

Teachers' Opinions on the Possibilities of Collaboration with Parents

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Abstract

Cooperation between preschool education institutions (kindergartens) and families contributes to the welfare of children, and primarily depends on the attitudes and competences of teachers. The research was conducted in two preschool institutions from different regions of the Republic of Croatia, on two samples similar in structure. The revised version of the Parent Survey of Family and Community instrument (Sheldon & Epstein, 2007) was used. The reliability of the used scale ($.76 < \lambda < .88$) corresponds to the original. Informing parents of kindergarten children has been recognised as the most common cause of collaboration with educators ($M=3.44$; $SD=0.59$), while counselling on parenting has been recognized as the least common one ($M=2.85$; $SD=0.61$). Factor saturation of certain scales indicates deeper parental involvement, rather than particles that point to normal activity. There was a statistically significant correlation between participants' professional work experience and the results of applied scales ($.40 < r < .55$; $p < .01$), except for the assessment of parents' contribution to the curriculum structure ($r = -.28$; $p < .05$). Significant differences in subsamples were determined on the *t*-test for the variable Causes of cooperation ($t=2.72$; $p < .01$). Research results indicate that existing formal education of teachers is insufficient in relation to their development of professional competences needed for collaboration with parents, which is in accordance with the results of recent global research.

Key words: collaboration causes; forms of teacher-parent collaboration.

Introduction

The importance of collaboration between parents and education institutions has long been acknowledged. The Kindergarten Act (1956, Article 2) states that one of

the most fundamental tasks of kindergartens is to collaborate with parents as well as to provide them with help “regarding the application of contemporary education principles and methods”. As stated in the Social Care of Preschool Children Act (1981, Articles 2 and 29), counselling as a form of support and parent collaboration emphasises the need for support and “other forms of collaboration with parents”. However, many years after its guidelines were legally determined, collaboration between parents and teachers has still not reached the wanted level, nor has it turned into a partnership.

It is possible to interpret the reasons for such an uneven and unsatisfying development of this collaborative relationship, as well as the absence of partnership between parents and education institutions, through an individual’s discourse, environment conditions and former experiences of both parents and teachers. Declarative repetition of the need for teachers’ collaboration with parents, as well as the absence of change in personal paradigm and application of effective solutions possibly confirms the theory of path dependence (Pierson, 2000), and indispensable system adjustments to the current state of society (Baran, Dobrotić, & Matković, 2011).

The National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education (2015) presupposes active parent participation in the education process. Although some authors (Lueder, 2011; Šteh & Kalin, 2011) remain uncertain regarding the possibility of building a teacher-parent partnership, positive educators’ attitudes toward parents, skills acquired and professional competences as well as quality teacher-parent collaboration are seen as beneficial for children. Insight into modern practice evokes the question of the levels of parents’ and teachers’ interest, and readiness regarding the building of partnership and mutual active participation in the construction, application and evaluation of early and preschool education curriculum. Therefore, it is valid to conduct research on teachers’ opinions on the quality of existing relationships and the modality of collaboration application, as well as self-evaluation of educators’ personal competences necessary to build the partnership.

This paper researches teachers’ opinions on the existing forms of collaboration, parental role in the construction of the curriculum and possibilities of partnership development, as well as teachers’ self-evaluation regarding their personal competences for designing, encouraging, realising and developing partnership with the parents of the children they teach. The paper represents a feature of action research on the possibilities of collaboration with parents, simultaneously conducted in certain education groups in kindergartens in Makarska and Čakovec, with the aim of encouraging active parent inclusion in curriculum construction. At the same time, a network of kindergarten teachers is promoted as a form of informal learning through experience exchange, evaluation and discussion. The research on teachers’ opinions was conducted as part of the initial phase, enabling the recognition of areas in need of change and further development, all the while working in the optimal interest of children and all participants of the education process.

Collaboration between families and education institutions can be interpreted as a generic term which includes all types of parent-institution interaction: information exchange, volunteering, participation in the education process and education for parents (Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009). Partnership between families and kindergartens presupposes parent participation in all aspects of education, thereby admitting (acknowledging) that parents present a principal influence on their children's lives (Epstein, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, & Van Voorhis, 2002; Ljubetić, 2014). Ljubetić (2014) sees partnership between parents and teachers as the highest level of partnering relationships directed towards achieving a mutual goal – children's welfare. Legislature suggests that partnership can be built exclusively with the parent, who presents a child's legal guardian, while other family members can be included following parents' approval.

Recent research (Jackson & Needham, 2014; Ratcliff & Hunt, 2009; Wilson, 2015) conclusively emphasises the importance of partnerships between parents and early and preschool education institutions. Quality partnership with the education institution can contribute to the quality of family influences, and in the long term is connected to more successful academic results, socio-emotional competence development in children (Jackson & Needham, 2014; Maleš, 2015), the transference of values, as well as the formation of value orientations which include a positive attitude toward education, which, in turn, affects society as a whole (Bleach, 2015). The validity of active parent inclusion in the education process can be corroborated in terms of human rights (Rege & Almeida, 2013), i.e. the fundamental right of each and every individual – children as well as their parents – to active participation and construction of a quality lifestyle.

It is valid to analyse parent participation in the education process through the prism of individual engagement of both parents and teachers (Berthelsen & Walker, 2008; Emerson, Fear, Fox, & Sanders, 2012; Higgins & Morley, 2014). Since partnership building most often takes place on the premises of education institutions, it is logical to conclude that the responsibility for encouraging a partnering relationship should be attributed to the employees of those institutions (Keyes, 2002; Maleš, 2015; Vuorinen, Sandberg, Sheridan, & Williams, 2014; Westergard, 2013). Therefore, the success and quality of partnering relationships very much depend on teachers' competences (Sewell, 2012). In addition to knowledge obtained during formal education, it is necessary for teachers to develop further competences, combined with a positive attitude towards the partnership, as well as skills which will enable them to apply their knowledge regarding the inclusion of parents in the education process in practice. Despite the importance of professional collaborative competences, research shows that teachers perceive their formal education as insufficient regarding this particular issue (Brown, Harris, Jacobson, & Trotti, 2014; Maleš, Ljubetić, & Stričević, 2010; MetLife 2006). Most commonly, the lack of practice in working with parents is emphasised (Chavkin, 2005), as are hidden curriculums which hinder the development of a partnering

relationship between teachers and parents (Katz & Bauch, 1999; Souto Manning & Swick, 2006; Swick & McKnight, 1989), especially when it comes to parents of a different cultural, religious or national heritage or worldview (Perry & Southwell, 2011; Stayton, Miller, & Dinnebeil, 2003). If professional competences are to be determined as a combination of professional knowledge and skills as well as personal characteristics (Brock, 2006), then it is necessary to acknowledge the fact that teachers' personal characteristics include their inner set of prejudice, which, in turn, affects their attitudes toward children and their families. In the interest of achieving a high quality of work and child welfare, early education professionals should be able to recognise their prejudiced opinions and consequent attitudes in order to overcome them. In problematising education as a presupposition of the acquisition of competences necessary for teacher-parent collaboration, Vuorinen et al. (2014) emphasise that teachers' personal characteristics, which represent an essential part of collaboration with parents, cannot be developed through formal education, but are obtained through experience. Teachers' insufficient competences limit the realisation and subsequent development of a partnering relationship, which can, in turn, negatively reflect on teachers' experience.

Partnership is a two-way process which should entail active parent participation. Positive parent engagement contributes to education success of their children (Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Lee & Bowen, 2006), children's motivation for active participation in their own education (Manson & Martin, 2009) and later social productivity of an individual (Emerson et al., 2012).

Rege and Almeida (2013) point out the positive effects of the transference of experience of parents who already have a child attending a certain education institution or whose children have recently joined an education group. Advantages of diverse education groups reflect on parent engagement, increased interaction between parents and the transference of positive patterns of behaviour, which directly enables a better understanding of the education process.

Within the global framework, the modern family is increasingly mobile. At the same time, the dynamic nonlinearity of family processes points to the need for understanding the specifics of a family. Teachers' professional competences therefore include interculturality, which combines cognitive and affective domains of functioning. The cognitive domain includes knowledge of one's own as well as other cultures, together with the knowledge of similarities and differences between those cultures and intercultural understanding. The affective aspect of reacting to intercultural differences, according to Perry and Southwell (2011), is called intercultural sensitivity, which is further expanded into two directions – the affective aspect of intercultural communicational competence, and the developmental, subjective experience of cultural differences. Therefore, the attitude that “[p]ractitioners in early and preschool education must be prepared to work with families of different cultural, ethnic, language and social background” (Stayton et al., 2003, p. 11) is completely justified.

Methodological Framework

This research is part of a study aimed at analysing the possibilities of high-quality practice development in connection to the engagement of teachers, professional associates and parents/legal guardians of children attending certain education groups in kindergartens in two local municipalities: Makarska and Čakovec. Through the application of action research, all members of the education process, including children and their parents, are encouraged to participate in the construction, application and evaluation of open and developmental curriculums. Teachers' attitudes toward their collaboration with parents are understood to be prerequisites for the successful inclusion of parents in the curriculum construction. The justification of the cooperation is not questionable; this applies to teachers' cooperation potential (previous experience, skills, motivation, commitment). The researcher thus focuses on the following: teachers' previous experience (viewed as a prerequisite for future cooperation), teachers' attitudes towards the inclusion of parents in the educational process, and teachers' self-evaluation with regard to their skills as a guide for professional development. Based on the research questions, the following research hypotheses were developed:

- 1) It is assumed that lower forms of cooperation (information) are the most represented within the existing forms of cooperation.
- 2) It is assumed that there is a link between teachers' self-evaluation with regard to their professional skills and the evaluation of existing forms of cooperation with parents.
- 3) It is assumed that professional work experience affects the frequency and assessment of the importance of cooperation with parents.

Participants in the initial estimate of the quality and modality of the collaborative relationship were 78 teachers (all female) – 39 from Makarska and 42 from Čakovec. The average age of teachers included in the research was 38.18 years ($SD=9.15$). Participation in the research was completely anonymous and voluntary. Although the sample includes all teachers in these two institutions, the size and structure of the sample are not representative of the teachers' population in the Republic of Croatia; however, it serves as an indication of teachers' assessment of the modality of current collaboration.

Comparison of teachers in two different but structurally similar institutions is used as the basis for a possible generalisation of research outcomes on the teacher population in similar educational institutions in Croatia.

Instrument

With the authors' approval, the research used a revised version of the *Parent Survey of Family and Community* instrument (Sheldon & Epstein, 2007), which primarily analyses parents' opinions. The *Questionnaire on Teachers' Opinions on Collaboration*

with Parents was modified according to specific conditions and then offered to teachers. Together with independent demographic variables (age, gender, years of working experience in early and preschool institutional education, level of formal education), it contained five dependent variables relevant for the research objective, structured as assessment scales (importance or frequency). Dependent variables were determined through two dimensions:

- 1) Teachers' opinions on existing collaboration with parents (Causes and forms of collaboration, their role, parent engagement and level of interest in the education process/V4);
- 2) Teachers' self-evaluation (*Professional satisfaction and personal competences/V5*).

The variable *nationality* featured in the original questionnaire was not used due to its statistic irrelevance for the teachers' population sample, nor was the variable *parent social networks*, since they are not relevant for the objective of this research. Collaboration between parents and kindergartens includes subscales based on different types of parent engagement (Epstein et al., 2002): inclusion in the education process, information on the success of a child, parent support, strengthening the relationship with the community on the level of information, active parent inclusion in preschool governing bodies and directly in the education process. The following scales were used: *Collaboration causes* (12 elements, index V1), *Parental inclusion in the education process* (16 elements, V2), *Parental inclusion in curriculum construction* (6 elements, V3) and *Parental contribution* (6 elements, V4). The additional *Teachers' self-evaluation* variable was also included (8 elements, V5). In scales V1 and V2, two elements were added. Through observation of practical social situations, existing characteristic partnering activities and cooperation activities in authentic situations were singled out. Information on teachers' personal experiences was gathered, which may be interpreted as the diagnostic phase of the assessment, necessary to determine key trends. The collected data was reduced through communication revision with the teachers and added as the following elements: *Invitation to social gatherings* and *Fundraising* (*Causes and forms of collaboration/V1*), and *Participating in kindergarten activities* and *Encouraging independence in conflict solving* (*Parental inclusion in the education process/V2*). Scale reliability coefficients were determined with Cronbach's alpha coefficient, and ranged between .76 and .88, which corresponds with the original (from .64 to .89).

Assessment was done on a dichotomously coded four-level scale, in which numbers 1 and 2 denote (partial or full) *low-level assessment of importance or frequency*, while 3 and 4 denote (partial or full) *high-level assessment of importance or frequency*. Frequency is determined in the *Causes and forms of collaboration* variable (V1). The authors of the original scale believe it to be justified, based on their own experience of using it while taking into account the possible level of study participants' education, and coding it so that a higher number means a higher approval or higher assessment level. The assessment scale is coded without the zero point in order to prevent research participants from taking a neutral position.

The questionnaire analyses teachers' opinions on collaboration with *parents* without differentiating between mothers and fathers. Although a certain amount of research supposes that mothers are more engaged in the lives of their children, a child's education is actually a result of the interaction between both parents (Jokić & Ristić Dedić, 2010), so educators perceive both parents equally.

Questioning was done within the initial testing as part of the preparatory phase of action research. Adjusted versions of the instrument were given to both teachers and parents in order to recognise the advantages and shortcomings of the current collaboration and use them as a starting point for future changes. This paper offers a review of the data collected through questionnaires given to teachers. The processed data indicate the existence of cooperation, but also problematic areas which can serve as encouragement for further development of the process. Teachers' self-evaluation indicates the need for additional education of teachers with regards to collaboration with the parents, with the aim of building a partnering relationship.

Results and Discussion

To process data, a factor analysis of the scales used was applied in order to isolate the key assessment elements and analyse the interdependence of variables. The extraction was done via principal components analysis. The application of the Scree test showed that all scales have one statistically significant dimension which accounts for the majority of its total variance.

Descriptive measures were used to analyse the results obtained through applied scales; the correlation between the scales was considered with the help of the Pearson correlation coefficient, while the connection between the length of working experience and the scales was done with the help of point-biserial correlation. The t-test was employed to analyse the significance of teachers' assessment of subsamples.

Table 1

Descriptive features of the scale Causes and forms of collaboration

	Elements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>v</i>	λ
V1.1	Progress information	3.44	0.59	0.35	.79
V1.2	Help in developing understanding and encouragement	3.22	0.67	0.45	.79
V1.3	Information on joining the workplace	2.88	0.69	0.48	.79
V1.4	Counselling on child-rearing practices	2.90	0.64	0.41	.80
V1.5	Counselling on possibilities	2.85	0.61	0.38	.79
V1.6	Possibilities of using community services	2.88	0.79	0.63	.78
V1.7	Information about a kindergarten child	3.67	0.50	0.25	.79
V1.8	Invitation to parent-teacher conferences	3.65	0.57	0.33	.81
V1.9	Invitation to social gatherings	3.74	0.49	0.24	.81
V1.10	Fundraising	3.40	0.76	0.59	.81
V1.11	Inclusion in the work of institutional bodies	2.54	0.93	0.87	.79
V1.12	Information on social events	3.05	0.79	0.62	.79

λ =reliability determined by using the Cronbach alpha coefficient

Teachers estimated that they most often invite parents to social gatherings in kindergartens (which are not indicated as a form of collaboration in the original instrument) as well as to inform them of their child's performance. As the least frequent cause of collaboration on the communication level, teachers point out the inclusion of parents in managing and counselling institutional bodies, which is possible to interpret through the nature of the establishment of these bodies (technically, elections take place every four years). Another possible explanation for such results can be found in the fact that the implementation of such forms of collaboration is clearly regulated, and the regulations themselves should closely be followed (social gatherings, parent-teacher conferences, and information exchange). Other forms of collaboration are also part of the institution curriculum, but there are no clear guidelines regarding the qualitative estimate of the frequency of such forms of collaboration. Cheatham and Ostrosky (2011) problematise teachers' perception of their partnerships with parents, especially regarding parent-teacher conferences, saying that it represents the result of a correction paradigm, which results in a relationship in which educators take a superior position and do not assess parents' knowledge or attitudes.

Table 2

Components and communalities of the scale Causes and forms of collaboration

	Elements	Factor saturation	Communalities	% variance
V1.1	Progress information	.66	.54	33.91
V1.2	Help in developing understanding and encouragement	.64	.41	14.60
V1.3	Information on joining the workplace	.63	.59	9.83
V1.4	Counselling on child-rearing practices	.54	.63	7.63
V1.5	Counselling on possibilities	.65	.62	7.31
V1.6	Possibilities of using community services	.07	.54	5.25
V1.7	Information about a kindergarten child	.63	.55	4.61
V1.8	Invitation to parent-teacher conferences	.39	.70	4.33
V1.9	Invitation to social gatherings	.34	.75	3.79
V1.10	Fundraising	.42	.55	3.57
V1.11	Inclusion in the work of institutional bodies	.64	.66	2.74
V1.12	Information on social events	.59	.45	2.36

The fact that teachers see counselling on the possibilities of encouraging the development of children as a rare occasion for their collaboration with parents is somewhat worrisome. Murray, McTarland-Piazza, and Harrison (2015) emphasise the need for teachers to employ those communication strategies which encourage *meaningful* involvement of parents, while emphasising the importance of parental strengths and talents. Since collaboration represents a two-way process, it is expected to result in a two-way communication as well. Therefore, teachers should, through counselling on the possibilities of the development of children, take into account the parents' role as advisors, just as they themselves are positioned in the role of advisor.

Earlier studies have shown that they are not yet ready to do so, since the majority of teachers opted for indirect counselling (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2011). It is possible that a certain number of research participants apply this form of counselling, but such opinions do not contribute to the development of effective parental support in the optimal interest of children, which unfortunately confirms the initial hypothesis.

It can be noted that the *Causes and forms of collaboration* variable (V1) is greatly determined by elements which refer to information exchange and collaboration within the framework of the education process, while social gatherings and parent-teacher conferences are the least included in certain variables. Information on progress and help with understanding and encouraging child development stand for 48.56% of the variance.

Table 3

Descriptive characteristics of the scale Parental inclusion in the education of children

	Elements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>v</i>	λ
V2.1	Building positive attitudes toward kindergartens	2.62	0.62	0.39	.88
V2.2	Encouraging positive attitudes toward education	2.89	0.57	0.32	.88
V2.3	Instructing children on different learning resources	2.43	0.69	0.47	.88
V2.4	Encouraging a child's learning process	2.90	0.70	0.49	.88
V2.5	Receiving counselling on a child's success	2.90	0.73	0.54	.88
V2.6	Contacting experts	2.25	0.89	0.79	.88
V2.7	Level of interest in a child's learning process	2.79	0.74	0.54	.87
V2.8	Participating in kindergarten activities	2.68	0.70	0.49	.88
V2.9	Participating in parent-teaching conferences	2.88	0.56	0.31	.88
V2.10	Understanding a child's attitude toward kindergarten	2.58	0.61	0.37	.87
V2.11	Motivating a child to participate in kindergarten activities	2.72	0.62	0.38	.87
V2.12	Assessment of a child's invested efforts	2.89	0.67	0.45	.87
V2.13	Celebrating a child's success	3.23	0.71	0.51	.88
V2.14	Supporting children's friendships	3.00	0.63	0.40	.88
V2.15	Encouraging independence in conflict solving	2.44	0.67	0.45	.87
V2.16	Level of success in the parental role	2.84	0.49	0.27	.88

λ =reliability determined by using the Cronbach alpha coefficient

Earlier studies (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003) show that parental inclusion varies depending on the age of the children. Early and preschool age is described as a period in which most parents are included by providing children with emotional and cognitive support. The results of this study confirm this claim since it is evident that teachers regard parents' positive emotional involvement as the most important parental behaviour which reflects on children's emotional development. Other findings are related to cognitive support, which also corresponds with the results of the aforementioned studies. Although certain prejudiced opinions about kindergartens (learning at an early age is not valued as much as learning in primary education) are nevertheless present, high evaluation of the importance of parental involvement in children's learning and fostering positive attitudes about education may indicate a change in attitude in favour of kindergartens.

This research has shown that teachers estimate that parents are not prone to asking for help when they notice their children having difficulties. Such a state could be the result of parental negation of the existence of the problem. Likewise, it can also be the result of teachers' low self-evaluation with regard to their professional skills; namely, teachers may avoid such conversations since they do not want to cause worry or, possibly, the feeling of guilt in parents (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2011). If teachers foster such opinions, parents are not able to ask for help in the first place.

It is interesting that teachers estimate that parents are insufficiently encouraging their children to solve their conflicts independently. This claim might be the result of prejudice regarding parental over protectiveness, as well as high expectations of their children's teachers and education institutions. Consideration of such a state indicates that it is hard to collaborate with parents who solve their children's conflicts or are expecting their teachers to solve them.

Table 4

Components and communalities of the scale Parental inclusion in the education of children

	Elements	Factor saturation	Communalities	% variance
V2.1	Building positive attitudes toward kindergartens	.49	.46	37.45
V2.2	Encouraging positive attitudes toward education	.43	.68	10.29
V2.3	Instructing children on different learning resources	.59	.63	9.91
V2.4	Encouraging the learning process of a child	.56	.68	6.26
V2.5	Receiving counselling on a child's success	.62	.66	5.14
V2.6	Contacting experts	.58	.77	4.91
V2.7	Level of interest in a child's learning process	.77	.66	4.44
V2.8	Participating in kindergarten activities	.59	.61	4.10
V2.9	Participation in parent-teaching conferences	.54	.60	3.24
V2.10	Understanding a child's attitude toward kindergarten	.66	.69	2.76
V2.11	Motivating a child to participate in kindergarten activities	.73	.65	2.56
V2.12	Assessment of a child's invested efforts	.71	.67	2.21
V2.13	Celebrating a child's success	.65	.73	1.93
V2.14	Supporting children's friendships	.60	.70	1.87
V2.15	Encouraging independence in conflict solving	.67	.54	1.52
V2.16	Level of success in the parental role	.49	.50	1.38

According to the level of factor saturation on the *Parental inclusion in the education process scale (V2)*, it is possible to conclude that the variable is significantly determined by indicators of deeper parent inclusion, rather than elements indicating normal activities. Building positive attitudes toward kindergarten and education stands for 47.74% of the variance.

Table 5

Descriptive features of scale elements, reliability coefficient and the structure of first principal components for the variable Parental inclusion in curriculum construction

	Elements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>v</i>	λ
V3.1	Planning education work	2.26	0.85	0.72	.65
V3.2	Condition organising of education work	2.65	0.76	0.58	.66
V3.3	Participation in kindergarten activities	2.88	0.72	0.52	.66
V3.4	Visit to parents' work place	2.64	0.87	0.75	.66
V3.5	Social gatherings, field trips	3.04	0.78	0.61	.67
V3.6	Education process evaluation	2.39	0.85	0.73	.66

λ =reliability determined by using the Cronbach alpha coefficient

Certain aspects of research (Hornby, 2000; Murray et al., 2015) indicate a deviation from the need for equal contribution of all parents. Therefore, it is valid to suggest to teachers that they should not expect all parents to be equally engaged in all activities, but that it is up to them to encourage inclusion of certain parents in certain forms of collaboration. Hornby (2000) acknowledges the contribution of parents as experts in various areas as a form of enriching the curriculum. According to this author, almost all parents will collaborate by organising field trips and social gatherings, as well as participation in kindergarten activities. Some parents will contribute to ensuring the conditions for the proper implementation of the education process, while only a small number of them will take part in decision-making regarding the management of the kindergarten or the education process. This research has confirmed such a model of parent inclusion. Teachers represented in the sample estimate that parental inclusion is at its highest when it comes to social gatherings and at its lowest when it comes to the communal planning of education work. If parents suggest and organise field trips independently, that can be interpreted as planning education work, which means that assessing inclusion in the planning should be equal to assessing participation in organising field trips. If parents only support teachers during field trips, it is questionable whether teachers acknowledge and encourage parent inclusion in the implementation of the curriculum.

Table 6

Components and communalities of the scale Parental inclusion in curriculum construction

	Elements	Factor saturation	Communalities	% variance
V3.1	Planning education work	.75	.57	53.11
V3.2	Condition organising of education work	.73	.54	12.79
V3.3	Participation in kindergarten activities	.77	.59	10.91
V3.4	Visit to parents' work place	.69	.48	9.23
V3.5	Social gatherings, field trips	.68	.47	8.00
V3.6	Education process evaluation	.73	.54	5.96

At the same time, certain aspects of research interpret parental inclusion as parental engagement (Hiatt-Michael, 2010), parents' previous experience (Rege & Almeida, 2013), collaboration with parents of other children (Emerson et al., 2012; Epstein et al., 2002), as well as teachers' communication competences (Hobjilä, 2014).

The *Parent inclusion in curriculum construction* scale (V3) has a clearly defined first component, while all other elements equally contribute to defining the variable and clearly suggest that a higher level of parent inclusion in curriculum construction and development would enhance the quality of the education process. Planning and organising education work makes up 64.90% of the variance.

Table 7

Descriptive features of scale elements, reliability coefficient and the structure of first principal components for the variable Parental contribution

	Elements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>v</i>	λ
V4.1	Contribution to education process quality	3.31	0.70	0.49	.68
V4.2	Contribution to overall development of children	3.44	0.63	0.40	.68
V4.3	Positive influence on parent-child relationship	3.53	0.61	0.38	.69
V4.4	Positive influence on educator-parent relationship	3.49	0.61	0.38	.69
V4.5	Facilitating the educational process	2.06	0.78	0.61	.73
V4.6	Reducing teachers' workload	1.90	0.68	0.46	.75

λ =reliability determined by using the Cronbach alpha coefficient

Positive assessment of parent contribution in elements which directly refer to children can suggest that the traditional collaboration paradigm dominates teachers' expectations, according to which the education process is primarily the responsibility of the teacher (Wright, 2009). It can be noted that teachers interpret active involvement and parental contribution in the education process as a need for greater personal commitment and workload. This is in accordance with research results which interpret children's socialisation and understanding of their immediate environment through communication between parents and teachers, and the level of their engagement (Banasiak, 2011; Hiatt-Michael, 2010). These results possibly depend on teachers' expectations of parents' contribution, which can be a result of teachers' previous experiences. This points to the conclusion that self-evaluation on competence of the education work is based on positive assessment of the importance of both formal and informal education of teachers.

Table 8

Components and communalities of the scale Parental contribution

	Elements	Factor saturation	Communalities	% variance
V4.1	Contribution to education process quality	.81	.69	53.08
V4.2	Contribution to overall development of children	.87	.84	25.87
V4.3	Positive influence on parent-child relationship	.85	.85	8.23
V4.4	Positive influence on educator-parent relationship	.83	.74	5.91
V4.5	Facilitating the education process	.57	.79	3.90
V4.6	Reducing teachers' workload	.63	.75	2.89

The *Parent contribution* scale (V4) is clearly determined although elements featuring negative aspects of parent inclusion have a somewhat lower factor saturation which possibly suggests that parent contribution is regarded as an enhancement of the

education process, but also implies a higher level of teacher commitment. The assessment of the importance of parental contribution to the quality of the education process and child development makes up 78.96% of the variance.

Table 9

Descriptive characteristics of the scale Teachers' self-evaluation

Elements	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>v</i>	λ
V5.1 I love being a kindergarten teacher	3.78	0.49	0.25	.73
V5.2 Competence for working with children	3.71	0.56	0.31	.72
V5.3 Competence for working with parents	3.37	0.62	0.39	.69
V5.4 Building a partnership with parents	3.57	0.61	0.38	.69
V5.5 Satisfaction with collaboration with parents	3.23	0.60	0.36	.75
V5.6 Acquiring competences through formal education	2.82	0.73	0.54	.80
V5.7 Independently acquired competences through work experience	3.41	0.54	0.29	.74
V5.8 Continuous professional training	3.42	0.59	0.35	.72

λ =reliability determined by using the Cronbach alpha coefficient

It can be noted that teachers have a high regard for their personal competences. Low level of teachers' self-evaluation with regard to skills acquired during their formal education refers to the importance of skill development through formal and informal learning during professional work, which is in accordance with findings of certain global studies (Eraut, 2003; Urban, Vandenbroek, Lazzari, Peeters, & van Laere, 2011).

Table 10

Components and communalities of the scale Teacher's self-evaluation

Elements	Factor saturation	Communalities	% variance
V5.1 I love being a kindergarten teacher	.69	.73	41.41
V5.2 Competence for working with children	.75	.80	16.87
V5.3 Competence for working with parents	.79	.63	11.57
V5.4 Building a partnership with parents	.79	.63	11.11
V5.5 Satisfaction with collaboration with parents	.46	.46	6.55
V5.6 Acquiring competences through formal education	.15	.36	5.46
V5.7 Independently acquired competences through work experience	.54	.55	4.02
V5.8 Continuous professional training	.69	.50	3.00

Self-evaluation with regard to personal satisfaction and professional competence makes up 58.19% of the variance. It is indicative that *Acquiring competences through formal education* variable does not feature a significant correlation with the factor.

Correlations between the results of certain scales show a high correlation of the scales used, although the scale regarding teachers' self-evaluation stands out from this trend. At the same time, assessment of the importance of parental involvement in the education of children positively correlates with the assessment of the importance

of parental contribution to the construction of the curriculum. No connection was found between teachers' self-evaluation and the assessment of parental inclusion in the education process in kindergartens.

Table 11

Used scales correlation

	V1	V2	V3	V4	V5
Collaboration causes (V1)	1.00	.54**	.39**	.33**	.25*
Parental inclusion in the education process (V2)		1.00	.52**	.29**	.32**
Parental inclusion in curriculum construction (V3)			1.00	.25*	.01
Parental contribution (V4)				1.00	.37**
Self-evaluation (V5)					1.00

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Table 12

Descriptive statistic measures of scale results

	Collaboration causes	Parental inclusion in the education process	Parental inclusion in curriculum construction	Parental contribution	Self-evaluation
M	38.22	44.00	15.56	19.99	27.15
Mod	34.00	44.00	18.00	22.00	29.00
SD	4.70	6.46	3.66	3.01	3.27
Sk	-0.40	-0.27	-0.67	-0.57	-1.56
Ku	0.11	-0.17	0.56	-0.07	3.61
K-S	0.84	0.70	1.16	1.55	1.42
λ	0.81	0.88	0.82	0.85	0.76

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

It is clear that only the *Parental inclusion in curriculum construction* scale (V3) features the arithmetic average that is lower than the mode value. As the measure of horizontal deviation, skewness indicates a higher level of assessment that is most pronounced in *Self-evaluation*, the only scale which has a statistically significant skewness value ($> + |1:00|$). At the same time, this scale is the only one which shows a statistically significant kurtosis value, while all others represent the value of vertical deviations from the normal distribution. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test values did not show statistically significant deviation from the normal distribution for any scale, and all applied scales have extremely satisfactory reliability. Reliability for the *Parent inclusion in the education process* variable, in which 3 additional elements were added on the basis of observed reality, is greater in the instrument that was used than in the original. Compared to the original, a slightly lower reliability (but still on a satisfactorily high level) can be noted for *Collaboration causes* and *Parental inclusion in curriculum construction* variables.

Table 13

Assessment comparison according to subscales (t-test)

	city / kindergarten	N	M	SD	SE	t	p
Collaboration causes	Makarska	39	39.64	3.78	0.60	2.72	.01
	Čakovec	42	36.90	5.12	0.79		
Parental inclusion in the education process	Makarska	39	45.33	7.07	1.13	1.82	.07
	Čakovec	42	42.76	5.62	0.86		
Parental inclusion in curriculum construction	Makarska	39	16.48	3.29	0.52	2.26	.03
	Čakovec	42	14.69	3.80	0.58		
Parental contribution	Makarska	38	20.52	3.08	0.49	1.54	.13
	Čakovec	42	19.50	2.89	0.44		
Self-evaluation	Makarska	37	26.83	3.78	0.62	-0.80	.43
	Čakovec	42	27.42	2.75	0.42		

Obtained t-test results indicate that there is a statistically important difference regarding the *Collaboration causes* and *Parental inclusion in curriculum construction* variables on the $p < .05$ level. The other three scales do not feature a statistically significant variation. The results indicate a generally high level of teachers' self-evaluation, and an equal estimate of the frequency of parental involvement and assessment of the importance of the contribution of such involvement in the education process, which could be interpreted as a general trend. The causes of cooperation and forms of parental inclusion in the construction of the curriculum differ, which can be attributed to authentic curricula of individual institutions.

Table 14

Correlation between years of working experience and scale scores

	Years of working experience
Collaboration causes	.53**
Parental inclusion in the education process	.55**
Parental inclusion in curriculum construction	.40**
Parental contribution	-.28*
Self-evaluation	.43**

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Based on the point-biserial correlation, a statistically significant correlation between the years of participants' professional work experience (the professional work was treated continually) and the scores obtained was determined. Years of working experience, on the level of $p < .05$, negatively correlate with the assessment of parental contribution to curriculum construction. At the same time, years of working experience have a positive correlation with the rest of the variables ($p < .01$), which indicates that a greater number of years of working experience leads to enhanced acknowledgment of the importance of the analysed variables and self-evaluation.

Conclusion

The results of empirical research on teachers' opinions on the collaboration with parents indicate that educators have a positive estimate regarding the importance of parental inclusion in early and preschool education of children, although this assessment has a negative correlation with the duration of teachers' professional work experience. Indicated frequency of lower forms of collaboration (information) can be interpreted through insufficient professional competences, which teachers estimate are developed through practice, as well as formal and informal education. However, the assumption is that teachers who positively assess the importance of collaboration experience objective difficulties in its implementation, which they perceive as an additional load on their personal work and a need for a higher level of personal commitment. These shortcomings may be associated with teacher education, but they could equally be the result of different expectations toward parental inclusion, different sets of values and cultural attitudes, as well as an authentic curriculum pertaining to a given education institution.

Recent sources emphasise that by strengthening teachers' competences, it is possible to direct the forms of parental inclusion and collaboration between education institutions and parents toward a partnering relationship with the aim of optimal interest of the children. The results of this research indicate the need for a systematic education and professional development of teachers, with the aim of realising the parent-teacher partnership, which can encourage parent's inclusion through various forms of collaboration and decrease the negative effect of work experience on the assessment of the importance of parental contribution to curriculum construction. It is reasonable to assume that the implementation of action research can positively reflect on teachers' commitment and their understanding of the importance of parental inclusion, as well as the construction of various forms of collaboration which will provide parents with a choice.

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Mišljenje odgajatelja o mogućnostima suradnje s roditeljima

Sažetak

Suradnja predškolskih odgojno-obrazovnih ustanova (dječjih vrtića) i obitelji doprinosi dobrobiti djece, a primarno ovisi o stavovima i kompetencijama odgajatelja. Istraženo je mišljenje odgajatelja o suradnji s roditeljima u dvije predškolske ustanove iz različitih regija Republike Hrvatske, na dva strukturno slična poduzorka. Koristila se revidirana verzija instrumenta Parent Survey of Family and Community (Sheldon i Epstein, 2007). Pouzdanost primijenjenih skala ($,76 < \lambda < ,88$) korespondira s izvornikom. Informiranje roditelja o djeci u dječjem vrtiću prepoznato je kao najčešći povod za suradnju s odgajateljima ($M=3,44$; $SD=,59$), a najmanje je zastupljeno ($M=2,85$; $SD=,61$) savjetovanje o odgoju djece. Faktorska zasićenost pojedinih skala upućuje na značajniju determiniranost indikatorima dublje uključenosti roditelja nego česticama koje upućuju na uobičajene aktivnosti. Utvrđena je statistički značajna korelacija profesionalnog radnog staža sudionica i rezultata na primijenjenim skalama ($,40 < r < ,55$; $p < ,01$) osim za procjenu doprinosa roditelja konstrukciji kurikula ($r= -,28$; $p < ,05$). Statistički značajne razlike t-testa za poduzorke utvrđene su za varijablu Povod za suradnju ($t=2,72$; $p < ,01$). Nalazi istraživanja upućuju na to da je postojeće formalno obrazovanje odgajatelja nedostavno za razvoj profesionalnih kompetencija odgajatelja za suradnju s roditeljima, na što upućuju i nalazi recentnih svjetskih istraživanja.

Ključne riječi: oblici suradnje odgajatelja i roditelja; povodi za suradnju.

Uvod

Značajnost suradničkog odnosa roditelja i odgojno-obrazovnih ustanova dugo je prepoznata. Zakon o dječjim vrtićima (1956) kao jednu od temeljnih zadaća dječjeg vrtića navodi potrebu suradnje i pomoći roditeljima u „primjenjivanju suvremenih načela i metoda u odgoju“ (NN, 24/56, čl.2.). Savjetovanje kao oblik potpore i suradnje s roditeljima navodi Zakon o društvenoj brizi o djeci predškolskog uzrasta (1981) koji naglašava potrebu potpore i „drugih oblika suradnje s roditeljima“ (NN, 28-397/ 81,

čl.2. i čl.29.). No, dugi niz godina nakon zakonski determiniranih smjernica, suradnja roditelja i odgajatelja nije u svim područjima dosegla željenu razinu niti prerasla u partnerski odnos.

Razloge za neravnomjeran i nedostatan razvoj suradničkih odnosa, kao i izostajanje partnerstva roditelja i odgojno-obrazovnih ustanova moguće je tumačiti diskursom pojedinca, uvjeta okruženja i prethodnim iskustvom roditelja i odgajatelja. Deklarativno ponavljanje zadaća o potrebi suradnje s roditeljima, a izostanak promjene osobnih paradigmi i primjene učinkovitih rješenja, možda potvrđuje tezu o ovisnosti o prijašnjem putu (Pierson, 2000) i samo o nužnim prilagodabama sustava aktualnom društvu (Baran, Dobrotić, i Matković, 2011).

Nacionalni kurikulum ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja (2015) pretpostavlja aktivnu uključenost roditelja u odgojno-obrazovni proces. Iako pojedini autori (Lueder, 2011; Šteh i Kalin, 2011) dvoje o mogućnosti izgrađivanja partnerskog odnosa, afirmativni stavovi odgajatelja prema roditeljima, razvijene profesionalne kompetencije odgajatelja i kvalitetna suradnja odgajatelja s roditeljima neosporno doprinose dobrobiti djece. Uvidom u suvremenu praksu, nameće se pitanje zainteresiranosti i spremnosti roditelja i odgajatelja za razvoj partnerskog odnosa i zajedničkog aktivnog sudjelovanja u oblikovanju, provedbi i vrednovanju kurikula ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja. Opravdano je zato istražiti mišljenje odgajatelja o kvaliteti postojećih odnosa i modaliteta provedbe suradnje, zatim samoprocjene osobnih kompetencija odgajatelja za izgrađivanje partnerskog odnosa.

U ovom se radu istražuje mišljenje odgajatelja o postojećim oblicima suradnje, ulozi roditelja u oblikovanju kurikula i mogućnostima razvoja partnerskog odnosa, kao i samoprosudbi odgajatelja o osobnim kompetencija za osmišljavanje, poticanje, ostvarivanje i razvoj partnerskog odnosa s roditeljima. Rad je dio akcijskog istraživanja o mogućnostima suradnje s roditeljima, koje se paralelno provodi u pojedinim odgojnim skupinama vrtića u Makarskoj i Čakovcu, a kojim se nastoji potaknuti aktivno uključivanje roditelja u oblikovanje kurikula. Istodobno se potiče umrežavanje odgajatelja kao oblik informalnog učenja putem razmjene iskustva, vrednovanje i raspravu. Istraživanje mišljenja odgajatelja provedeno je kao dio inicijalne faze i omogućava prepoznavanje područja potrebnih promjena, a u optimalnom interesu djece i svih dionika odgojno-obrazovnog procesa.

Suradnju obitelji i odgojno-obrazovne ustanove moguće je tumačiti kao generički pojam koji uključuje sve tipove interakcije obitelji i ustanove: od razmjene informacija, volontiranja, sudjelovanja u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu i obrazovanja roditelja (Ratcliff i Hunt, 2009). Partnerstvo kao suradnički ravnopravnih partnera doprinosi međusobnoj dobrobiti, a temelji se na povjerenju i moralnosti. Partnerstvo obitelji i vrtića pretpostavlja sudjelovanje roditelja u svim aspektima odgoja i obrazovanja djece priznajući (uvažavajući) da roditelji (i obitelji) imaju primarni utjecaj u životu svoje djece (Epstain, Sanders, Simon, Salinas, Jansorn, i Van Voorhis, 2002; Ljubetić, 2014). Partnerski odnos roditelja i odgajatelja Ljubetić (2014) prepoznaje kao najvišu

razinu suradničkih odnosa usmjerenu na postizanje zajedničkog cilja – dobrobiti djece. Zakonska legislativa sugerira da se partnerstvo može izgrađivati samo s roditeljima kao pravnim skrbnicima djece, a da se uz pristanak roditelja može surađivati s obiteljima.

Nalazi recentnih istraživanja (Jackson i Needham, 2014; Ratcliff i Hunt, 2009; Wilson, 2015) nedvojbeno ukazuju na potrebu izgrađivanja partnerskog odnosa roditelja i ustanova ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja. Kvalitetan, partnerski odnos s odgojno-obrazovnom ustanovom može doprinijeti i kvaliteti obiteljskih utjecaja, a dugoročno je povezan s boljim akademskim postignućima i razvijenim socio-emocionalnim kompetencijama djece (Jackson i Needham, 2014; Maleš, 2015), prijenosom vrijednosti i formiranjem vrijednosnih orijentacija u koje se ubraja pozitivan stav prema obrazovanju, što ima utjecaj na društvo u cjelini (Bleach, 2015). Opravdanost aktivnog uključivanja roditelja u odgojno-obrazovni proces može se potkrijepiti i ljudskim pravima (Rege i Almeida, 2013), odnosno temeljnim pravom svakog pojedinca na aktivno sudjelovanje i oblikovanje kvalitetnog života, djece i roditelja.

Sudjelovanje roditelja u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu opravdano je analizirati kao angažiranost pojedinca – roditelja i odgajatelja (Berthelsen i Walker, 2008; Emerson, Fear, Fox, i Sanders, 2012; Higgins i Morley, 2014). Kako se ostvarivanje partnerskih odnosa najčešće odvija u ustanovi, opravdano je odgovornost za iniciranje partnerskih odnosa pripisati profesionalcima u ustanovi (Keyes, 2002; Maleš, 2015; Vuorinen, Sandberg, Sheridan, i Williams 2014; Westergard, 2013). Uspješnost i kvaliteta partnerskih odnosa zato u mnogome ovisi o kompetencijama odgajatelja (Sewell, 2012). Osim znanja koje odgajatelji stječu formalnim obrazovanjem, potrebno je razvijati kompetencije kao sklop pozitivnih stavova prema partnerstvu i vještine primjene znanja u praksi angažiranja obitelji u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu. Unatoč važnosti suradničkih profesionalnih kompetencija, istraživanja pokazuju kako odgojitelji obrazovanje u tom području procjenjuju nedostatnim (Brown, Harris, Jacobson, i Trotti, 2014; Maleš, Ljubetić, i Stričević, 2010; MetLife 2006). Kao najčešći problemi navode se nedostatak prakse u radu s obiteljima (Chavkin, 2005) i skriveni kurikuli koji dovode do teškoća u ostvarivanju odnosa (Katz i Bauch, 1999; Suoto Manning i Swich, 2006; Swick i McKnight, 1989), osobito u radu s obiteljima različitog kulturnog, religijskog, nacionalnog ili svjetonazorskog porijekla (Perry i Southwell, 2011; Stayton, Miller, i Dinnebeil, 2003). Pristupa li se određenju profesionalnih kompetencija kao spoja profesionalnih znanja, vještina i osobnih karakteristika (Brock, 2006), tada je potrebno uvažiti činjenicu da osobne karakteristike odgojitelja uključuju i njihove predrasude, koje posve sigurno utječu na njihove stavove u odnosu na djecu i njihove obitelji. U interesu kvalitetnog rada i dobrobiti djece, profesionalci u ranom odgoju i obrazovanju trebali bi prepoznati osobne predrasude i stavove do kojih oni dovode kako bi ih nadišli. Problematizirajući obrazovanje kao pretpostavku stjecanja kompetencija za suradnju s roditeljima, Vuorinen i sur. (2014) naglašavaju da osobine koje su sastavni dio kompetencije za suradnju s roditeljima nije moguće

razvijati tijekom formalnog obrazovanja, nego se one stječu iskustveno. Nedostatne kompetencije odgajatelja ograničavaju ostvarivanje i razvoj partnerskog odnosa, što se onda može negativno odraziti na iskustvo odgajatelja.

Partnerstvo kao dvosmjernan proces zahtijeva i aktivno uključivanje roditelja. Pozitivna roditeljska angažiranost doprinosi obrazovnim postignućima djece (Grolnick i Slowiaczek, 2008; Lee i Bowen, 2006), motiviranosti djece za aktivno sudjelovanje u osobnom odgoju i obrazovanju (Manson i Martin, 2009), kao i kasnijom društvenom produktivnosti pojedinca (Emerson i sur., 2012).

Rege i Almeida (2013) ukazuju na pozitivne efekte prijenosa iskustva roditelja koji već imaju djecu u pojedinoj ustanovi ili odgojnoj skupini na roditelje novouključene djece. Prednost mješovitih odgojnih skupina odražava se tako i na angažiranost roditelja, povećanu interakciju među roditeljima i prijenos pozitivnih obrazaca ponašanja, što posredno omogućava i bolje razumijevanje odgojno-obrazovnog procesa.

Suvremena je obitelj u okviru globalnih procesa sve više mobilna. Istodobno, dinamička nelinearnost obiteljskih procesa usmjerava na potrebu razumijevanja pojedine obitelji. Profesionalne kompetencije odgajatelja stoga zahtijevaju i interkulturalnost, što objedinjuje kognitivno i afektivno funkcioniranje. U kognitivno se ubraja znanje o vlastitoj i drugim kulturama, znanje o sličnostima i razlikama između kultura, kao i interkulturalno razumijevanje. Afektivni aspekt reagiranja na interkulturalne razlike Perry i Southwell (2011) nazivaju interkulturalnom osjetljivošću, koju nadalje pojašnjavaju u dva pravca – kao afektivan dio interkulturalne komunikacijske kompetencije, i razvojno kao subjektivno iskustvo kulturnih različitosti. Opravdan je stav da „Praktičari u sustavu ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja moraju biti spremni za rad s obiteljima različite kulture, etničke, jezične i društvene pozadine“ (Stayton i sur., 2003, str. 11).

Metodološki okvir

Ovo istraživanje dio je studije kojom se istražuju mogućnosti razvoja kvalitetne prakse ovisno o angažiranosti odgajatelja, stručnih suradnika i roditelja / skrbnika djece uključene u pojedine odgojne skupine u vrtićima jedinica lokalne samouprave – Makarske i Čakovca. Provedbom akcijskog istraživanja svi čimbenici odgojno-obrazovnog procesa, uključujući i djecu i roditelje, potiču se na uključivanje u konstrukciju, provedbu i vrednovanje otvorenog i razvojnog kurikula. Kao prediktor uspješnog uključivanja roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula pretpostavljeni su stavovi odgajatelja prema suradnji s roditeljima. Nije upitna opravdanost suradnje nego potencijal odgajatelja (prethodno iskustvo, kompetencije, motiviranost, angažiranost) za suradnju. Zato su istraženi dosadašnje iskustvo odgajatelja kao jedan od prediktora daljnje suradnje, stavovi odgajatelja prema uključivanju roditelja u odgojno-obrazovni proces i samoprosudba kompetencija kao smjernica za stručno usavršavanje. U skladu s istraživačkim pitanjima postavljene su hipoteze istraživanja:

- 1) Pretpostavlja se da su u postojećim oblicima suradnje najviše zastupljeni oblici niže razine (informiranje)
- 2) Pretpostavlja se da postoji povezanost samoprocjene profesionalnih kompetencija odgajatelja i procjene postojećih oblika suradnje s roditeljima
- 3) Pretpostavlja se da postoji povezanost godina radnog iskustva u odnosu na učestalost i procjenu važnosti suradnje s roditeljima.

U inicijalnoj procjeni kvalitete i modaliteta suradničkih odnosa sudjelovalo je 78 odgajateljica (sve žene) od kojih je 39 iz Makarske i 42 iz Čakovca. Prosječna starost ispitanica iznosila je 38,18 godina ($SD=9,15$). Sudjelovanje u istraživanju u potpunosti je bilo dragovoljno i anonimno. Iako su uzorkom obuhvaćeni svi odgajatelji u navedenim ustanovama, uzorak veličinom i strukturom nije reprezentativan za populaciju odgajatelja u Republici Hrvatskoj, ali je indikativan kao uvid u procjenu odgajatelja o modalitetima postojeće suradnje. Usporedba odgajatelja u dvije različite, a strukturalno slične, ustanove koristi se radi mogućeg uopćavanja nalaza istraživanja na populaciju odgajatelja u sličnim odgojno-obrazovnim ustanovama u Hrvatskoj.

Instrument

U istraživanju se, uz suglasnost autora, koristila revidirana verzija instrumenta *Parent Survey of Family and Community* (Sheldon i Epstein, 2007) koji primarno istražuje mišljenje roditelja. *Upitnik mišljenja odgajatelja o suradnji s roditeljima*, modificiran je prema specifičnim uvjetima i ponuđen odgajateljima. Uz nezavisne demografske varijable (dob, spol, godine radnog staža u institucionalnom ranom i predškolskom odgoju i obrazovanju i razina formalnog obrazovanja), sadrži 5 zavisnih varijabli relevantnih za predmet istraživanja strukturiranih kao skale procjene (značajnosti ili učestalosti). Zavisne varijable determinirane su u dvije dimenzije:

- 1) mišljenje odgajatelja o postojećoj suradnji s roditeljima (*povodi i oblici suradnje, uključenost roditelja u odgojno-obrazovni proces, uključenosti roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula, doprinos roditelja/V4*)
- 2) *samoprocjena profesionalnog zadovoljstva i osobnih kompetencija odgajatelja / skala V5.*

Iz izvornika nisu preuzete varijable *nacionalnost* kao statistički irelevantna u uzorku populacije odgajatelja i *društvene mreže roditelja* jer nisu predmet ovog istraživanja. Suradnja roditelja i vrtića uključuje subskele prema vrstama angažmana roditelja (Epstein i sur., 2002): uključenost u odgojno-obrazovni proces, informacije o dječjim postignućima, potpora roditeljstvu, jačanje veza sa zajednicom na razini informiranja, aktivna uključenost roditelja u upravna tijela predškolskih ustanova i u neposredan odgojno-obrazovni proces. Preuzete su skale: *Povodi i oblici suradnje* (12 čestica, oznake V1), *Uključenosti roditelja u odgoj i obrazovanje djece* (16 čestica, V2), *Uključenosti roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula* (6 čestica, V3), *Doprinos roditelja* (6 čestica, V4), a dodana varijabla *Samoprocjena kompetencija odgajatelja* (8 čestica, V5). U skalama V1 i V2, u odnosu na original, dodane su po dvije čestice. Opservacijom socijalnih

situacija prakse izdvojene su postojeće prepoznatljive suradničke aktivnosti i postupci suradnje u autentičnim situacijama. Prikupljene su informacije i iskustva iz osobne prakse odgajatelja, što je moguće tumačiti kao dijagnostičku fazu procjene kako bi se determinirali ključni trendovi. Sakupljeni podaci reducirani su nakon komunikacijske revizije s odgajateljima i dodani kao čestice (poziv na zajednička druženja i prikupljanje sredstava za rad/V1, zatim uključenost roditelja u odgoj i obrazovanje djece/V2). Koeficijenti pouzdanosti skala utvrđeni su primjenom koeficijenta Chronbach Alfa i kreću se od ,76 do ,88, a što korespondira s izvornikom (od ,64 do ,89).

Procjena je bila moguća na 4-stupanjskoj skali, dihotomno kodiranoj, gdje 1 i 2 označavaju (djelomično ili potpuno) *nisku razinu procjene značajnosti ili učestalosti*, a 3 i 4 (djelomično ili potpuno) *visoku razinu procjene značajnosti ili učestalosti*. Autori izvornika procjenjuju opravdanim, slijedom iskustva korištenja, uvažavajući moguću razinu obrazovanja sudionika istraživanja, kodirati tako da viši broj znači veću suglasnost ili višu razinu procjene s iskazom. Skala procjene kodirana je bez nulte točke kako bi se sudionike istraživanja potaknulo na zauzimanje stava, odnosno izbjegavanje neutralne pozicije.

U upitniku za odgajatelje istražuje se mišljenje odgajatelja o suradnji s *roditeljima* i ne odvajaju se uloge majke i oca. Iako pojedina istraživanja pretpostavljaju da su majke više uključene u život djece, ne smije se zanemariti činjenica da se odgoj djeteta odvija u interakcijskom odnosu oba roditelja (Jokić i Ristić Dedić, 2010) te da ih odgajatelji prihvaćaju kao roditelje.

Anketiranje je provedeno u okviru inicijalne procjene kao dio pripreme faze akcijskog istraživanja. Prilagođene verzije instrumenta ponuđene su i odgajateljima i roditeljima kako bi se prepoznale prednosti i nedostaci dosadašnje suradnje kao polazište promjena. Ovaj rad daje prikaz obrađenih podataka sakupljenih anketiranjem odgajatelja. Obradeni podaci ukazuju na postojeću suradnju, ali i na područja poteškoća koje mogu biti poticaj za daljnji razvoj procesa. Samoprocjena odgajatelja ukazuje na potrebne dodatne edukacije odgajatelja za suradnju s roditeljima u pravcu izgrađivanja partnerskih odnosa.

Rezultati i rasprava

U okviru obrade podataka primijenjena je faktorska analiza korištenih skala kako bi se izdvojile ključne čestice procjene i ispitala međuovisnost varijabli. U ekstrakciji se koristila metoda glavnih komponenti. Na temelju primjene Scree testa utvrđeno je da sve skale imaju jednu statistički značajnu dimenziju koja objašnjava najveći dio njezine ukupne varijance.

Deskriptivnim mjerama analizirani su rezultati primijenjenih skala, korelacije između skala razmatrane su preko Pearsonova koeficijenta korelacije, a povezanost dužine radnog staža sa skalama putem point-biserijske korelacije. T-testom je istražena značajnost procjene odgajatelja prema subzorcima.

Tablica 1

Odgajatelji procjenjuju da roditelje najčešće pozivaju na zajednička druženja u vrtiću (što u izvornom instrument nije naznačeno kao oblik suradnje) i radi informiranja o postignućima djece. Kao najrjeđi povod za suradnju na komunikacijskoj razini odnosa odgajatelji procjenjuju uključivanje u upravna i savjetodavna tijela ustanove, što je moguće tumačiti prirodom osnivanja upravnih i savjetodavnih tijela ustanove (izbori su tehnički tek svake četvrte godine). Moguće objašnjenje tih rezultata može se pronaći u činjenici kako je provođenje navedenih oblika suradnje jasno propisano te se očekuje njihova realizacija (druženja, roditeljski sastanci, informiranja). Ostali oblici također su dio kurikula ustanova, ali ne postoji kvantitativno određenje učestalosti tih oblika suradnje. Cheatham i Ostrosky (2011) problematiziraju odgojiteljsku percepciju partnerskih odnosa s roditeljima, osobito u provođenju roditeljskih sastanaka, pojašnjavajući kako ona proizlazi iz paradigme korekcije te rezultira odnosom u kojem su odgojitelji nadmoćni i ne vrednuju roditeljska znanja i uvjerenja. Zabrinjava procjena odgajatelja da savjetovanje o mogućnostima poticanja razvoja djece nije čest povod za suradnju. Murray, McTarland-Piazza i Harrison (2015) ističu potrebu za tim da odgojitelji primijene one strategije za komunikaciju s obitelji koje potiču *smisleno* uključivanje roditelja, uz naglašavanje važnosti roditeljskih snaga i talenata. Kako je suradnja dvosmjernan proces, očekivano je da rezultira i dvosmjernom komunikacijom. Odgojitelji bi stoga putem savjetovanja o mogućnostima razvoja djece trebali uvažiti roditeljsku savjetodavnu ulogu, jednako kao što se i sami nalaze u ulozi savjetnika. Prijašnja istraživanja pokazuju da na to nisu spremni, jer se većina odgojitelja odlučuje za indirektno savjetovanje (Cheatham i Ostrosky, 2011). Moguće je da i dionici istraživanja primjenjuju takav oblik savjetovanja, no ovakvo mišljenje ne pridonosi razvoju učinkovite potpore roditeljstvu u optimalnom interesu djece i, nažalost, potvrđuje početnu hipotezu.

Tablica 2

Razvidno je da je varijabla *Povod za suradnju (V1)* u najvećoj mjeri determinirana česticama koje se odnose na razmjenu informacija i suradnju u okviru odgojno-obrazovnog procesa, a da su zajednička druženja i roditeljski sastanci najmanje uključeni u određenje varijable. Informacije o napredovanju i pomoć pri razumijevanju i poticanju dječjeg razvoja objašnjavaju 48,56 % varijance.

Tablica 3

Ranija istraživanja (Desforges i Abouchaar, 2003) pokazuju kako se uključenost roditelja mijenja ovisno o dobi djece. Ranu i predškolsku dob opisuju kao razdoblje u kojem se roditelji najviše uključuju dajući emocionalnu i kognitivnu podršku djeci. Rezultati ovog istraživanja potvrđuju te tvrdnje jer je vidljivo kako odgojitelji najvišom procjenjuju pozitivnu emocionalnu uključenost roditelja koja se odražava na emocionalni razvoj djeteta. Ostali rezultati odnose se na kognitivnu podršku, što također odgovara rezultatima prije navedenog istraživanja. Premda još postoje

predrasude o vrtiću kao predvorju škole te se učenje u ranoj dobi ne vrednuje jednako kao učenje u primarnom obrazovanju, visoke procjene roditeljske uključenosti u učenje djece, poticanju pozitivnih stavova o obrazovanju mogu ukazivati na promjene stavova u korist vrtića.

Ovo istraživanje pokazalo je kako odgajatelji procjenjuju da roditelji najmanje traže pomoć kada primijete poteškoće kod djece. Ta procjena može biti posljedica roditeljskog negiranja činjenice da postoji teškoća. Jednako tako može biti i posljedica niske samoprocjene profesionalnih kompetencija odgojitelja koji izbjegavaju ovakve razgovore ne želeći kod roditelja izazvati zabrinutost ili čak osjećaj krivnje (Cheatham i Ostrosky, 2011). Ako odgojitelji imaju takav stav, moguće je da roditelji nisu u prilici tražiti pomoć.

Zanimljivo je kako odgojitelji procjenjuju i da roditelji nedovoljno potiču svoju djecu na samostalno rješavanje sukoba. Ta tvrdnja može proizlaziti iz predrasuda o pretjeranom zaštićivanju djece i o prevelikim očekivanjima od odgojitelja i odgojno-obrazovne ustanove. Promišljanje usmjerava na stav da je teško surađivati s roditeljima koji rješavaju djetetove konfliktnu situacije ili očekuju da ih rješava odgojitelj.

Tablica 4

Prema visini faktorskih zasićenja u skali *Uključenosti roditelja u odgoj i obrazovanje djece (V2)* moguće je zaključiti da je varijabla značajnije determinirana indikatorima dublje uključenosti roditelja nego česticama koje upućuju na uobičajene aktivnosti. Izgrađivanje afirmativnih stavova prema vrtiću i prema obrazovanju objašnjava 47,74 % varijance.

Tablica 5

Pojedina istraživanja (Hornby, 2000; Murray, McTarland-Piazza, i Harrison, 2015) naglašavaju odstupanje od potrebe za jednakim uključivanjem svih roditelja. Opravdano je zato preporučiti odgajateljima da ne očekuju uključivanje svih roditelja u sve aktivnosti nego da potiču uključivanje pojedinih roditelja u pojedine oblike suradnje. Doprinos roditelja kao eksperata za različita područja Hornby (2000) prepoznaje kao oblik obogaćivanja kurikula. Prema tom autoru, gotovo će se svi roditelji uključiti u suradnju kod organiziranja izleta i druženja, kao i sudjelovanja u aktivnostima. Neki će roditelji pridonijeti osiguravanju uvjeta za provedbu odgojno-obrazovnih uvjeta, a samo će se rijetki roditelji uključiti u odlučivanje koje se referira na upravljanje procesom ili vrtićem. Ovo je istraživanje potvrdilo takav model uključivanja roditelja. Odgajatelji u uzorku procjenjuju da roditelji najčešće sudjeluju u zajedničkim druženjima, a najrjeđe u zajedničkom planiranju odgojno-obrazovnog rada. Ako roditelji samostalno predlažu i organiziraju izlete, to se može tumačiti kao planiranje odgojno- obrazovnog rada pa bi učestalost uključivanja u planiranje trebala biti barem jednaka sudjelovanju u provođenju izleta. Ako se roditelji uključuju u izlete samo kao podrška odgojiteljima, tada je upitno poštuju li i ohrabruju odgojitelji uključivanje roditelja u provedbu kurikula.

Istodobno, pojedina istraživanja uključivanje roditelja tumače roditeljskom angažiranošću (Hiatt-Michael, 2010), prethodnim iskustvom roditelja (Rege & Almeida, 2013), suradnjom s drugim roditeljima (Epstein i sur., 2002; Emerson i sur., 2012) i komunikacijskim kompetencijama odgajatelja (Hobjilä, 2014).

Tablica 6

Skala *Uključenosti roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula (V3)* ima vrlo dobro definiranu prvu glavnu komponentu, a sve čestice podjednako doprinose određenju varijable i jasno sugeriraju da bi veća uključenost roditelja u konstrukciju i razvoj kurikula doprinijela kvaliteti odgojno-obrazovnog procesa. Planiranje i organiziranje odgojno-obrazovnog rada zajedno objašnjavaju 64,90 % varijance.

Tablica 7

Pozitivna procjena doprinosa roditelja u česticama koje se odnose neposredno na djecu može upućivati na to da u očekivanjima odgojitelja i dalje prevladava tradicionalna paradigma suradnje u kojoj je odgojno-obrazovni proces ponajprije odgovornost odgojitelja (Wright, 2009). Vidljivo je da odgajatelji aktivnije uključivanje i doprinos roditelja u odgojno-obrazovni proces tumače kao potrebu za osobnom većom angažiranošću i opterećenjem. To je u suglasnosti s nalazima istraživanja koja socijalizaciju djece i njihovo razumijevanje neposrednog okruženja tumače upravo komunikacijom roditelja i odgajatelja, kao i njihovom anagažiranošću (Banasiak, 2011; Hiatt-Michael, 2010). Ti rezultati možda ovise o odgajateljskim očekivanjima doprinosa roditelja, što može biti posljedica prethodnih iskustava odgajatelja. To upućuje na zaključak da se samoprocjena kompetentnosti za odgojno-obrazovni rad zasniva na pozitivnom vrednovanju značajnosti neformalnog i informalnog obrazovanja odgajatelja.

Tablica 8

Skala *Doprinosa roditelja (V4)* jasno je determinirana iako čestice negativnih aspekata uključivanja roditelja imaju nešto nižu faktorsku zasićenost, što možda sugerira da se roditeljski doprinos smatra unapređenjem odgojno-obrazovnog procesa, ali zahtijeva veću angažiranost odgajatelja. Procjena značajnosti doprinosa roditelja kvaliteti odgojno-obrazovnog procesa i razvoju djece objašnjava 78,96 % varijance.

Tablica 9

Razvidno je da odgajatelji visoko vrednuju osobne kompetencije. Niska samoprocjena kompetencija izgrađenih tijekom formalnog obrazovanja upućuje na značajnost razvoja kompetencija neformalnim i informalnim oblicima učenja tijekom profesionalnog rada, što je u suglasju s rezultatima pojedinih istraživanja u svijetu (Eraut, 2007; Urban, Vandebroek, Lazzari, Peeters, i van Laere, 2011).

Tablica 10

Samoprocjena osobnog zadovoljstva i profesionalne kompetentnosti objašnjava 58,29 % varijance. Indikativno je da jedino čestica *Stjecanje kompetencija tijekom obrazovanja* ne ostvaruje značajnu korelaciju s faktorom.

Tablica 11

Korelacije dobivenih rezultata pojedinih skala pokazuju visoku povezanost korištenih skala iako se skala samoprocjene odgajatelja izdvaja iz tog trenda. Osobito je značajno da uključenost roditelja u odgoj i obrazovanje svoje djece pozitivno korelira s procjenom značajnosti doprinosa roditelja konstrukciji kurikula. Nije nađena povezanost samoprocjene odgajatelja s procjenom značajnosti uključivanju roditelja u odgojno-obrazovni proces u vrtiću.

Tablica 12

Razvidno je da je samo kod skale *Uključenosti roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula (V3)* aritmetička sredina manja od vrijednosti moda. Skjunis kao mjera horizontalnog odstupanja upućuje na više razine procjene, što je najizraženije kod skale *Samoprocjena* koja jedina ima statistički značajnu vrijednost skjunita ($>+|1,00|$). Istodobno jedino ta skala pokazuje i statistički značajnu vrijednost kurtozisa, a sve su ostale vrijednosti vertikalnog odstupanja od normalne raspodjele. Vrijednosti Kologoro-Smirnov testa ne pokazuju statistički značajno odstupanje od normalne raspodjele ni za jednu skalu, a sve primijenjene skale imaju iznimno zadovoljavajuću pouzdanost. Pouzdanost za varijablu *Uključenost roditelja u odgojno-obrazovni rad*, gdje su na temelju zamijećene realnosti dodane 2 čestice, veća je u korištenom instrumentu nego izvorniku. U odnosu na izvornik zamjetna je nešto niža pouzdanost za varijable *Povodi za suradnju* i *Uključenosti roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula*, ali je i dalje zadovoljavajuće visoka.

Tablica 13

Dobiveni nalazi *t-testa* ukazuju na to da na razini $p<,05$ postoji statistički značajna razlika za varijable *Povod za suradnju* i *Uključenosti roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula*. Za preostale tri skale nisu utvrđene statistički značajne razlike. Nalazi istraživanja ukazuju na opću visoku samoprocjenu odgajatelja i izjednačenu procjenu učestalosti uključenosti roditelja i procjenu značajnosti doprinosa takvog uključivanja za odgojno-obrazovni proces, što je moguće tumačiti kao opći trend. Povodi za suradnju i oblici uključivanja roditelja u konstrukciju kurikula se razlikuju, što je moguće pripisati autentičnim kurikulumima pojedine ustanove.

Tablica 14

Na temelju point-biserijske korelacije utvrđena je statistički značajna korelacija profesionalnog radnog staža sudionica (staž je tretiran kontinuirano) i rezultata na primijenjenim skalama. Godine radnog iskustva, na razini $p<,05$, negativno koreliraju s procjenom doprinosa roditelja konstrukciji kurikula. Istodobno, godine radnog iskustva u pozitivnoj su korelaciji sa svim ostalim varijablama ($p<,01$), što upućuje

da duži radni staž dovodi do većeg prepoznavanja važnosti ispitivanih varijabli i samoprocjene.

Zaključak

Nalazi provedenog empirijskog istraživanja mišljenja odgajatelja o suradnji s roditeljima ukazuju na to da odgajatelji pozitivnim procjenjuju značajnost uključivanja roditelja u neposredan odgojno-obrazovan rad s djecom rane i predškolske dobi, iako ta procjena negativno korespondira s dužinom profesionalnog radnog staža odgajatelja. Naznačenu učestalost nižih razina oblika suradnje (informiranje) moguće je tumačiti nedostatnim profesionalnim kompetencijama. Odgajatelji procjenjuju da tijekom formalnog obrazovanja nisu stekli potrebne kompetencije za suradnju s roditeljima te naglašavaju razvoj tih kompetencija u praksi, neformalnim i informalnim obrazovanjem. Pretpostavka je da odgojitelji koji pozitivno procjenjuju važnost suradnje, ipak imaju objektivne teškoće u samom provođenju, što procjenjuju kao dodatno opterećenja osobnom radu i potrebu za većom osobnom angažiranošću. Ti nedostaci mogu biti povezani s obrazovanjem odgojitelja, no jednako tako mogu biti posljedica različitih očekivanja u odnosu na uključivanje roditelja, različitih vrijednosnih i kulturnih stavova, kao i na autentičan kurikulum pojedine odgojno-obrazovne ustanove.

Recentni izvori ukazuju na to da je jačanjem kompetencija odgojitelja moguće unaprijediti oblike uključivanja roditelja i suradnju odgojno-obrazovnih ustanova i roditelja prema partnerskom odnosu u optimalnom interesu djece. Nalazi ovog istraživanja upućuju na potrebu sustavnog obrazovanja i stručnog usavršavanja odgajatelja za suradnju, što može doprinijeti učestalosti uključivanja roditelja putem različitih oblika suradnje te smanjiti negativan utjecaj radnog staža na procjenu značajnosti doprinosa roditelja pri konstrukciji kurikula. Opravdano je pretpostaviti da je provedbom akcijskih istraživanja moguće pozitivno utjecati na angažiranost odgajatelja, razumijevanje značajnosti sudjelovanja roditelja i konstrukciju različitih oblika suradnje koji će roditeljima omogućiti izbor.