

Evaluation Level in the Process of Self-Evaluation of an Educational Institution

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Abstract

The aim of the research was to explore the justification for the evaluation level in the process of self-evaluation of an educational institution in regard to the key stakeholders as evaluators. The data were collected using the Self-Evaluation of ECEC Institution Project¹. The research refers to data collected in three organizational units of the same ECEC institution. The evaluation level is either a separate organizational unit or an ECEC institution as a whole². Participants in the research (N=189) were the following key stakeholders: 3 principals, 37 preschool teachers, 12 preschool specialists³, 44 administrative/technical staff members and 93 parents. The quality of ECEC institution was evaluated through self-evaluation questionnaires developed during the aforementioned project.

Data analysis confirmed that participants were very well informed about the quality area they were evaluating (95.28%). The Kruskal-Wallis test was used to explore the differences in evaluation scores regarding the evaluation level (separate

¹ for additional information about *Self-Evaluation of ECEC Institution Project* please consult the *Handbook for the Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions* (2013)

² ECEC institutions, e.g. kindergartens, are public institutions that provide preschool education as a public service. Kindergartens differ according to organisational structure, e.g. self-contained or with departments. Organisational units, e.g. departments, are dislocated parts of a central kindergarten, which include one or more groups of children, and are established by kindergartens as required (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). The number of departments may vary, from 1 up to 25 and more. Evaluation level, e.g. unit of analysis within the sample regarding the specific organisational structure of ECEC institutions, is therefore either a separate organizational unit, e.g. department, or ECEC institution as a whole, e.g. central kindergarten with all its departments - dislocated parts of a central kindergarten.

³ preschool specialists: *expert associates* in the early education institution are the counsellor, psychologist, special education experts (a speech and language therapist, rehabilitator, social counsellor) and a senior nurse (Slunjski, 2013); *professional assistants* are education professional, psychologist, special education teacher (Croatian Bureau of Statistics, 2015)

organizational unit or ECEC institution as a whole) and regarding key stakeholders. Data analysis did not show significant differences in evaluation scores regarding separate organizational units in cases where the evaluators were principals ($\chi^2=2.000$; $p=0.368$), preschool teachers ($\chi^2=1.480$; $p=0.477$), preschool specialists ($\chi^2=1.500$; $p=0.472$), members of administrative/technical staff ($\chi^2=1.489$; $p=0.475$) or parents ($\chi^2=1.274$; $p=0.529$).

It has been confirmed that separate organizational units are justified as an evaluation level only when exploring how well the key stakeholders are informed about the quality areas they are evaluating. In the process of self-evaluation of an educational institution the justified evaluation level is ECEC institution as a whole.

Key words: ECEC institution; key stakeholders; quality assurance; self-evaluation process.

Introduction

When considering quality in the area of education and care and its sole definition, what is often emphasized is the complexity and relativity of the term. It is sometimes considered a “slippery” term (Harvey & Green, 1993), which can, in general sense, be grouped in 5 mutually connected concepts of quality: quality as excellence (or as consistency), purposefulness, cash value (value for money) and transformation. In doing so, such a conceptual definition is transferred to all educational levels. Many authors (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000; Bruner, 2000; Kinsler & Gamble, 2001) claim that the complexity of quality in education considered as a process is mirrored in the fact that quality is necessarily in relation to this process and its consequences, and because of different roles and expectations of its subjects. Ensuring quality implies functional connection between activities, the goal of which is to establish, keep track of and improve the quality of education. According to UNESCO (UNESCO, 2003) the quality of education is a multidimensional, dynamic term which refers to contextual schemes of an educational model, institutional missions and goals and also specific standards of a given system, institutions and programmes.

The concept of quality and therefore defining quality is conditioned with values and culture, and is subject to changes in the course of time (Kammerman, 2001). Moss and Pence (1994) point out that it is more precise to use the concept of the perspective of quality rather than the concept of the universal standard of quality, and French (2000) stresses that quality is no longer observed as a unique standard of excellence that applies to all children at all educational levels, but rather as a set of key criteria by which educational institutions can improve, i.e. by which progress can be measured.

The concept of measuring in the educational system is closely related to the concept of evaluation. All elements of the educational system, and the system as a whole, are subject to measurement. A systems approach shows, in a comprehensive way, which elements of the system are subject to evaluation, how they relate to each other and how they are connected with their environment. Key elements of the systems approach

are present in different approaches to measuring quality of an educational institution. Therefore, we can distinguish an approach oriented towards measuring structural determinants of quality: the number of children in a group, the ratio of educators to children, material conditions of an institution, the level of education of the employees, etc. (Munton et al., 2002; Moss et al., 2003; Pascal et al., 2012), an approach oriented towards measuring the process determinants of quality: quality of stakeholder interaction, culture of the institution, organizational management of the institution, curriculum and the educational process, etc. (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000; Moss et al., 2003; Ljubetić, 2009), and an approach oriented towards measuring child outcomes (Peisner-Feinberg et al., 1999; McQuai et al., 2002). The aforementioned forms of evaluation are defined in relation to the subject of measuring. On an international level, during the last 20 years, countries have been working systematically on the implementation and monitoring of various forms of quality assurance system in education (EC, 2014; EC/EACEA/Eurydice/Eurostat, 2014a; EC/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015; OECD, 2015). The approach directed to the structural determinants of quality is the most represented one, followed by the approach directed to measuring of the child outcomes and the approach oriented towards process determinants of quality. In these approaches to measuring quality, whether they are structural determinants, process determinants or child outcomes, the level of evaluation and the unit of evaluation can be an individual (child/student, teacher, personnel), a group (class/educational group, group of employees/other personnel) or the entire educational institution (with all its organizational units).

When talking about organizational culture, what it refers to is the level of awareness, appreciation of the common attitude and behaviour regarding the quality of the outcome of the overall educational activities of an institution (organization). Just because of that tight relation with the overall quality of educational activities which in great measure shape its authenticity and identity (Hargreaves, 1999; Stoll, 1999), the organizational culture can be renamed the culture of quality. For those educational institutions that have a more developed and effective system of quality management, expressed through the outcomes of evaluation and self-evaluation, it can be said that they have a higher level of organizational culture (Senge, 2002). There is no unique model that would enable the development of institutional processes for ensuring quality. That is why every sub-system looks for the best solution according to its mission, vision, opportunities and possibilities that occur in its environment.

The process of quality improvement must continuously be monitored and evaluated. The culture of self-evaluating applies to a whole organizational environment in which decisions are based on facts, research and analysis. Self-evaluation is an assessment of the accomplishment, as are the ways in which it was achieved, in order to comprehend which approach is the most useful one. What is being evaluated are direct results of work, their effect and long-term impact. Self-evaluation is a reflective and emotional activity which substantially helps learning from one's own experience, showing if

something has indeed changed in the sense of improving previous experiences (Tot, 2013). Basically, this process starts with the assertion that it is possible to learn from one's own successes and mistakes. Stoll (1999) and Fullan (2002) recommend openness and interaction of all stakeholders involved in the process of change. That means that understanding one's own successes and failures makes it possible to choose those activities that are appropriate for the desired changes. The process of self-evaluation which is compliant with one's own needs and needs of everyone involved guarantees its final true usefulness and significance.

Since it is about a development process, the path to quality of every educational institution is possible in the process of mutual reciprocal adaptation and development of theory and practice. Considering the complexity of defining the concept of quality and specificity of the system of monitoring and quality assurance, in this paper the theoretical and methodological basis relies on the national frame for self-evaluation of early and preschool education institutions⁴. According to the primary thesis, which is an integral part of the theoretical basis of the model and the guideline for development of methodology and instruments, a high quality institution of early and preschool education is the one that encourages growth and development of each child, each parent, each employee and each community. The definition is based on the modern understanding of a child, childhood, institutionalisation of childhood and the definition of the quality of early and preschool education institution based on modern theoretical schemes of early and preschool education, life and work of ECEC institutions and experiences of implementation of the self-evaluation model in practice. Furthermore, the quality of the educational institution is operationalized through quality areas that contain elements or criteria of quality. The areas of educational institution quality correspond to the strategy of the institution, i.e. the mission, vision and values of the institution, organizational leadership, the institutional culture, spatial, material and technical working conditions, sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety, curriculum and the educational process, human resources, cooperation with the local and broader community, and the monitoring and evaluation process. The above mentioned areas of quality cover different levels of activities of an early education institution, whose quality directly affects the quality of life in it – for the child, for employees, parents, local community and other key stakeholders. Areas of quality mutually overlap and certain aspects of work performed in an educational institution can be found in different areas.

Defining quality, as well as implementing the process of self-evaluation (assessing, monitoring and improving quality) involves key stakeholders: the principal of the institution, governing council, educators/teachers, (pre)school specialists, administrative/technical staff members and parents. The model of self-evaluation

⁴ for additional information about the national frame for self-evaluation of early and preschool education institutions please consult the *Handbook for the Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions* (2013)

places equal emphasis on different perspectives of participants who are directly or indirectly involved and responsible for the quality of an institution and for the educational process (Antulić & Pribela-Hodap, 2012).

The established model of self-evaluation of ECEC institutions is made up of default elements: gaining insight into the current level of quality of the work performed in an institution, analysing key quality areas, determining priority areas of development and creating a development plan of the institution, followed by monitoring of the implementation of development plan and improvement of the quality of an institution⁵.

The proposed model of self-evaluation is characterized by a systematic approach to development of methodologies and instruments, which contributes to high sustainability of the process of self-evaluation. Institutions, by using their resources, are those that can do the most to improve the current situation, and thereby quickly and efficiently start a process of continuous improvement of its practices (Ljubetić, 2009). The comprehensiveness of the model is reflected in the self-evaluation process of the stakeholders, who are also the key stakeholders in the education system. The model of self-evaluation is systematic and structured in order to ensure the uniformity of the process on a methodological level, and at the same time it is flexible enough to be applicable in relation to the specificities of each ECEC institution.

Early and preschool education and care is perhaps one of the most complex levels of the educational system on the national level. Specificities of a certain ECEC institution are reflected in the founder, size of the institution, geographical dispersion of different/smaller organizational units, the number of members of professional development services, qualifications of the personnel and possibilities of meeting the state pedagogical standards, the dominant pedagogy, the duration and specificity of the programme, etc. Considering the aforementioned, defining, measuring and monitoring the ECEC quality poses a great challenge.

Since organizational structure of the ECEC institution is one of the most prominent features within the system, a research question is whether the established model for assuring and monitoring quality is truly flexible enough to respond to the needs of specific institutions, and whether the definition and measurement of quality at the level of the educational institution as a whole is indeed more justifiable than measuring quality at lower organizational units. This must be verified by taking into account the perspectives of various stakeholders in the educational process as evaluators and how well they are informed about the subject of assessment, as well as taking into account the structure of the established concept of quality.

Goal and Problems of the Research

The aim of the research is to explore the justification of the level of evaluation in the process of self-evaluation of the quality of an ECEC institution in relation to key

⁵ for additional information about methodology of the national frame for self-evaluation of early and preschool education institutions please consult the *Handbook for the Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions* (2013)

stakeholders as evaluators. For the research, the data were collected during the Self-Evaluation of Early and Preschool Education Institutions Project. The data refer to the assessment of quality of three geographically dispersed organizational units of an educational institution. The level of evaluation is an organizational unit or institution as a whole.

Research problems are: (1) to examine if the level of access to information about the institution's quality (overall and by areas of quality) is different considering the level of evaluation and key stakeholders as evaluators, and (2) to explore whether there are differences between the evaluated institution's quality (overall and by areas of quality) considering the level of evaluation and key stakeholders as evaluators.

According to the aforementioned research problems and the aim of the research, the hypotheses were: (1) there will be no significant statistical differences in the level of access to information about the institution's quality (overall and by areas of quality) considering the level of evaluation and key stakeholders as evaluators, and (2) there will be no significant statistical differences between the evaluated institution's quality (overall and by areas of quality) considering the level of evaluation and key stakeholders as evaluators.

Methodology

Participants

The research involved a total of 189 participants out of which 31 were male and 140 were female. The sample consisted of 3 principals, 37 preschool teachers, 12 preschool specialists, 44 members of administrative/technical staff and 93 parents. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 60, out of which 34.4% of participants were 31 to 40 years old, 30.7% were 41 to 50 years old and 19% were from 51 to 60 years old. Out of the total sample, half of the participants provided information regarding the years of service in the institution they were currently working in. 19% of the respondents had 11 to 20 years of service, 7.9% had 21 to 30 years of service and 6.9% of them had 31 to 40 years of service.

Instruments

The questionnaires used in the research were those developed under the project Self-Evaluation of Early and Preschool Education Institutions: Questionnaire for the principal, Questionnaire for the preschool teachers, Questionnaire for the preschool specialists, Questionnaire for the administrative/technical staff members and the Questionnaire for parents. Questionnaires for different groups of subjects contain comparable areas of quality and as they are designed and implemented according to the same methodology, they are comparable between different stakeholders (Antulić, 2012). The questionnaire items were grouped into 9 areas of quality⁶: 1) the strategy

⁶ For more detailed information about quality assurance area please consult the *Handbook for the Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions* (2013)

of the institution; 2) the organizational leadership; 3) the institutional culture; 4) spatial and material, and technical working conditions; 5) sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety; 6) curriculum and the educational process; 7) human resources; 8) cooperation with the local and broader community, and 9) monitoring and evaluation process. The questionnaires were used to estimate satisfaction with a certain element of quality area in the range from 1 to 7 – 1 meaning *I do not agree at all*, 7 meaning *I agree completely*, and 0 meaning *I cannot say*. The questionnaires also consisted of items related to demographic data of participants and there is also a space reserved for open comments.

Method

The data used in this research were collected in 2011 within the project Self-Evaluation of Early and Preschool Education Institutions. The data were collected according to a predetermined methodology⁷ that ensures equal conditions for data collection. During data collection anonymity and the voluntary principle were ensured.

Results and Discussion

In order to address the first research problem, the data related to the stakeholders' (i.e. principals, preschool teachers, preschool specialists, administrative/technical staff members and parents) level of information awareness regarding certain areas of quality as well as the quality of the institution as a whole were analysed. The level of information awareness regarding the quality of an institution refers to the total number of selections of value "0" which indicates the participants' inability to evaluate items due to insufficient access to information about the selected content. According to the total number of items in each area of quality, the total number of selections of value "0" was transformed to a scale in range from 0 to 1, 0 meaning a low level of access to information (low information awareness) and 1 meaning a high level of access to information (high information awareness). The results show a quite high level of information awareness regarding the specific areas of quality, as well as the quality of the institution as a whole. In this research 4.72% of the participants did not have sufficient information to evaluate all elements of the institution's quality. This confirms the justification, but also the need, to respect the perspective of different stakeholders in the educational process when it comes to measuring the institution's quality. One of the definitions of quality emphasizes that "quality child care is, to a large extent, in the eye of the beholder – and that beholder can be anyone or any group from among a range of stakeholders, each with an interest in early childhood services" (Moss & Pence, 1994, p. 172), which justifies the use of different sources of data in the process of evaluating quality.

When it comes to the areas of quality, the level of access to information is the lowest in the area of cooperation with the local and broader community (M=0.92; min=0.5;

⁷ For more detailed information about self-evaluation methodology please read Antulić (2012)

max=1), followed by human resources ($M=0.93$; $\min=0.14$; $\max=1$), institution's strategy ($M=0.95$; $\min=0.29$; $\max=1$), curriculum and the educational process ($M=0.96$; $\min=0.5$; $\max=1$), sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety ($M=0.97$; $\min=0.40$; $\max=1$), spatial, material and technical working conditions ($M=0.98$; $\min=0.63$; $\max=1$), the institutional culture ($M=0.99$; $\min=0.67$; $\max=1$), the monitoring and evaluation process ($M=0.99$, $\min=0.5$, $\max=1$) and the organizational leadership ($M=0.99$, $\min=0.63$, $\max=1$).

These results indicate the visibility of elements of certain areas of quality to groups of key stakeholders. It can be concluded that none of the areas stands out in terms of access to information about the quality, but at the same time, how well the stakeholders are informed differs in various areas. Key stakeholders are the least informed ones about the process determinants that are in relation to elements of cooperation between the institution and the community, the elements of the human resources and institution's strategy, while they are slightly more informed about the process determinants related to the institutional culture, monitoring and evaluation process and organizational elements of the institution. These data can serve as guidelines for further activities in the field of access to information in order to increase the transparency of the work performed in the institution.

Univariate analysis of variance has confirmed that there is a statistically significant difference ($F(4,184)=4.68$; $p=0.001$) in the level of information awareness regarding the specific areas of quality in relation to key stakeholders as evaluators. Principals, who have enough information to evaluate all of the items, are the most informed, followed by the preschool specialists ($M=0.99$, $SD=0.01$, $\min=0.97$, $\max=1$), preschool teachers ($M=0.99$; $SD=0.02$; $\min=0.94$; $\max=1$), administrative/technical staff members ($M=0.95$; $SD=0.06$; $\min=0.78$; $\max=1$) and parents ($M=0.95$; $SD=0.06$; $\min=0.68$; $\max=1$). Statistically significant differences were confirmed in all areas of quality, except for the areas of sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety, and in the case of overall quality evaluation.

The data indicate the need for control of the evaluator's perspective in accordance with different roles within the institution. The principal of the institution is, considering the job description and responsibilities, in a unique position in terms of insight into the overall functioning of the institution. Similar responsibilities are also shared by the preschool specialists who, by their job descriptions, work in all organizational units of the institution and cooperate with most of the key stakeholders, which enables them an insight into the entirety of the work of the institution. Preschool teachers and administrative/technical staff members who, depending on the peculiarities of the institution and the organization of work, share working environment, i.e. they work in separate organizational units, which can lead to possibilities of insight into their own working environment but also the inability of insight into other organizational units. Parents have proven to be the least informed group, which is possibly due to focus on lower organizational units – educational group and organizational unit –

which can lead to reduced opportunities for evaluating criteria explored at the level of the institution as a whole.

In relation to the organizational units to which the participants belong, the level of information awareness regarding the quality of an institution is the lowest in the first unit ($M=0.957$; $SD=0.06$; $\min=0.74$; $\max=1$), followed by the second unit ($M=0.962$; $SD=0.06$; $\min=0.68$; $\max=1$) and the third unit ($M=0.981$; $SD=0.03$; $\min=0.81$; $\max=1$). Univariate analysis of variance confirmed a statistically significant difference in the level of information awareness regarding the quality of an institution in the area of institutional strategy ($F(2,186)=3.155$; $p=0.045$) while the area is significantly lower in the first unit ($M=0.92$; $SD=0.15$)* in comparison with the third unit ($M=0.98$, $SD=0.08$)*. Univariate analysis of variance confirmed a statistically significant difference in the level of information awareness regarding the area of human resources ($F(2,186)=3.068$; $p=0.049$)* where the level of information awareness regarding the area is significantly lower in the first unit ($M=0.91$; $SD=0.16$)* compared to the third unit ($M=0.98$; $SD=0.07$)*⁸. In relation to the organisational units that the participants belong to, a statistically significant difference in the level of information awareness regarding the quality of an institution has been confirmed in two out of nine quality areas. This difference was found in two of the three explored units. According to the aforementioned, the first research hypothesis has been partially refuted. This leads to the conclusion that the lower organizational structure is a justified level of evaluation only in case of exploring the level of information awareness regarding the quality of an institution as a whole and exploring the level of information awareness regarding the quality of specific areas, especially when the purpose of the evaluation is development of an action plan aimed at improving the overall institutional quality.

Another research problem was to explore whether the assessment of the institutional quality (overall and according to the areas of quality) is different compared to the level of evaluation and key stakeholders as evaluators. The overall institutional quality assessed is quite high ($M=5.73$; $SD=0.818$; $\min=3.22$; $\max=7$). The overall institutional quality assessed at the level of organisational units, as the level of evaluation, is shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Overall institutional quality assessed at organisational unit level

unit*	N	M	SD	min	max
1	81	5.78	0.803	3.48	7.00
2	64	5.76	0.776	3.22	7.00
3	44	5.60	0.906	3.52	6.90

*i.e. first (1), second (2) and third (3) geographically dispersed organizational units of the same educational institution.

⁸ * *post hoc test - Bonferonni*

Although the explored units differ by the total number of participants, overall institutional quality assessed on a 7-point scale is within a range of 5.60 to 5.78. The minimum scores range from 3.22 to 3.52 and the maximum scores range from 6.90 to 7.00. Institutional quality assessed by areas of quality in relation to the units as a level of evaluation is shown in Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2
Institutional quality assessed by the areas of quality in relation to organisational unit level

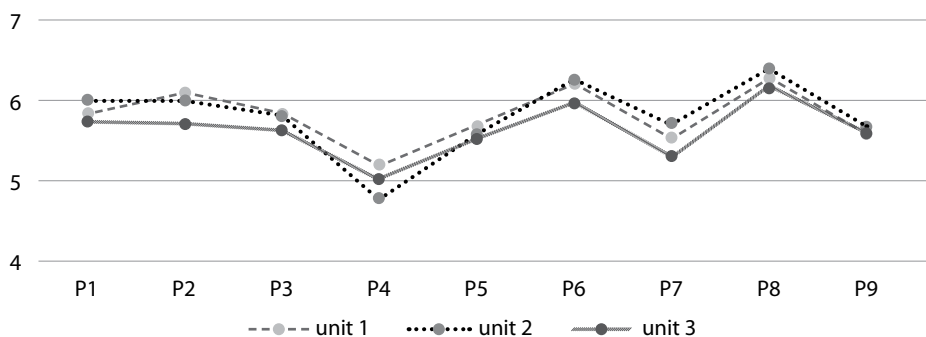
AREA OF QUALITY		UNIT*		
		1	2	3
P1 institution's strategy	M	5.86	6.02	5.77
	SD	1.016	0.801	0.945
P2 organizational leadership	M	6.11	6.02	5.73
	SD	0.814	0.820	0.918
P3 institutional culture	M	5.85	5.83	5.65
	SD	0.998	1.031	1.145
P4 spatial, material and technical working conditions	M	5.22	4.81	5.06
	SD	1.028	1.073	1.095
P5 sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety	M	5.70	5.62	5.56
	SD	1.109	1.053	0.888
P6 human resources	M	6.24	6.27	5.98
	SD	0.750	0.885	1.036
P7 cooperation with the local and broader community	M	5.56	5.74	5.33
	SD	0.936	1.014	1.301
P8 monitoring and evaluation process	M	6.30	6.41	6.21
	SD	0.579	0.602	0.666
P9 curriculum and educational process	M	5.62	5.70	5.64
	SD	0.861	0.952	1.109

*i.e. first (1), second (2) and third (3) geographically dispersed organizational units of the same educational institution.

Average scores of institutional quality assessed on a 7-point scale are within a range of 4.81 to 6.41, assessed by the areas of quality in relation to evaluation at the unit level.

In accordance with the aforementioned problem, the differences between organizational units and assessed quality areas were tested. The assumption of homogeneity of variance (Levene test; $p \geq 0.05$) was satisfied. According to ANOVA, there was no statistically significant difference between different organisational units in the assessed quality in any of the nine explored areas. Results indicate that for quality assessment, at the level of quality as a general concept, but also in the case of measurements of specific areas of quality, a reasonable level of evaluation is the educational institution as a whole. As shown in Figure 1, scores of institutional quality assessed follow the trends in relation to the organisational units. Higher scores are obtained in the areas of (8) the monitoring and evaluation process

($\text{Mu}_1=6.30$, $\text{SDu}_1=0.579$; $\text{Mu}_2=6.41$, $\text{SDu}_2=0.602$; $\text{Mu}_3=6.21$, $\text{SDu}_3=0.666$) and (6) human resources ($\text{Mu}_1=6.24$, $\text{SDu}_1=0.750$; $\text{Mu}_2=6.27$, $\text{SDu}_2=0.885$; $\text{Mu}_3=5.98$, $\text{SDu}_3=1.036$) while the lowest average scores are obtained in the area of (4) spatial, material and technical working conditions evaluation ($\text{Mu}_1=5.22$, $\text{SDu}_1=1.028$; $\text{Mu}_2=4.81$, $\text{SDu}_2=1.073$; $\text{Mu}_3=5.06$, $\text{SDu}_3=1.095$).



Note: The figure shows a part of the assessment scale from 1 to 7.

Figure 1. Average scores of institutional quality assessed on a 7-point scale by the areas of quality in relation to evaluation at the unit level*

In accordance with the aforementioned problem, the differences between key stakeholders and assessed quality areas in relation to evaluation level were tested. Since the subsamples were unequal, the nonparametric Kruskal-Wallis test was applied. The results of the Kruskal-Wallis test confirm that there is no statistically significant difference in the assessed quality in relation to the unit of analysis by the principals ($X^2=2.000$; $p=0.368$), preschool teachers ($X^2=1.480$; $p=0.477$), preschool specialists ($X^2=1.500$; $p=0.472$), administrative/technical staff members ($X^2=1.489$; $p=0.475$) nor the parents ($X^2=1.274$; $p=0.529$). According to the aforementioned, the second research hypothesis was confirmed. The assessment of quality of the work of the institution in areas of quality in relation to key stakeholders as assessors and the unit as a level of evaluation is shown in Figure 2. Average scores of institutional quality assessed on a 7-point scale by the areas of quality in relation to key stakeholders and evaluation at the unit level are shown in Figure 2.

The results confirm that in assessing the institutional quality at the level of quality as a general concept, with control from the perspective of key stakeholders as evaluators, a justified level of evaluation is the educational institution as a whole.

Research findings confirm that the proposed model of monitoring and quality assurance for educational institutions corresponds to the specific needs of the system. The ECEC institution quality is defined as the one that promotes the growth and development of each child, each parent, each employee and the community (Slunjski

*i.e. first (unit 1), second (unit 2) and third (unit 3) geographically dispersed organizational units of the same educational institution

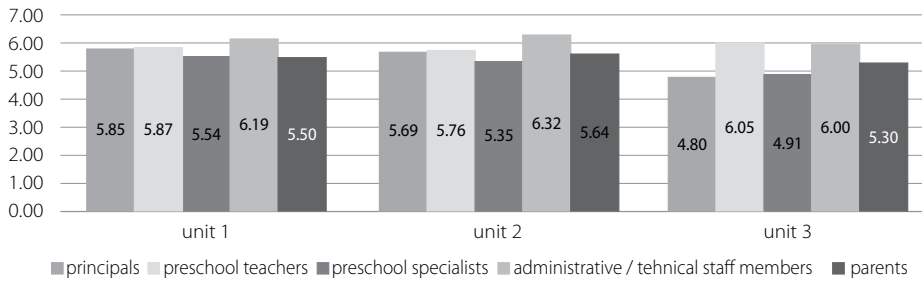


Figure 2. Average scores of institutional quality assessed on a 7-point scale by the areas of quality in relation to key stakeholders and evaluation at the unit level*

et al., 2013). The educational institution quality is operationalized through areas of quality consisting of specific elements, i.e. quality criteria. Areas of quality relate to the strategy of the institution (i.e. the mission, vision and values of the institution), the organizational leadership, institutional culture, spatial, material and technical working conditions, sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety, curriculum and educational process, human resources, collaboration with the local and broader community, and the monitoring and evaluation process. According to the methodology of this model, the ECEC institution quality is assessed by key stakeholders that include the principal of the institution, governing council, preschool teachers, preschool specialists, administrative/technical staff members and parents. In the context of this model and in relation to the analysed data in the process of self-evaluation, a justified level of evaluation is the educational institution as a whole. A unit, as a lower organizational structure, is a justified level of evaluation only in the case of exploring the stakeholder's level of information awareness regarding the overall ECEC institution quality, i.e. specific areas of quality. These findings emphasise the model sensitivity to different educational and local context (Antulić & Pribela-Hodap, 2012).

The complexity of operationalization of the concept of quality and the specificity of the educational system reduce the possibility of generalization of the results. At the same time, there is an additional need to explore the justification of the level of evaluation on a larger sample and at other levels of the educational system in which it is especially important to take into account the levels of construct of quality which we are exploring.

Conclusion

The aim of the research was to explore the justification of the level of evaluation in the process of self-evaluation of the quality of the ECEC institution in relation to key stakeholders as evaluators. For the purpose of the research, data were collected during the Self-Evaluation of Institutions of Early and Preschool Education Project. The first research problem was to explore whether the level of information about the ECEC

*i.e. first (unit 1), second (unit 2) and third (unit 3) geographically dispersed organizational units of the same educational institution.

institution quality (overall and in specific areas of quality) is different considering the level of evaluation and key stakeholders as evaluators. The results show a high level of information awareness regarding specific areas of quality as well as the quality of the institution as a whole, which confirms validity, but also the need to respect the perspective of different stakeholders in the process of measurement of the quality of an institution.

The data related to the level of information awareness regarding the quality of an institution indicate the visibility of elements of defined quality areas to key stakeholders, with no area standing out in terms of access to information about the quality, but at the same time the extent to which the stakeholders are informed differs in various areas.

There is a statistically significant difference in the information awareness regarding certain areas of quality in relation to key stakeholders as evaluators, whereby the most informed group are the principals, followed by preschool specialists, preschool teachers, administrative/technical staff members, and parents as the least informed group. The data indicate the need for control over the evaluator's perspective in accordance with the different roles within the institution.

In relation to the organizational units that the participants belong to, the level of information awareness regarding the quality of an institution is lowest in the first unit, and highest in the third unit. In relation to the organisational units of the institution which the participants come from, there was a statistically significant difference in the level of information awareness in two out of nine quality areas. This difference was found in two out of the three analysed units.

Another research problem was to explore whether the assessment of the institutional quality (overall and according to the areas of quality) differs compared to the level of evaluation and key stakeholders as evaluators. This research showed a high level of overall institutional quality. In accordance with the aforementioned problem, the differences between separate organizational units and assessed quality areas were tested. It was found that there was no statistically significant difference between different organisational units in the assessed quality in any of the nine analysed quality areas, which indicates that for quality assessment of the ECEC institution at the level of quality as a general concept, a justified level of evaluation is the educational institution as a whole.

The differences between key stakeholders and assessed quality areas in relation to evaluation level were also tested. The results confirm that there is no statistically significant difference in the assessed quality in relation to the unit of analysis neither by the principals, preschool teachers, preschool specialists, administrative/technical staff members nor by parents. This further confirms that in assessing the institutional quality at the level of quality as a general concept with the control of the perspective of key stakeholders as evaluators, a justified level of evaluation is the educational institution as a whole.

Research findings confirm that the proposed model of monitoring and quality assurance for educational institutions responds to the specific needs of the system. In the context of this model and in relation to the analysed data in the process of self-evaluation of an educational institution, a justified level of evaluation is the educational institution as a whole. A unit as a lower organizational structure is a justified level of evaluation only in the case of exploring the stakeholders' level of information awareness regarding the overall ECEC institution quality, i.e. specific areas of quality.

The research findings should be observed while taking into account the complexity of operationalization of the concept of quality, the methodology of monitoring the quality and the specificity of the educational system. There is a need for additional research in this area while taking into account different levels of the educational system.

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Razina evaluacije u procesu samoevaluacije obrazovne institucije

Sažetak

Cilj je istraživanja ispitati opravdanost razine evaluacije u procesu samoprocjene kvalitete rada odgojno-obrazovne ustanove u odnosu na ključne dionike kao procjenjivače. Za potrebe istraživanja koristili su se podatci prikupljeni u projektu Samovrednovanje ustanova ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja. Podatci se odnose na procjenu kvalitete rada triju područnih objekata jedne odgojno-obrazovne ustanove. Razinu evaluacije predstavlja područni objekt, odnosno ustanova u cjelini. Sudionici istraživanja (N=189) su ovi ključni dionici: 3 ravnatelja, 37 odgojitelja, 12 članova stručnoga tima, 44 člana administrativno-tehničkoga i pomoćnoga osoblja i 93 roditelja. Za procjenu kvalitete rada ustanove, odnosno pojedinoga objekta, koristili su se upitnici za ključne dionike koji su razvijeni unutar spomenutoga projekta. Rezultati potvrđuju visok stupanj informiranosti (95.28 %) ključnih dionika o elementima kvalitete rada ustanove. Kruskal-Wallis testom ispitane su razlike između procjena kvalitete rada ustanove u odnosu na razinu evaluacije (područni objekti, odnosno ustanova u cjelini) i ključne dionike kao procjenjivače. Rezultati potvrđuju da nema statistički značajne razlike u procjeni kvalitete rada ustanove u odnosu na objekt kao razinu evaluacije ravnatelja ($\chi^2=2.000$; $p=0.368$), odgojitelja ($\chi^2=1.480$; $p=0.477$), članova stručnoga tima ($\chi^2=1.500$; $p=0.472$), administrativno-tehničkoga i pomoćnoga osoblja ($\chi^2=1.489$; $p=0.475$) i roditelja ($\chi^2=1.274$; $p=0.529$). Potvrđeno je da je objekt, kao niža organizacijska struktura, opravdana razina evaluacije jedino u slučaju ispitivanja informiranosti dionika o kvaliteti rada ustanove, odnosno o informiranosti o pojedinim područjima kvalitete rada ustanove. U procesu samovrednovanja rada odgojno-obrazovne ustanove opravdana razina evaluacije je odgojno-obrazovna ustanova u cjelini.

Ključne riječi: ključni dionici; osiguranje kvalitete; proces samovrednovanja; ustanova ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja.