical part is the presentation of the results of a study about preschool teachers' preparation for a conversation with parents of children who are part of a minority. The authors find that before introducing a child with a different cultural or national background to the group, the majority of preschool teachers talked to the group about the culture, religion, traditions and the mother tongue of the child, so they knew how to face someone different and were ready for a conversation with the parents of that child.*

**Keywords:** *institutional preschool education, interaction with parents, multiculturalism, preschool pedagogics.*

## **Introduction**

We live in times of many migrations, and consequently, there is a lot of discussion about interculturalism and related concepts like multiculturalism or internationalism. Regardless of the term used, behind all of them, there is the effort to coexist and co-create in a common space, regardless of the cultural differences of individuals. It is therefore not surprising that we are talking about the concept of interculturalism in the field of pedagogy and education, where many experts deal with theoretical definitions and possible applications of interculturalism (e.g. Bedeković, 2015; Kirova, 2010; Sedmak and Ženko, 2010; Skubic Ermenc, 2006; Vižintin, 2014). Different authors use different terms for denoting pedagogies in multicultural environments. So we know intercultural pedagogy, some prefer using terms such as multicultural and international or intercultural, more recently also anti-racist pedagogy (Zidarić, 1994). “In our country the position has somehow prevailed the most appropriate term is intercultural that is also used in various documents. Every term has its history, often it denotes a stage in the development of the whole theory” (Mujkanović, 2010, p. 196). The talk is about new migration realities that have led us to multiculturalism becoming a social reality, a fact that indicates the presence and coexistence of different cultures within a particular society (Medica, 2010).

## **The definition of interculturalism and multiculturalism from the perspective of pedagogics**

Interculturalism or multiculturalism are concepts that denote the preservation of original cultures, religious practices, languages and individual ethnic groups in themselves and their equivalence in a certain area (Sedmak and Ženko, 2010). Interculturalism already appeared approximately between 1500 and 1200 BC as a result of economic, commercial and political contacts between individual communities, ethnic groups or political entities (Lazar, 2010). Although today there is much talk about interculturalism and intercultural dialogue, some authors report that a complete overcoming of the dominance of one culture in favour of interculturalism cannot be achieved in the broadest sense of the word. The modern society is essentially a society of boundaries, both physical and symbolic, both real and imaginary. The overall tendency to maintain the boundaries between cultures, spaces and people is being criticized, while at the same time, there is a call for the development of interculturalism in the field of all sciences and the integration of seemingly incoherent and in the past highly intertwined cultures (Sedmak and Ženko, 2010).

Multiculturalism or multicultural education is oriented into attempting to change the thinking of the individual in the direction of breaking down prejudices, fixed ideas, orientation into oneself and one's own culture, idealization and admiration of only certain cultures with having mutual reconciliation between cultures in view. Thus it requires from us to abolish the classification along the vertical with respect to political power, wealth, race and gender and to begin valuing a new way, along the horizontal, allowing for equal opportunities for all, while simultaneously also for diversity and variegation (Shaughnessy, Cordova, Mohammed, and

Kang, 1998). Even though multiculturalism promotes diversity, respect for the different, and equivalence, typically sometimes even a small expression of the belief of the importance of otherness and diversity of individuals will trigger socio-economic changes (Shiffman, 2005).

Intercultural society is equally a community of individuals with different national and cultural roots, yet these communities live in harmony, without created prejudices and contempt for others. Their lives are interwoven and mutually complementing. Respect rules among them for different political views, norms, and values. They do not have the feeling of being threatened by any other communities, so they do not feel the need to conceal their identity (Motik and Veljić, 2007). Interculturalism relates to mutual respect and dialogue. The ego, the principle where one person and her/his view of the world, and his/her experience of it is set in the centre, is not present. In intercultural society otherness is perceived, accepted, and hosted. Authentic existence is not found in one's own individuality or in a closed group, but in a mutual reciprocal relationship (Milan, 2006).

With multicultural education the goals of multiculturalism can be achieved. One of the basic goals is also for individuals to learn to identify the differences between their own culture and other cultures and to try to understand and accept these differences while identifying with their own culture. To be able to meet the goals of interculturalism, however, contacts between people and communication between representatives of different cultures are necessary. The term that points out the significance of interaction, cooperation, communication between members of different cultures with its very structure already, is *interculturalism* (ibid.) (Zidarić, 1994).

Interculturalism has teamed up with the demands for abolishment of Eurocentrism and for the elimination of all forms of discrimination. The goal of intercultural pedagogy has become to live and to act in diversity (Mujkanović, 2010). Interculturalism and intercultural pedagogy need therefore first to be thought of in the situations where people from different cultural environments, people who speak different languages, cherish different traditions, and the similar, are gathered in a place. In this individuals are expected to develop new attitudes, skills and behaviours, through which they would consciously or unconsciously react to individual features of different cultures encountered and thus, according to Fennes and Hapgood (1997), develop *intercultural competence*.

## **Implementation of interculturalism in preschool institutions**

» Interculturalism in pedagogy is a pedagogical-didactic principle that directs the planning, implementation and evaluation of education to support the changing of existing hierarchical relationships between the dominant ethnic / cultural majority and subordinate minority ethnic / cultural groups in the education system « (Skubic Ermenc, 2006). Multicultural or intercultural education is much more than just including foreigners into our educational and social system. It requires from us to show our moral characteristics towards other persons in the real meaning of the word. In educating a child the teacher must be aware the child does not only live in certain set social frameworks, but goes a step further. Only in this way can we educate a community and live between different cultures (Milan, 2006). With multiculturalism or interculturalism in preschool stimulating intercultural communication and raising awareness of its worth is necessary. We must know this is a process that takes time. Through the activities that are important for a certain group we approach the goal with adequate contents offered in the annual development plan, the daily, weekly or monthly plans of work. Here also different situations in life are present without which we would not be able to approach the goal. To be able to implement the goals of multiculturalism or interculturalism well, it is necessary for the

preschool teacher to learn about different cultures and to strive toward all cultures and the individuals who carry different identities being in interaction (Motik and Veljić, 2007).

We can define four basic components of the concept of interculturalism:

- Interculturalism is a pedagogical principle that encourages the development of a more equal relation to other cultures / ethnicities.
- Interculturalism is a pedagogical principle that encourages the view of a different as an equivalent and not as deficient.
- Interculturalism is a pedagogical principle that encourages such a conduct of the pedagogical process that enables a more realistic success of minority groups.
- Interculturalism is a pedagogical principle that encourages the development of community values (Skubic Ermenc, 2006).

M. A. Vižintin (2014) has further extended the findings of K. Skubic Ermenc and has defined a new model of intercultural education with the aim of exceeding the focus only on individual aspects and to develop a more comprehensive view of including children from other cultural backgrounds. In her model, she focuses on the participation of the whole environment of the child – teachers, children and parents of immigrants, other children and parents, local population, local organizations, already existing opportunities within the school system and legislation. This model of intercultural education and training contains seven components:

- interculturalism as a pedagogical-didactic principle,
- system support for the integration of immigrant children,
- teachers with an evolving intercultural capacity,
- a developing awareness of a multicultural society in all school subjects,
- development of intercultural dialogue at school,
- cooperation of the school with (parents) immigrants,
- cooperation of the school with the local community.

### **The role of preschool teacher**

Education is hard work. Children must constantly check their conduct and attitudes, compare with other children and look for solutions that suit them the best. This exactly is why the authority of the teacher is necessary. When the teacher possesses authority children can identify with her/him and find a model. With their authority teachers can break all the prejudices that appear (Zalokar Divjak, 1998). Competent educators are aware how important interculturalism is in the education of preschool children. It means in planning their activities they must also take account of the children who come from different environments or the children that have a culture different from the majority of the children. Thus they will not only take care of the integral development of these children, but also for the feeling of empathy and establishing dialogue without prejudice with all the children in the group.

In 2003 Resman wrote the intercultural curriculum does not mean something about what is special in the life of minorities is added to the traditional curriculum, but that the specialties of cultural and social environment are included in all the areas of education and thus the fundamental values of life are set (Grobelšek, 2010). Preschool teachers and teacher assistants should therefore need to have sufficient knowledge in multicultural and intercultural pedagogy. Here also the knowledge belongs that allows understanding the codes and the problems that arise from a society that contains multiple cultures. They should have the competences for the

understanding of the migration processes within Slovenia and wider. They should be able to teach the children to perceive the proper and the foreign. They should possess the knowledge how to help a child speaking a foreign language. Good educational professionals should have the knowledge for encouraging intercultural communication; they should eliminate prejudice and adequately cooperate with immigrant parents (Motik and Veljić, 2007). In their work they should not just consider their own culture, but the culture of all the children in the group. Integration of multiculturalism throughout the curriculum helps both the children and the educators critically reflect on their different prejudices and otherness (Golnick and Chinn, 2005). The teacher must create the conditions for all the children to feel the elements of their culture matter. This is why it is important to inform about all the family and cultural circumstances of the children in the group. The type of behaviour that is functional at home might not be acceptable in preschool and vice versa. The role of the teacher is to let the child know what is acceptable in what place, and thus the child learns how to behave in a certain situation (Hansen, Kaufmann, and Saifer, 2001).

To make the application of intercultural education possible, it is necessary to introduce training for professionals that would enable the fulfilment of all components of the concept of interculturalism as defined by M. A. Vižintin (2014, p. 74). However, inside an educational institution, it is necessary to involve all employees - managers, pedagogues, psychologists, educators, assistants, who also need to be trained in intercultural education. It is therefore very important that every professional working with immigrant children goes through further training which should include learning about the culture of an immigrant child, the language and art, the skills to produce appropriate didactic materials and abilities to integrate specific content related to the culture immigrant children, as well as to cooperate with their families (Janta and Harte, 2016). In this training, every pedagogical worker goes through a process of transformation, which goes from the role of a mediator in the transfer of national stereotypes, through the role of a mentor in the acceptance of elements of other cultures, to a pedagogical worker as a facilitator of intercultural education and training (Bedecković, 2015).

### **Cooperation with parents**

In the cooperation with parents, educators must build a trusting relationship with parents of children. This means that the educator's task is also to get acquainted with the culture of the children and their situation in order to be able to adequately assist in the integration process. It is important that the educator remembers the names of the parents or important family members, to respect the parents, informs them about the progress of the child, actively listens. It is also recommended to visit them at their home and for parents to attend all organized meetings (Macura-Milanović, 2006). Every cooperation includes exchange of views, attitudes, and proposals. It is necessary to raise the awareness of the children and of their parents about the importance of open dialogue. If this opportunity is not exploited in preschools and in families, social bonds for tolerant relation remain fragile. Every misunderstanding can turn into intolerance towards the different. The individual who has experienced sufficient amounts of dialogue in different social environments will know how to react in different situations in life. The beginning of every successful cooperation should always be relaxed conversation (Motik and Veljić, 2007).

Cooperation with parents is one of the most important forms of work that must be developed by educational institutions and their professionals. Cooperation with parents cannot be left over to each individual educator; the educational institution must include the development of strategies and forms of cooperation with the parents of immigrant children into their work

programme. (Strategija vključevanja otrok, učencev in dijakov migrantov v sistem vzgoje in izobraževanja v Republiki Sloveniji, 2007). Namely, within every family there are key risk factors that can negatively affect the process of integration of children in preschool institutions: a lower parental education, less interest of parents in supporting the education of their children, the parents' wish that children finish school as soon as possible, material poverty, poor family relationships (especially relationships between parents and children), lack of social control of children, frequent change of occupation and the absence of parents (Bynner, 2001). On the other hand, a pedagogical worker that involves the family in his work, rather than just the cultural background of the family can have even a greater influence on children (Epstein, 1995).

Adequate communication is crucial, where it is important misunderstanding does not occur. The educator must be open in the conversation, which means, he/she also tries to see the things from the other perspective. In communicating the educator must respect the partner, listen to her/him actively and attentively, understand her/him, and avoid assumptions. Her/his speech must be clear and concise (Hansen, Kaufmann, and Saifer, 2001). Education professionals must be aware immigrant parents have different experiences, the past, and a different image about life. This will help them establish contact with the parents. Educators must acquire as much information about the world the child comes from (the data about the country, culture, the status of wife, mother, and daughter, the education system) as possible. They must determine the expectations of the parents and of the children about Slovenia and the life in it. They must get answers to the question how they cope with otherness. The preschool teacher must also reflect on how immigrant parents contribute to the well being of all individuals in the group. In the case of refugees it is important to establish contact with the persons who know the problems more widely (Motik and Veljić, 2007). Lack of adequate professional knowledge and skills of education professionals for quality sustainable cooperation with migrant parents includes:

- Absence of adequate recommendation, guidelines for the work with migrant parents (strategies for communication with migrant parents, strategies for integrating migrant parents into preschool and school environment, etc.);
- No adequate training and materials with examples of work with migrant parents;
- Too modest knowledge of the elements of the language and the culture of the migrants with the help of which they would avoid possible misunderstandings or more easily establish contact with the parents and encourage them for cooperation;
- Too modest knowledge and skills of educational professionals for encouraging intercultural communication between Slovenian children's parents and the migrant parents;
- No adequate financial support for the help in communication with migrant parents (lack of financial means for interpreters, for the preparation of bilingual invitations, instruction, messages, etc.) (Strategija vključevanja otrok, učencev in dijakov migrantov v sistem vzgoje in izobraževanja v Republiki Sloveniji, 2007, str. 5)

In spite of the problems that occur with the work in preschool the teachers can do a lot themselves. To be able to make their work easier and to improve their work strategies, it is important they educate themselves about the national and cultural background of the children and the parents, as in this way they will be able to better understand their attitudes. It is necessary to find as much literature, also in foreign languages, about integrating migrant children's parents into the work of the preschool. With sufficient knowledge communication will be facilitated and also the attitude of parents will be respectful and trusting. Attention must also be paid to mimics, gestures, the way of shaking hands and eye contact. With such acts already, the parents will feel accepted with us, relaxed, and equal to the parents who are the

holders of the mainstream part of the culture, and they will be ready to establish a quality relationship of trust and to participate (Lepičnik Vodopivec in Hmelak, 2017).

## The purpose of the empirical research

The purpose of the present empirical research is to explore how preschool teachers and teacher assistants cope with multiculturalism or interculturalism in the education process and how the preparation for cooperation with the parents of children of another national origin runs. In the said aspects we will be interested in the existence of differences according to the age, work experience and workplace.

## Methodology

The causal non-experimental method and the descriptive method of educational research have been applied.

The empirical research was carried out on the non-random convenience sample of preschool teachers and preschool teacher assistants in the preschool of the town of Velenje. In the research, a case study, 85 preschool teachers and their assistants took part.

The data were gathered with a survey questionnaire and processed with the support of the SPSS package. In processing the data the descriptively expressed assessment scales were weighed in the following way: perfectly true with the value 3, partly true with the value 2, and not true with the value 1. With these values the arithmetic means were calculated for each statement separately. Individual statements were ranked on the basis of the corresponding arithmetic means and compared to each other. For the analysis of differences by individual statement according to the workplace of the employees the Mann-Whitney U-test was applied, and the Kruskal-Wallis test for the analysis of differences by individual statement according to the age of the surveyees and their work experience.

## Results and discussion

As educators we must be aware how important cooperation with parents is. We must create trust, as in this way also the children will trust us. But first of all we must reflect upon a few issues ourselves. We must know how we ourselves cope with otherness and whether we respect it, as it will be difficult to win the trust of parents and children, if we have prejudices.

Table 1.

The numbers (f) and structural percentage (f %) of the surveyees by the response to the question: "In what way did you prepare for the conversation with the parents of children with a different background?" ranked by average assessment score.

Preparation for the conversation with the parents of children with a different background	Perfectly true (3)	Partly true (2)	Not true (1)	Total	Average score
f	31	46	8	85	2.27

I answered to myself the question how I myself cope with otherness.	f %	36.5	54.1	9.4	100	
I reflected upon how children's parents can contribute to the well being of individuals in the group.	f %	31 36.5	40 47.1	14 16.5	85 100	<b>2.20</b>
I determined the expectations of the parents and the children in the country of origin and in Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration, in relation to all areas of adaptation.	f %	28 32.9	40 47.1	17 20	85 100	<b>2.13</b>
I acquired information about the world the child has come from.	f %	22 25.9	48 56.5	15 17.6	85 100	<b>2.08</b>

On the basis of the results we see the highest average score (2.27) was determined with the statement the surveyees answered to themselves the question how they cope with otherness themselves, which is extremely important, as we must clear with ourselves the issues, then we can act in this direction and educate for tolerance. With the average score 2.20 the statement follows that the surveyees reflected upon how the children's parents can contribute to the well being of individuals in the group; they determined the expectations of the parents and the children in the country of origin and in Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration, in relation to all areas of adaptation (2.13); rank as the last the statement comes the surveyees have acquired information about the world the child comes from (2.08).

Let us put the largest structural percentages with individual statements under lens. With the claim the surveyees have acquired information about the world the child comes from, the largest share, namely 56.5 % pertains to the response partly true. 54.1 % of the surveyees ticked off the response partly true with the statement how they themselves cope with otherness. Also with the next statement, namely that they reflected upon the parents can contribute to the well being of individuals in the group, the response partly true received the largest proportion of votes (47.1 %), and with the statement the teachers and their assistants determined the expectations of the parents and the children in the country of origin and in Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration, in relation to all areas of adaptation the largest proportion (47.1 %) is again registered with the response partly true.

We estimate the outcome of the findings is not very encouraging. Looking at the numbers, we see only 36.5 % of the surveyees ticked off perfectly true with the statement they have answered themselves to the question how they cope with otherness. As educational professionals they should have cleared up this idea during the initial study. Preschool teachers should also acquire information about the country the child comes from, about its habits, culture and tradition, as in this way it would be easier for them to understand the child's habits, thoughts and emotions. Manifesting interest in their culture would also allow them to establish a more genuine contact with the child's parents. The parents would thus have a greater feeling of equality.

Educators and parents cooperate primarily in order to qualitatively improve the child's benefits in the institutional offer. Cooperation enables us to truly achieve what is best for the child and therefore, great importance is attributed to this topic in educational institutions (Jensen in Jensen, 2011). Educational professionals must be aware immigrant parents have different experiences, past, and a different idea about life. This will help them establish contacts with parents (Motik and Veljić, 2007).



Table 2.

The result of Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in the statements  $S_1$  to  $S_4$  according to the age of the surveyees

Preparation for the conversation with the parents of children with a different background	Age (years)	$\bar{R}$	$\chi^2$	g	P
I acquired information about the world the child has come from.	Up to 30	32.80	9.594	3	0.022
	31 to 40	40.45			
	41 to 50	49.67			
	51 or more	50.92			
I answered to myself the question how I myself cope with otherness.	Up to 30	34.67	8.249	3	0.041
	31 to 40	38.84			
	41 to 50	50.38			
	51 or more	49.74			
I reflected upon how children's parents can contribute to the well being of individuals in the group.	Up to 30	35.54	3.708	3	0.295
	31 to 40	47.80			
	41 to 50	44.17			
	51 or more	45.18			
I determined the expectations of the parents and the children in the country of origin and in Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration, in relation to all areas of adaptation.	Up to 30	33.74	6.288	3	0.098
	31 to 40	50.36			
	41 to 50	43.40			
	51 or more	45.24			

Statistically significant difference shows with the claims the surveyees have acquired information about the world the child comes from ( $P = 0.022$ ) and that they answered themselves the question how they cope with otherness ( $P = 0.041$ ). Here the null hypothesis is rejected. Tendency shows with the claim the teachers and their assistants determined the parents' expectations about the country of origin and about Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration related to all areas of adaptation ( $P = 0.098$ ).

Let us compare the two claims with which the statistical difference shows. The highest average score of the claim the surveyees have acquired information about the world the child comes from (50.92) shows with 51 and more years old surveyees, and in the age group of 41 to 50 years old surveyees with the claim the teachers and their assistants answered themselves the question how they cope with otherness (50.38). It is evident the highest average scores were achieved in the groups of more than 40 years old surveyees.

Table 3.

The outcome of Kruskal-Wallis test of differences in statements  $S_1$  to  $S_4$  according to work experience of surveyees

Preparation for the conversation with the parents of children with a different background	Work experience (years)	$\bar{R}$	$\chi^2$	g	P
I acquired information about the world the child has come from.	Up to 5	34.09	6.697	4	0.153
	6 to 10	43.00			
	11 to 20	42.18			
	21 to 30	46.97			
	More than 30	51.36			
I answered to myself the question how I myself cope with otherness.	Up to 5	34.82	5.789	4	0.215
	6 to 10	39.19			
	11 to 20	46.44			
	21 to 30	49.47			
	More than 30	47.11			
	Up to 5	41.27	1.250	4	0.870

I reflected upon how children's parents can contribute to the well being of individuals in the group.	6 to 10	39.85	3.124	4	0.537
	11 to 20	41.26			
	21 to 30	45.10			
	More than 30	47.28			
I determined the expectations of the parents and the children in the country of origin and in Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration, in relation to all areas of adaptation.	Up to 5	36.16			
	6 to 10	41.81			
	11 to 20	46.15			
	21 to 30	47.30			
	More than 30	45.67			

There are no statistical differences, so the null hypothesis can be retained with all the claims. With the claim the teachers and their assistants acquired information about the world the child comes from the highest score (51.36) was registered with the group of the surveyees with 30 or more years of work experience. With the claim how they cope with otherness the highest average score (47.11) was registered with the surveyees with over 30 years work experience. The third in rank (47.28) is the claim the surveyees reflected upon how the children's parents can contribute to the well being of individuals in the group of those with more than 30 years of work experience. As the last (47.30) the claim comes the teachers and their assistants determined the expectations of the parents and the children in the country of origin and in Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration, in relation to all areas of adaptation registered in the group of surveyees with 21 to 30 years of work experience.

It is evident from the results the average scores of assessment were the highest in the groups of the surveyees with more than 20 years of work experience.

Table 4.

The outcomes of Mann-Whitney U-test of differences with the statements  $S_1$  to  $S_4$  according to the surveyees' workplace

<b>Preparation for the conversation with the parents of children with a different background</b>	<b>Workplace</b>	<b><math>\bar{R}</math></b>	<b>U</b>	<b>P</b>
I acquired information about the world the child has come from.	Teacher assistant	38.74	-1.936	0.053
	Preschool teacher	48.03		
I answered to myself the question how I myself cope with otherness.	Teacher assistant	37.43	-2.536	0.011
	Preschool teacher	49.56		
I reflected upon how children's parents can contribute to the well being of individuals in the group.	Teacher assistant	43.11	-.048	0.962
	Preschool teacher	42.87		
I determined the expectations of the parents and the children in the country of origin and in Slovenia, including with all the options and needs for integration, in relation to all areas of adaptation.	Teacher assistant	42.63	-.162	0.871
	Preschool teacher	43.33		

A tendency shows with the claim the surveyees acquired information about the world the child comes from ( $P = 0.053$ ) and a statistically significant difference with the claim the surveyees answered themselves the question how they cope with otherness ( $P = 0.011$ ).

The average score of the claim the surveyees acquired information about the world the child comes from is 48.03 with preschool teachers and 38.74 with preschool teacher assistants. With the claim they answered themselves the question how they cope with otherness the highest

average score was in the group of preschool teachers, 49.56, and 37.43 in the group of teacher assistants. As the third the claim has been ranked the surveyees reflected upon how children's parent can contribute to the well being of the children in the group, where, surprisingly, the higher average score (43.11) was registered in the group of preschool teacher assistants. The preschool teachers' score in this assessment is 42.87. As the last let us take a look at the claim the teachers and their assistants determined the expectations of the parents about the country of origin and about Slovenia including with all the options and needs for integration related to all areas of adaptation, where the average assessment of the claim is 43.33 with teachers and 42.63 with their assistants.

Through our study we have found prior to the arrival of a child of a different cultural or national origin into the group most of the preschool teachers acquired complete or only partial information about the culture, religion, traditions, and mother tongue of the child; that they clarified with themselves how they cope with otherness; and that they had prepared for the conversation with the child's parents. With the claim they acquired information about the world the child comes from 56.5 % of the surveyed persons selected the response partly true, and 25.9 % the response perfectly true. Encouraging are the facts that indicate the surveyees do not ignore otherness, which is extremely important in their work.

In recent decades, preschool institutions have made a concrete effort to emphasize the importance of quality cooperation and partnership between professional workers of preschool institutions and parents (Lepičnik Vodopivec, 2010). Although the quality of a preschool institution is not precisely defined, because it depends on who defines it, we can speak of a quality kindergarten when adequate objective conditions and a quality educational process are guaranteed - the frequency and quality of social interactions between children, between children and adults, and among adults (Marjanovič Umek and Fekonja Peklaj (2008). Finally, the cooperation between professionals in a preschool institution and parents is one of the areas that also adequately contributes to complementing family education (Brejc and Weissbacher, 2015). However, since cooperation is a result of trust, professionals in preschool institutions, in all directions, endeavour to create an atmosphere in which they can regularly, unforcedly and unreservedly talk, both with children and their parents, about problems and difficulties as well as successes they are experiencing and have experienced (Bezenšek, 2000).

## **Conclusion**

Intercultural education generally deals with culture, so it is important the cultures in contact are defined, because often they are in conflict with each other. This refers to the relation between the culture of immigrants and the mainstream culture that is often understood as being superior. The way of intercultural education is the way of communication between "our culture" and "your culture", as the cultures of minorities are often looked at from the perspective of stereotypes and simplifications. It is therefore extremely important children have opportunities to learn about cultures, both about their own culture and the cultures of others. By learning about a minority culture we demonstrate its members their culture is appreciated and considered equal to the culture of the majority. In addition to this, learning different cultures strengthens inter-ethnic understanding, acceptance, openness to creative cooperation, which is indispensable for a school child in a multicultural society.

In parallel intercultural pedagogy particularly stresses the importance of education and continuous training of preschool teachers and teacher assistants for intercultural education. They need to know the theory and be able to perform comprehensive educational analysis, as

this helps them understand some of the specifics of immigrant children and their parents. They must also be ready to consider their attitudes, any prejudices and discriminatory practices.

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