УНИВЕРЗИТЕТ У БЕОГРАДУ
УЧИТЕЉСКИ ФАКУЛТЕТ

Међународни научни скуп

ПРОГРАМСКЕ (РЕ)ФОРМЕ У ОБРАЗОВАЊУ И ВАСПИТАЊУ – ИЗАЗОВИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ

Универзитет у Београду–Учитељски факултет

Књига резимеа

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International Scientific Conference

CURRICULAR (RE)FORMS IN EDUCATION – CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES

University of Belgrade –Teacher Education Faculty

Book of Abstracts

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САДРЖАЈ / CONTENT

ПЛЕНАРНА САОПШТЕЊА

PLENARY LECTURES

Милош М. Ковачевић
О (НЕ)КВАЛИТЕТНИМ РЕШЕЊИМА У НОВОМ
НАСТАВНОМ ПЛАНУ И ПРОГРАМУ ЗА СРПСКИ ЈЕЗИК
У 5. И 6. РАЗРЕДУ ОСНОВНЕ ШКОЛЕ 24

Miloš M. Kovačević
ON (NON)QUALITY SOLUTIONS IN THE NEW SERBIAN LANGUAGE
CURRICULA FOR THE 5th AND 6th GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL . . .25

Игор Саксида
НЕ *ИЛИ ЈЕДНО – ИЛИ ДРУГО*, ВЕЋ *И ЈЕДНО И ДРУГО*:
НАСТАВА КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ У ЗАМЦИ ЛАЖНИХ СУПРОТНОСТИ . .26

Igor Saksida
NOT *EITHER-OR*, BUT *AND*:
LITERATURE CLASSES IN THE GRIP OF FALSE OPPOSITIONS 27

Александар Јерков
УЧЕЊЕ НЕЗНАЊА И МЕНТАЛНА КОРУПЦИЈА 30

Aleksandar Jerkov
LEARNING IGNORANCE AND MENTAL CORRUPTION 31

Jasna Kudek Mirošević
RAZVOJ KOMPETENCIJA U KURIKULARNOM PRISTUPU
USMJERENOM NA DIJETE 32

Jasna Kudek Mirošević
COMPETENCE DEVELOPMENT IN A CHILD-DIRECTED
CURRICULAR APROACH 33

ИЗАЗОВИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ ПРОГРАМСКИХ (РЕ)ФОРМИ У НАСТАВИ СРПСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА И ЈЕЗИЧКЕ КУЛТУРЕ

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF CURRICULAR (RE)FORMS IN SERBIAN LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE CULTURE TEACHING

Бојана Милосављевић
РЕЧНИЦИ И ЊИХОВА СВРХА У ОБРАЗОВАЊУ –
ИЗ УГЛА БУДУЋИХ УЧИТЕЉА 36

Bojana Milosavljević
DICTIONARIES AND THEIR PURPOSE IN EDUCATION – FROM THE
PERSPECTIVE OF THE PRE-SERVICE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS . .37

Марта Шиманска
КОНЦЕПТ РАЗВИЈАЊА УЧЕНИЧКОГ МАТЕРЊЕГ ЈЕЗИКА
У НАСТАВНОМ ПЛАНУ И ПРОГРАМУ РЕПУБЛИКЕ ПОЉСКЕ
ИЗ 2016. ГОДИНЕ 38

Marta Szymańska
THE CONCEPT OF DEVELOPING STUDENTS' MOTHER TONGUE
IN THE POLISH CORE CURRICULUM FROM 2016 39

Горан Зељић
ЛИНГВОМЕТОДИЧКИ ТЕКСТ У НАСТАВИ МОРФОЛОГИЈЕ
СРПСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА НА МЛАЂЕМ ШКОЛСКОМ УЗРАСТУ 40

Goran Zeljić
LINGUAL-METHODOLOGICAL TEXT IN TEACHING MORPHOLOGY
OF SERBIAN LANGUAGE TO EARLY PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS 41

Јелена Стевановић, Валерија Јанићијевић
ЈЕЗИЧКА КУЛТУРА У ПРОГРАМИМА РАЗРЕДНЕ НАСТАВЕ:
ПОРЕДБЕНА АНАЛИЗА 42

Jelena Stevanović, Valerija Janićijević
LANGUAGE CULTURE IN THE LOWER PRIMARY SCHOOL
CURRICULA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS 43

Виолета Николовска
ЈЕЗИЧКЕ ГРЕШКЕ КАО ИНДИКАТОР ЈЕЗИЧКЕ КУЛТУРЕ 44

Violeta Nikolovska
IRREGULAR USE OF STANDARD LANGUAGE AS INDICATOR
OF CULTURE OF LINGUISTIC EXPRESSION 45

Љубица Весић
ИМЕНИЦЕ *PLURALIA И SINGULARIA TANTUM*
У НАСТАВИ ГРАМАТИКЕ 46

Ljubica Vesić
PLURALIA AND *SINGULARIA TANTUM* NOUNS
IN GRAMMAR TEACHING 47

Нада Шева, Наташа Лалић Вучетић
ИЗАЗОВИ У КРЕИРАЊУ БУКВАРА:
ОДНОС ТЕКСТА И ИЛУСТРАЦИЈЕ 48

Nada Ševa, Nataša Lalić Vučetić
CHALLENGES IN CREATING PRIMERS:
THE CORRELATION BETWEEN TEXTS AND ILLUSTRATIONS 49

Маринел Негру, Бриндуша Жујка, Вирђинија Поповић
ЕФИКАСНОСТ УПОТРЕБЕ НОВИХ ТЕХНОЛОГИЈА У НАСТАВИ
НА РУМУНСКОМ ЈЕЗИКУ НА (ОСНОВНО)ШКОЛСКОМ УЗРАСТУ
У ВОЈВОДИНИ, РЕПУБЛИЦИ СРБИЈИ 50

Marinel Negru, Brinduša Žujka, Virđinija Popović
EFFICIENCY OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN TEACHING
IN ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AT PRIMARY SCHOOL LEVEL
IN VOJVODINA, REPUBLIC OF SERBIA 51

Sabina Višček
ZAJEDNO U SVETU REČI: NEKOLIKO PRIMERA PROMOCIJE
ČITANJA ZA ČITAOCE POČETNIKE 52

Sabina Višček
TOGETHER IN THE WORLD OF WORDS: SOME IDEAS
FOR PROMOTING READING FOR BEGINNER READERS 53

Љиљана Плазинић
ШТА МОЖЕМО НАУЧИТИ О УНАПРЕЂЕЊУ
ЧИТАЛАЧКЕ ПИСМЕНОСТИ ОД СРПСКИХ УЧЕНИКА? 54

Ljiljana Plazinić
WHAT CAN WE LEARN FROM OUR STUDENTS ABOUT
THE IMPROVEMENT OF READING LITERACY? 55

ИЗАЗОВИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ ПРОГРАМСКИХ (РЕ)ФОРМИ У НАСТАВИ КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF CURRICULAR (RE)FORMS IN LITERATURE TEACHING

Зона Мркаљ
ГДЕ СУ НЕСТАЛИ НАСТАВНИ ЦИЉЕВИ? 58

Zona Mrkalj
WHERE DID THE TEACHING OBJECTIVES DISAPPEAR? 59

Marek Pieniążek
СРПСКА ПОЕЗИЈА У ПОЉСКИМ ШКОЛАМА: ЛЕКЦИЈЕ
О ТРАНСРЕГИОНАЛНОСТИ СЛОВЕНСКЕ ЗАЈЕДНИЦЕ 60

Marek Pieniążek
SERBIAN POETRY IN POLISH SCHOOLS: THE TRANS-REGIONAL
SLAVIC COMMUNITY LESSONS 61

Александар Јовановић
ПУТОВАЊА КАО ВИД ОБРАЗОВАЊА И КУЛТУРЕ 62

Aleksandar Jovanović
TRAVEL AS A FORM OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE 63

Зорана Опачић
САВРЕМЕНА КЊИЖЕВНОСТ У НАСТАВНИМ ПЛАНОВИМА
И ПРОГРАМИМА ЗА ВИШЕ РАЗРЕДЕ ОСНОВНЕ ШКОЛЕ –
ПУТ КА ПРЕВАЗИЛАЖЕЊУ КРИЗЕ ЧИТАЊА 64

Zorana Opačić
CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE IN THE CURRICULA
FOR THE HIGHER GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL –
THE WAY OF OVERCOMING THE READING CRISIS 65

Слађана Јаћимовић
РЕФОРМА ПРОГРАМА НАСТАВЕ КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ
У СРЕДЊИМ ШКОЛАМА – ИЗАЗОВИ И ОГРАНИЧЕЊА 66

Slađana Jaćimović
REFORM OF THE SECONDARY EDUCATION LITERATURE
CURRICULA – CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS 67

Светлана Илибашић, Јадранка Милошевић
УЛОГА КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ У НАСТАВНИМ ПРОГРАМИМА
СРПСКОГА ЈЕЗИКА У ОСНОВНОЈ ШКОЛИ 68

Svetlana Ilibašić, Jadranka Milošević
THE ROLE OF LITERATURE IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL
SERBIAN LANGUAGE CURRICULA 69

Валерија Јанићијевић
ИСХОДИ И ЛЕКТИРА: КРОЗ НОВЕ ПРОГРАМЕ
ЗА РАЗРЕДНУ НАСТАВУ КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ 70

Valerija Janićijević
LEARNING OUTCOMES AND COMPULSORY READING LISTS:
AN OVERVIEW OF THE NEW CURRICULA FOR TEACHING
LITERATURE IN THE LOWER GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL 71

Наташа Станковић Шошо
НАРОДНА (УСМЕНА) КЊИЖЕВНОСТ У РЕФОРМИСАНИМ
ПРОГРАМИМА ЗА ОСНОВНУ ШКОЛУ 72

Nataša Stanković Šošo
FOLK (ORAL) LITERATURE IN THE REFORMED CURRICULA
FOR PRIMARY SCHOOLS 73

Валентина В. Хамовић
ИЗБОРНА ЛЕКТИРА И ИЗАЗОВИ РЕФОРМЕ 74

Valentina Hamović
OPTIONAL READING LISTS AND REFORMS 75

Милена Милева Блажић
ИНОВАТИВНИ ОБЛИЦИ УЧЕЊА И ПОУЧАВАЊА
НА ПРИМЕРУ БАЈКЕ „ЗЛАТНА ПТИЦА” 76

Milena Mileva Blažić
INNOVATIVE FORMS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING
ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE FAIRY TALE “GOLDEN BIRD” 77

Јелена Панић Мараш, Страхиња Полић
КЛАСИЦИ СРПСКЕ КЊИЖЕВНОСТИ, ИВО АНДРИЋ И
МИЛОШ ЦРЊАНСКИ, У ПРОГРАМИМА ОСНОВНЕ ШКОЛЕ 78

Jelena Panić Maraš, Strahinja Polić
THE CLASSICS OF SERBIAN LITERATURE, IVO ANDRIĆ AND
MILOŠ CRNJANSKI, IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL CURRICULA 79

Немања Каровић
МЕТОДИЧКИ ПРИСТУП ПОЕМИ („ЛАМЕНТ НАД БЕОГРАДОМ”
МИЛОША ЦРЊАНСКОГ) 80

Nemanja Karović
THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO POEMS
(MILOŠ CRNJANSKI, “LAMENT NAD BEOGRADOM”) 81

Бојана Маринковић
ВЕЧИТА САВРЕМЕНОСТ БРАНКА ЋОПИЋА
(ЋОПИЋЕВА ДЕЛА У НОВИМ ПРОГРАМИМА
СРПСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА У РАЗРЕДНОЈ НАСТАВИ) 82

Bojana Marinković
AN ENDLESS CONTEMPORARINESS OF BRANKO ĆOPIĆ
(ĆOPIĆ’S WORKS IN THE NEW SERBIAN LANGUAGE
TEACHING COURSES) 83

Бојан Марковић
(АВАНГАРДНЕ) ПЕСНИЧКЕ СЛИКЕ –
КАКО СА МЛАДИМА РАЗГОВАРАТИ О ЊИМА 84

Bojan Marković
(AVANT-GARDE) POETIC IMAGES AND
HOW TO TALK TO YOUNG PEOPLE ABOUT THEM 85

Милан Вурдеља
УЗОРНОСТ МАРГИНАЛИЗОВАНОГ ЈУНАКА: ОСТВАРИВАЊЕ
ВАСПИТНИХ ЦИЉЕВА НАСТАВЕ С ОБЗИРОМ НА ИНОВАЦИЈЕ
У ЛЕКТИРНОМ ПРОГРАМУ 86

Milan Vurdelja
EXEMPLARITY OF A MARGINALIZED HERO: EDUCATIONAL
GOALS REGARDING THE INNOVATIONS IN THE CURRICULUM 87

Милена Митровић
ИЗМЕЂУ СЦЕНСКЕ ИГРЕ И ТУМАЧЕЊА КЊИЖЕВНОГ ТЕКСТА –
ДРАМСКИ ТЕКСТОВИ У ПРОГРАМИМА СРПСКОГ ЈЕЗИКА
ЗА МЛАЂЕ РАЗРЕДЕ ОСНОВНЕ ШКОЛЕ 88

Milena Mitrović
BETWEEN THE STAGE PLAY AND INTERPRETATION OF LITERARY
TEXTS – DRAMA TEXTS IN THE CURRICULA OF THE SERBIAN
LANGUAGE FOR JUNIOR GRADES OF PRIMARY SCHOOL 89

ИЗАЗОВИ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЕ ПРОГРАМСКИХ (РЕ)ФОРМИ У НОВИМ ОСНОВАМА ПРОГРАМА ПРЕДШКОЛСКОГ ВАСПИТАЊА И ОБРАЗОВАЊА

CHALLENGES AND PERSPECTIVES OF CURRICULAR (RE)FORMS IN NEW PRESCHOOL EDUCATION CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK

Morena Ravnić
VASPITAČ I DETE U ZAJEDNIČKOM STVARANJU KURIKULUMA 92

Morena Ravnić
PRESCHOOL TEACHERS AND CHILDREN AS A TEAM
IN CURRICULUM DESIGN 93

Невена Буђевац, Зорица Ковачевић
САГЛЕДАВАЊЕ ДЕТЕТА И ПРОЦЕСА УЧЕЊА У НОВИМ ОСНОВАМА ПРОГРАМА ПРЕДШКОЛСКОГ ВАСПИТАЊА И ОБРАЗОВАЊА 94

Nevena Buđevac, Zorica Kovačević
CHILDREN AND LEARNING PROCESS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEW PRESCHOOL EDUCATION CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK 95

Кирил Барбареев
ДА ЛИ ЈЕ ПОТРЕБНА НОВА ПАРАДИГМА ЗА ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ И ПРОФЕСИОНАЛНИ РАЗВОЈ ВАСПИТАЧА? 96

Kiril Barbareev
IS THERE A NEED FOR A NEW PARADIGM FOR EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS? 97

Љиљана Ранђић, Анђела Шошкић, Вања Ковић
КОРАК КА ВАЛИДАЦИЈИ НОВОГ ПРИСТУПА ПОДУЧАВАЊУ ЧИТАЊА НА УЗРАСТУ 3–5 ГОДИНА 98

Ljiljana Randić, Anđela Šoškić, Vanja Ković
TOWARDS VALIDATION OF A NEW APPROACH TO TEACHING READING AT THE AGE OF 3–5 YEARS 99

Милијана Лазаревић, Марија Маловић, Александар Стојановић
ИМПЛИКАЦИЈЕ РЕФОРМЕ ПРЕДШКОЛСКОГ ВАСПИТАЊА И ОБРАЗОВАЊА НА КОНЦЕПЦИЈСКЕ ОКВИРЕ ИНИЦИЈАЛНОГ ОБРАЗОВАЊА ВАСПИТАЧА У СРБИЈИ 100

Milijana Lazarević, Marija Malović, Aleksandar Stojanović
IMPLICATIONS OF THE PRESCHOOL EDUCATION REFORM ON THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF INITIAL EDUCATION OF PRESCHOOL TEACHERS IN SERBIA 101

Драгана Гундоган
СТАВОВИ И ИСКУСТВА РОДИТЕЉА О БОРАВКУ ДЕЦЕ У ЈАСЛИЦАМА У БЕОГРАДСКИМ ВРТИЋИМА 102

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IS A NEW PARADIGM FOR EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF PRSCHOOL TEACHERS NEEDED?

Summary

Effective systems for pre-school education and upbringing aim at raising the professional status of the staff, which is generally considered a key factor of quality. The system should aim at pedagogical workforce consisting of professionals with a full professional qualification specialized in pre-school education at ISCED level 6. The new challenges faced by upbringing and education need staff professionally enabled for creative action, which will stimulate, motivate, provide various educational situations in which the child will experience its own self-realization. The profession – preschool teacher has its own developmental path and is built on the basis of general principles and an appropriate system of scientific knowledge and practical skills. Education and professional development of preschool teachers is a challenge in the reforms and it is the key issue of an educational institution.

The aim of this paper is to perceive and indicate the current conditions and challenges of the system of education and professional development, as well as the need for change, possible directions and solutions. Therefore, we have analyzed the model of education and professional development of preschool teachers in Macedonia, the reform process, analysis of the most important documents of the European institutions and other international organizations, analysis and comparison of the experiences of EU countries, in order to offer an authentic model for the education of educators that will be open, dynamic and harmonized with the lifelong education of educators.

Key words: initial education, preschool teacher, professional development.

ДА ЛИ ЈЕ ПОТРЕБНА НОВА ПАРАДИГМА ЗА ОБРАЗОВАЊЕ И ПРОФЕСИОНАЛНИ РАЗВОЈ ВАСПИТАЧА?

Резиме

Ефективни системи предшколскогобразовања и васпитањаимају за циљ подизање професионалног статуса кадра, што се генерално сматра кључним фактором квалитета. Систем треба да има за циљ педагошку радну снагу састављену од стручних лица са пуном професионалном квалификацијом, специјализованом за предшколско образовање на нивоу ISCED 6. Нови изазови са којима се суочавају васпитање и образовање траже професионалце способне за креативно деловање, који ће стимулисати, мотивисати, омогућавати различите образовне ситуације у којима ће дете доживети сопствену самореализацију. Професија - васпитач има свој развојни пут и

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гради се на основу општих принципа и одговарајуће одређеног система научних знања и практичних вештина. Образовање и професионални развојваспитача представља изазов у реформи и кључно питање било које образовне институције.

Циљ овог рада је да сагледа и да укаже на тренутно стање и изазове система образовања и стручног усавршавања, као и на потребу за променама, могућим правцима и решењима. Стога смо анализирали модел образовања и професионалног развоја васпитача у Македонији; процес реформе; анализу најважнијих докумената европских институција и других међународних организација; анализу и поређење искустава земаља ЕУ са циљем да се понудиаутентичан модел образовање васпитача који ће бити отворен, динамичан и усклађен са доживотним образовањем васпитача.

Кључне речи: иницијално образовање, васпитач, професионални развој.

Introduction

In the context of a strong global interest and focus on preschool education, there is a growing awareness of the importance of quality in proper growth and development of children. Europe has a lot of challenges and priorities, but also a different pedagogical vision. Yet, one of the most important themes and priorities ever since 1992[2] has been to increase the number of children in preschool education, upbringing and care.

In 2017, the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission set out 20 principles for a more effective exercise of citizens' rights. Principle 11 refers to the fact that children have the right to quality and financially accessible preschool education, upbringing and care[3]. It has also set a goal which is seriously ambitious and it implies that at least 95% of children between the ages of three and the first grade should be guaranteed a place[4].

Based on experts' conclusions, work groups, through an open method of cooperation and exchange of good practices, as well as on the basis of multinational research, have put forward proposals for improving the quality of preschool education, upbringing and care in the European context. Five dimensions have been highlighted that are believed to contribute to a significant improvement of quality of preschool education through enhanced investment, support and implementation measures and activities. Here follow these five dimensions: 1.

[2]**Council Recommendation of 31 March 1992 on Childcare** (92/241 /EEC)*;* **European Commission Network on Childcare** and Other Measures to Reconcile the Employment and Family Responsibilities of Men and Women; *Proposals for a Ten Year Action Programme / Quality Targets in Services forYoung Children*, 1996

[3]**Council of the European Union**, Proclamation on the European Pillar of Social Rights Brussels, 20 October 2017 (OR. en) 13129/17; https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en

[4]**European Commission:** *Final Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture,* Strasbourg, 14.11.2017 Com(2017) *673*

Workforce (educators, carers, professional associates); 2. **Curriculum**; 3. **Monitoring and evaluation**; 4. **System management**; 5. **Financing**.

Basics of quality

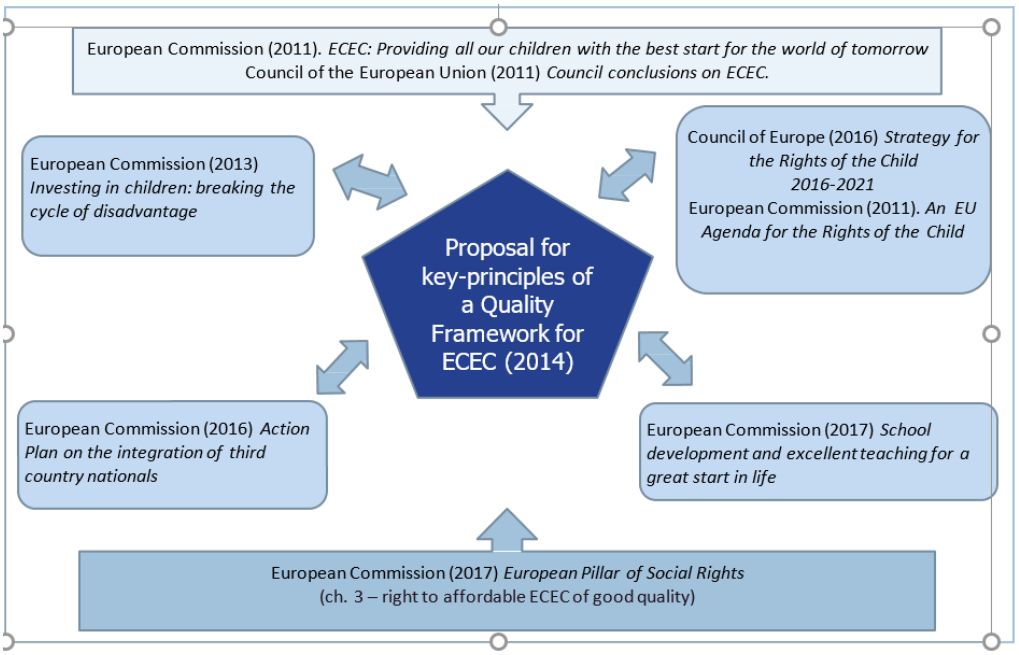
There is no single definition of quality in preschool education, upbringing and care. But what is common to all is the view that quality is a complicated and complex concept and it encompasses structures, processes and outcomes. The European Quality Framework interprets quality as a combination of multiple sets of mutually dependent measures[5]:

- ***Structural quality*** – this means what the philosophy and the concept are and how preschool education, upbringing and care are organized. It includes norms, standards and regulations related to: accreditation of conditions; number of professionally trained staff; creating a curriculum; financing of services; employees-children ratio; equal treatment of all children in general and in accordance with their individual needs; and physical conditions for healthy and safe care, education and upbringing.

- ***Process quality*** – defines the quality of the process and practices through: the role of play in the curriculum; relationships between employees and families; the relationship and interaction between educators and children and among children themselves; the degree of integration; parent and community participation and everyday pedagogical practices.

- ***Outcome quality*** – defines the quality of the outcome / result of the system, i.e. benefits to children, families, communities and society, in particular children's outcomes: children's emotional, moral, mental and physical development; children's social skills; preparedness for further education and for the adult world; and children's health and their preparedness for the first grade.

[5]Proposed Framework for Quality in Preschool Education, Upbringing and Care: prepared on the basis of a European Commission proposal to the Council of the European Union for a recommendation on high quality preschool education, upbringing and care / (authors Elena Misic ... etc). - Skopje: Foundation for Educational and Cultural Initiatives Step by Step, 2019.



Graph 1: Positioning of the European Quality Framework in the context of other European policies and initiatives[6] relating to pre-school education, upbringing and care.

The profession – **preschool teacher** has its own developmental path, its own characteristics, and it is built on general principles and a properly defined system of knowledge and practical guidelines. The education and professional development of teachers and educators is the key issue in every country, as the quality of educational staff is one of the main factors influencing the level of educational achievement of each individual. Qualitative educational work cannot be conceived without qualitative educational staff. The question of the quality of education of the staff working with preschool children is constantly present in the pedagogical public.

The preschool teachers' **sentimental attitude** towards children, which is actually the most significant humanistic quality of an educator, is one of the most significant components of upbringing. Without love for children and strong motivation for their successful upbringing and education, the process of upbringing and education is not possible.

[6]The titles of the documents are as follows: European Commission (2011): Providing the best start to tomorrow's world for all children; Council of the European Union (2011) *Council's Conclusions*; European Commission (2013) *Investing in children: how to break the cycle of marginalization*; Council of Europe (2016) *Children's Rights Strategy 2016-2021*; European Commission (2011) *EU Children's Rights Agenda;* ***Proposal for key principles of a Quality Framework(2014);*** European Commission (2016) *Action Plan for Integration of Third Country Citizens*; European Commission (2017) *School Development and High Quality Teaching for a Great Start in Life;* European Commission (2017) *European Pillar of Social Rights* (Chapter 3 - The right to be financially accessible and qualitative).
[6]According to Lazzari, A. (2017): *The current state of national ECEC quality frameworks, or equivalent strategic policy documents, governing ECEC quality in EU Member States*, NESET II ad hoc question No. 4/2017

The European Commission (Global Report, 2003)[7], which in defining the key competencies starts from the newly created (modified) roles of preschool teachers/teachers, distinguishes five groups of competencies:

-good didactic and methodological knowledge that enables the preschool teacher to plan and organize educational activities,

-capacity for teamwork and cooperation with other educators and professional associates,

-knowledge of child psychology, which will enable preschool teacher to know children, their characteristics and unique features for effective motivation,

-personal professional development: responsible orientation of one's own professional development in the process of lifelong learning.

If we analyse these sets of competences, all but the first, are more or less a matter of general, transferable teacher / educator competencies, assuming that each educator / teacher has sufficient specific knowledge in each area.

Workforce and its Training/Professional Development

Initial education of preschool teachers in R. Macedonia is realized at five institutions of higher education:

- Institute of Pedagogy at the Faulty of Philosophy, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius"in Skopje
- Faculty of Pedagogy, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje
- Faculty of Education, "St. Kliment Ohridski" University – Bitola
- Faculty of Educational Sciences, University "Goce Delcev" - Stip
- Study programme in Pedagogy, State University in Tetovo

It is evident that all the institutions of initial education since 2004 have been actively working on achieving the commitment of the Bologna Declaration adopted in 1999 - to build a coherent and cohesive European area of higher education by 2010.

Work groups from all faculties, based on the results of their own research (using the methodology of the TUNING[8] project) and the experiences obtained from the project for modernization of the Initial Teacher Training Programs in accordance with the Bologna

[7]*Definingcompetencies and curriculum*, European reference points for the teaching profession, Prepared by Eurydice for study visit (England, April 2003).

[8]Gonzales, J., Wagenaar, R. (eds.) (2005). *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. II. Universities Contribution to the Bologna Process*. Bilbao/Groningen: University Deusto/University Groningen.

Process - Creative Teaching and Learning, supported by USAID and the Foundation - Open Society Institute - Macedonia, worked on creating a list of competencies and on the renewal of the study programmes for preschool education and upbringing.

In this context, the experiences gained from the Faculty of Pedagogy at the University of Ljubljana, the conclusions presented in Europe as "new competences now expected of teachers"(Eurydice, 2003), and the recommendations for teacher education presented in the Concept for Nine-Year Primary Education - R Macedonia (2007) are particularly significant.

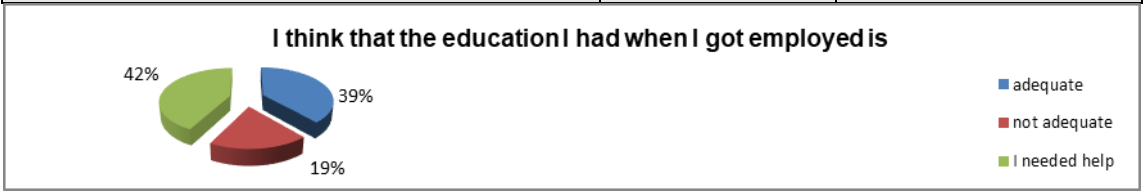
It can be concluded that all study programmes are designed as integrated theoretical and practical capacities that combine knowledge, understanding, skills, abilities and values specific to professional profiles comparable and compatible with those in the European educational space.

However, what is noticeable is that the study programmes have not been created according to the so-called Dublin descriptors, which means that the views and opinions of the educational staff in kindergartens and primary schools have not been taken into account.In the study programmes of institutions preparing educational staff for the sub-system of preschool education and upbringing we can notice: (1) ***(non) compliance of programmes***, (2) ***inconsistency and lack of coordination between these institutions***.

The analysis of the programmes shows the need for a **revision** of study programmes and their general harmonization (**unification**).There is a difference in the conceptual structure of the profile that is being formed, as well as a difference in the study and subject programmes that are implemented at the faculties. The need for unification stems from the need for equal quality in initial education for future educators, as one of the first steps towards achieving quality in preschool education in the Republic of Macedonia.

Table. Opinion about the system of education before employment

I think that the system of education when I got employed is:	*f*	%
Adequate	50	38,5
Not adequate	25	19
I needed help	55	42,3
other	-	-
TOTAL	130	100



Graph

When asked ***to rate the system of education and professional development of preschool teachers***, the respondents' answers were mostly negative, that is, they were critically inclined. More than half of them (**51%**) were critically inclined towards the existing organization of initial education of preschool teachers and said that a much more practical experience was needed than the current approach to favouring theoretical content and realizing practice and teaching methods.

The application of theory in the context of a particular practical situation is not recognized. The next group was even more critical and said that radical changes to the educational system and professional development of preschool teachers were needed (**33%**); this strong group of respondents emphasized the need for a study programme for preschool teachers to encompass the integration of all the main competencies for preschool teachers (knowledge of subject matter, practical experience, educational knowledge).

Preschool teachers were asked about the percentage of practical activities that are a key part of the study programme for preschool teachers. More than half of the respondents (52.3%) believe that the percentage ration of practical and theoretical activities should be 50-50%; the second group of respondents (25.3%) goes further and stresses that practice is the most important part of initial education and therefore think that it should be represented by 70% of the total study programme; the third group (19.2%) believes that practice should be represented by around 30%.

The legislation defines the types and qualifications of various professionals and ancillary staff comprising the ECEC workforce, with responsibilities for: *management* of facilities and standards of provision; *educational work* - teaching; *care* of children; *specialist professional support* to staff (pedagogue, psychologist, and music pedagogue); and administrative and other support (hygiene, meals, and administration). **Box 1: Staff ratio in ECEC facilities:**

Managers	4.6%
Teachers	25%
Caregivers	39.3%
Specialists	1.7 %
Admin/technical staff	29.4%

The low ratio of teaching staff within the overall workforce seems to confirm the general opinion that the system is geared towards care and less towards early learning and stimulation. Significant percentage of staff not directly involved in working with children might be seen as indication of relative internal inefficiency.

There is no regulated system of professional development in the Republic of Macedonia that will ensure enhancement in the quality of educational work, the comprehensive effectiveness of kindergartens, and new concepts toward which the country's education policy would move. The following data illustrate the real situation with respect to this issue. They are part of a comprehensive study conducted in 2017 by the Institute of Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje[9].

When asked how much the licensing process provided for professional development, 78.3% think that the licensing process does not provide professional development, and 21.7% think that the licensing process provides professional development.

As for the process of developing or designing study programmes, teachers were asked (multiple choice questions) - *who should design study programmes for the first and the second cycle of studies*?

A vast majority of teachers (73.8%) believe that the current way of designing study programmes should be changed and that it should include joint workgroups consisting of:(1) teachers from institutions of initial education, (2) professional and academic associations, (3) the Ministry of Education and the Bureau for Development of Education,4) kindergarten educators, (5) and governing bodies of children communities. One quarter of teachers (26%) think that the current way is good, and that it should be in full autonomy of the institutions of initial education.

Table. Designing a study programme

Who should design study programmes?	*f*	%
Institutions of initial education	17	26,1
Joint work groups: Faculties, Ministry of Education and Science, educators, professional associations, ...	48	73,8
State	-	-
TOTAL	**65**	**100**

[9]Филозофски факултет, Институт за педагогија: Истражување: Професионалните компетенции на воспитувачите и квалитетот на раното учење и развој, 2017

Conclusion

We are no doubt in the common European space where both levels of education last for a total of five years (300 ECTS). The research has shown shortcomings in the current education of preschool teachers. The biggest disadvantages are in the areas requiring differentiated work of preschool teachers.

There is a need to raise the quality of education and professional development of the professional staff with particular attention to the following competences:

- Synthetic, analytical, creative thinking and problem solving.
- Independence, (self) criticism, (self) assessment, (self) evaluation and quality advocacy.
- Initiative/ambition, appreciation of continuous personal promotion and professional development (***this is the key competence related to the professional development of anpreschool teachers in his/her career***).
- Preparation for research in preschool education.
- Special pedagogical knowledge of working with children with special needs.
- Knowledge and practical application of artistic disciplines - drama education and education (preparation of plays for children, children's plays, pantomime); developing children's creativity (music, art).

Effective systems tend to raise the professional status of staff, which is generally considered a key quality factor, by raising the level of qualifications. Professional staff is the most important factor for children's well-being and their learning and development outcomes. Working conditions and professional development are considered to be an essential element of quality.

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