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Cooperation of preschool institutions with parents toward early childhood education

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Abstract

Preschool education, especially institutionalized preschool education, is exceptional for early childhood. In this context, cooperation with the parents is considered vital for children's education. Very often, parents are not aware of their fundamental role in their children's education and development, through different ways of cooperation.

This research addresses the partnership between parents and preschool institutions (hereafter: PSI), and the relation of this partnership with factors such as communication, school environment, parents transferring their professional experience to children, and parents' access to preschool education curricula and policies, all of which serve to improving children's early education. The research is carried out through a quantitative approach with parents (N=60) and a qualitative approach with educators, examining the challenges and needs for the improvement of this cooperation, as well as the role and the opportunities of both parties towards the realization of a more effective cooperation.

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Research findings prove that identifying forms and agents of cooperation with parents does have the positive influence on strengthening the triangle preschool institution / family / community and in increasing the level of awareness of parents and preschool institutions on benefits from such co-operation.

Keywords: *early childhood, cooperation, communication, parents, preschool institutions*

Preschool education, as a term, refers to all services provided to children up to the age of six (Taguchi & Munkammar, 2003). Parents' involvementⁱ in the educational work of Preschool Institutions (PSI) has been considered irrelevant in different periods, but in fact, it has an essential importance in the child's education (Miller, 2003).

The child is in the focus of cooperation between parents and preschool institutions. Many authors have reflected on the importance of cooperation with parents through different forms. This is an opportunity for parents' involvement, since it has an impact in improving educators' work (Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2008).

In a study in Pittsburgh, it is stated that parents' involvement in schoolsⁱⁱ is an important component of early childhood education to help promoting the so-called "long-term effect" (Barnard, 2004). In relation to early childhood, experts emphasize that the main characteristic of this level of education is its inclusive character. Among seven areas specified in their book "Early childhood education today", family centred practice is included as well. Here it is made clear that in order to meet children's needs, educators in early childhood should cooperate with the families and community (Morrison, 2007, p. VI). At the same time, Coleman (1988) involves the term 'social capital' to examine the relations between family and school for students' achievements

(Coleman, 1988). If we refer to social capital, the loss of quality of interactive time between a child and an adult is the key reason for having a lower school performance and a lower level of homework performance in preschool institutions. In addition, it was noticed that parents' time available to be close to preschool institutions is increasingly reduced due to a higher number of single parent families and double income families (Office of Student services, 2002).

In this context, the research analyses the cooperation with parents as one of the key factors in preschool level educational processes, addressing hypothesis 1: Cooperation and a more active involvement of parents in educational work at preschool institutions have a positive impact in increasing the quality of educational services. Improvement of quality in schools has a direct impact on students' better performance. A higher level of involvement of parents is very important to improve quality (Oostdam & Hooge, 2013). On the other hand, the auxiliary hypothesis addresses the interrelation of factors, as follows: a constructive cooperation between preschool institutions and parents is achieved by interrelating factors, such as communication, physical environment and knowledge of preschool education policies.

Then, the research addresses the improvement of cooperation between preschool institutions and parents, challenges to improve cooperation, interrelation between factors of cooperation, the impact on parents' attitudes and their motivation to cooperate, as well as the perception of such a cooperation by educators in the intellectual aspect. In relation to the issues mentioned, the following research questions have been formulated: Research question 1: What are the challenges and needs to improve existing cooperation between parents and preschool institutions?, Research question 2: What is the interrelation between factors (true communication, school

environment, parents' approach toward preschool education policies) in developing a constructive cooperation?, and Research question 3: What could be done to improve cooperation with parents, to the benefit of educational work in preschool institutions?

Parents and their pedagogical role

The pedagogical role of parents was defined by Epstein (2001) with reference to child raising, parents' beliefs and expectations about their child's education, and the physical dimension, i.e. the suitable environment where children could learn. Parents or guardians of children have a direct impact on children's education; therefore, they have to be addressed through cooperation, focusing on the role and influence of parents in their children's education (Epstein J. , 2001).

Earlier, it was said that parents are not entitled to get involved in the educational process. Therefore, a shift in this traditional approach would be appreciated and useful, both for children and school, educators and parents as well; especially based on the premise that the role of parents in the educational process is beneficial, in both providing individual assistance and enriching class or school educational experiences (Miller, 2003, p. 224).

Berger (2004) stresses the same family function in meeting child's needs, regardless of the possibility of changes in the family structure. In general, several roles of parents were suggested, such as the primary role of parents to provide care, food, protection and shelter to children. In addition, families socialize children in line with the societal norms and cultural values. Parents are responsible in monitoring the education of their child in school and at home. In addition, they are the

primary educators of their children; therefore, the ability of a child to do well in educational institutions depends largely on the care received by that child at home (Berger, 2004).

Hence, preschool institutions should cooperate with parents, so that they are successful in their mission of educating children.

Cooperation with parents is considered to have the equal importance as the preschool education curriculum and professional development of educators. Based on data from findings, in several institutions there is a lack of parents' interest to cooperate. On the other hand, the question arises: Is there any institutional cooperation plan developed by institutions, through which they would show their commitment for such cooperation? Often, there is no intent to establish a culture of proximity between the school and parents. At the same time, according to Plakolli (2011, p. 416 - 417), parents visit preschool institutions only during parent-teacher meetings. In addition, parents often lack the proper skills to adequately approach their children.

The importance of establishing a culture of cooperation

According to Michael Fullan (1999, p. 41), parent and community engagement is seen as a special characteristic of organizational changes. Fullan (1999, p. 43) presents the characteristics of cultures of cooperation to achieve success at school (organization) through theoretical explanation.

Where in Fullan's book "The new meaning of educational change", the importance of a culture of working in cooperation is stressed, Bryk, Sebring, Kerbow, Rollow & Easton (1998) refer to the impact of a cooperative school in improving students' achievements. At the same time, Goldberg, in his study

conducted in the “Freeman” school in Los Angeles, highly appreciated the moment when the school shifted from a school showing a poor progress to a full cooperative development school, improving at the same time the performance of students in their studies (Gallimore & Goldenberg, 2001). Such an approach demonstrates the responsibility of establishing a culture of cooperation toward the school as an organization, involving research findings and parents’ presumption about the cooperation with the PSI.

On the other hand, Gaitan (1999) interconnects the importance of a culture of cooperation with a study about the active involvement of parents in their children’s education, which took place in schools in California. In this case, it is reported that precisely because active participation requires specific cultural knowledge, conventional forms of cooperation between parents and the school were not opened, whereas non-conventional forms of cooperation, on the contrary, encouraged parents’ involvement in their children’s education through culturally responsive communication.

On the other hand, the importance of parents’ involvement has a powerful impact on students’ educational achievements (Gonzales et al., 2013). The above provides for a connotation beyond the aspect of cooperation with parents, reflecting the importance of a culture of cooperation, in the general aspect, as a factor of interaction between all subjects, to the benefit of students’ success at school, and consequently, to the benefit of preschool institutions as well. How is PSI’s success achieved? Of course this is measured through children’s success that partially comes as a result of a constructive cooperation. That is exactly what underlines the importance of a culture of cooperation between parents and teachersⁱⁱⁱ, stressing the impact of this cooperation for the child’s development and education (Sewell, 2012).

While it is strongly emphasized that a culture of cooperation can contribute in increasing the motivation to learn and creating the belief that education is beneficial, effective cooperation and open communication can provide the school with predictions about cultural origin and show the limitations and differences (Gonzales et al., 2013). In every alternative, a culture of cooperation has a positive impact, including in the aspect of motivation to learn, but it goes further insinuating also the involvement of motivation of parents to cooperate. This is evident when Fullan (2001) interrelates the improvement in learning toward a positive approach precisely with the cooperative school.

International experience related to the culture of cooperation between parents and preschool institutions

If we focus our attention to the institutional approach toward the importance of cooperation with the parents, we will encounter various experiences. Continuing with a concrete example, such relevant institutions can be found in the context of Sweden, including children of age 1-5. In Swedish practice, parents form part of institution because they have a regular contact with the preschool institution. Besides that, preschool education curriculum envisages the importance of communication and conversation as a tool of establishing a linkage between school and family. This interaction between family and school focuses on child development, learning and wellbeing both at home and in the PSI. At the same time, in Swedish practice, conferences with parents are organized and they are considered very important to maintaining and strengthen the relations between the family and PSI. Usually, during these meetings, there are discussions taking place with

the parents, where the educator manages to keep the parent active and motivates him/her, by using an artifact called "strength card ". Educators, apply these strength cards to make parents aware, so that they are "good enough preschool parents," who are cooperative and able to categorize and label their children (Markstrom 2011).

Motivation of parents to cooperate with preschool institutions

The parent and the whole family represent a bridge between the knowledge students acquire in preschool institutions and learning at home while, "[t]he right to undertake the initiative, organize and plan the cooperation between the educator and parent mainly remains with the institution" (Deva-Zuna, 2009).

In many cases, both parents and educators have blamed each other for problems and difficulties faced in the PSI although solutions can only be found by working as a team.

To motivate parents to cooperate with the PSI, the institution and educators alike should exercise their impact.

In parent meetings, the teacher should make parents feel comfortable about their child and their parental abilities. Then, parents and teachers as experts working together can find an easy solution for the child (Miller, 2003, p. 225). In short, parents' motivation to cooperate depends on the ability of the teacher to engage the parent in supporting their child's learning. This is achieved by communicating positively with every parent and appreciating their contribution in supporting the child in educational institutions (Epstein J. , 2013).

If we interrelate the motivation issue with research question 1, the dilemma is precisely in the motivation as a challenge, and a good initiative at the same time, to work more toward

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parents' motivation, and thereby improve the existing cooperation. Meanwhile, the document of standards also provides the best example interrelated to parents' motivation for involvement in PSIs. This is done when describing conditions that institution should provide in order develop the successful cooperation with parents, motivating them to be more actively involved (see item 2.2). The question arises, what do research results indicate?

The approach of preschool institutions toward cooperation with parents

Graham (2011) emphasizes that *involvement of parents and parents' participation* in their children's education constitutes the notion of school-family cooperation. Therefore, the term *parents' involvement* is an essential term applied for the participation of family, school and community in activities supporting the development of the child. *Parents' participation*, on the other hand, is used in the context of parents' involvement, emphasizing the involvement of parents as decision makers in educational, managerial and administrative programs.

Based on the above, the Australian definition for family - school - community states:

"Cooperative relations and activities involve school staff, parents and other students' family member in a school. Effective partnerships are based on mutual trust and respect and in joint responsibility for students' education at school" (Department of Education, 2008).

Michael Fullan (1999, p. 37) considers the cooperative school to be the decisive factor in achieving success. In addition, according to Sewell (2102), a communicative and understanding approach between two communities contributes

to the fulfilment of children's needs. Teachers' education as well is considered highly important in order for them to understand the need for such an integration and cooperation. Compliance with education and preschool education standards as the awareness of educators about their role in building capacities and creating conditions for a constructive cooperation are other factors that would complement this aspect.

The aspect of preschool education standards

The policy issued by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (hereafter: MEST) is rather advanced; it defines the standards of preschool education services. The standards aim to inform the persons responsible in institutions and educators about their work. Of seven areas of standards, the document dedicates a specific standard (number 4) to cooperation with the family. Among other activities within preschool education, preschool education standards envisage parents' involvement as well. At the same time, preschool institutions, a) provide information to parents, b) gather information to the benefit of child and family, c) support parents, d) create the conditions for parents' involvement, e) ensure parent - staff communication through different tools, f) inform parents officially, and g) involve parents within active counselling council (MEST, 2006, p. 33).

Parents are users of standards (MEST, 2006, p. 10), and precisely this creates coherence between the standards and the factor (parents' knowledge of preschool education policies) addressed by research question 2 and the auxiliary hypothesis (see above).

The reason why parents use standards is related to the information they need about the developments taking place within the PSI, to their understanding of educational activity standards, familiarization and assessment of the level of achievement of standards within the PSI and involvement in educational activities in preschool education (MEST, 2006, p. 11).

The idea of this research came from preschool education standards with the aim to specifically examining the impact of active involvement of parents in increasing the quality in PSIs and the creation of conditions for cooperation by preschool institution.

Research methodology

Both a qualitative method through interviews with educators and the quantitative method, which involved using a survey technique with parents, were adopted for the research.

Children in the age group 3-6 were the focus of the research, examining the perspective of parents having children of this age group, as presented above, and interviewing educators working with this age group as well. The educators and parents of preschool aged children were subjects of the research. The study took place in Prishtina, Ferizaj and Gjakova.

The sample selection was done using the non-probability, purposive sampling technique, exploring and interpreting experiences and perceptions of participants in the research selected based on their experience and characteristics corresponding to the field of study (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 167). In this case, the number of parents, participants in the research, were 60 parents in three centres, meaning 20 parents per centre in Prishtina, Gjakova and Ferizaj. In addition, 12

educators were interviewed, 4 in each center (as above). The selection was done as follows: 2 educators from a public institution and 2 educators from a private institution in each centre.

Research instruments were used to perform the research. In our study, the research instruments included the questionnaire with parents and the interview protocol, which served as an instrument to perform the interviews with the educators. The questionnaire is mainly drafted based on the document "General Standards of education and preschool education in Kosovo (3-6 years old)" and the main issues addressed in the fourth area of standards.

Several analytical approaches were applied to analyze the data from interviews so that the results are as clear as possible. The data from interviews, initially unprocessed and taken in written form, were processed through a *based approach*. Then, the *understandable interpretations approach* certainly facilitated transmitting the data in the clearest possible manner.

The clear definition of data coming from interviews was achieved through the *thematic approach*. The questions are presented in a table, and in columns. The respective answers from every interviewee are given as well. This way, *the index (indexing)*, was defined to facilitate data extraction and key issues to be elaborated. Data taken from interviewees were coded as per answers of each interviewee. Initially, the data from answers related to key issues were presented in a table, after which the analysis was continued through schemes as per relevant aspects of research (Matthews & Ross, 2010, p. 372-385).

Quantitative data were analyzed through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), applying the descriptive analysis - frequencies. Following that, Chronbach Alpha analysis was used to address the internal consistency (measure

the questionnaire reliability) to confirm that the data are from the result of findings rather than questionnaire malfunctioning. In addition, correlation analysis was applied to measure the relation between two variables (in this case, factors as per questions and research hypothesis).

Research data analysis

Qualitative data analysis

The data gathered from interviews have been presented in the table, as per categorization of answers (the table in the annex); we notice the categorization of answers as per their importance, interrelated to the issue in the focus of the research, presenting the general aspect of the answer and elaborating them in details, as key topics, through the schemes.

In this context, the analyses of data from the qualitative method – collected through interviews, are summarized in the following four specific dimensions:

Level and forms of cooperation between PSI and family

Preschool education policies and parents

Physical environment and supply with didactic material and technology

Challenges of cooperation between PSI and family.

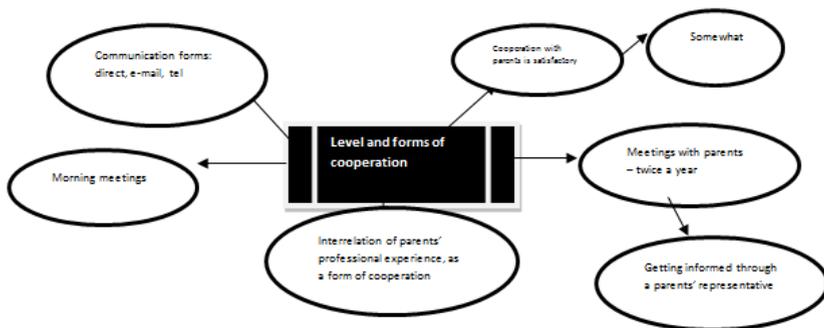


Illustration 1. Situation of cooperation with families

Presentation and analysis of the results

Starting from the first key dimension – *Level and forms of cooperation* (see the four specific issues), in the illustration (No 1.) above, questions 1, 2, 3 and 6 of interview protocol, address the aspect of the PSIs' communication with the family (parents), where a good level of cooperation can be perceived through different forms of cooperation. This is in accordance with the preschool education standards (see point C, D, E, F of standard No. 4). The interviewee with the code IKPR1 supports this, through the following answer: "Cooperation with parents is at the level required and is achieved through meetings organized, invitation of parents to be part of activities that are linked to their professions." Often, the reason of cooperation with parents is precisely the involvement of parents' professional experience in PSI, which in fact is one of the most effective ways of cooperation (item D/5 in standard 4). This leads toward the identification of children's skills when it comes to choosing their profession inform an early age, and their knowledge of different professions and the impact of each profession.

On the other hand, among others things, from the findings resulting from the qualitative analysis, while addressing the first key issue, there is a lack of creativity and seriousness noticed to establish a true cooperation with parents, or even lack of a form of cooperation through activities.

If we look at the second key dimension, which is related to parents' knowledge of preschool education policies, this is addressed by question No. 4 of the interview protocol, and item D/1 of the preschool education standard No. 4, which in fact does not correspond to the research results. We can explain this aspect as an issue with which parents are quite familiar with, but in fact, we could not find a convincing argument to explain it. At the same time, according to interviewees, parents are part of the PSI's decision making (supported as well by item G/2 of standards), but no evidence is presented whether parents have access in preschool education policies (preschool education standards and curriculum) or whether they are involved in drafting policies and being part of them). This could be achieved by providing trainings on policy functionalization, so that parents are acquainted with the essence of the impact of policies in children's education and development.

With regards to the third issue - physical environment in preschool institutions, included in question No. 5 - a degree of negligence can be noticed on behalf of educators in relation to this issue. The educators acknowledge that institutions are equipped with didactic material and technology, and that they are rationally used whereas there is no adjustment of physical environment to incorporate activities that allow for cooperation with parents. An example of these is the statement provided by the interviewee with the code IKFR4: "The kindergarten meets all the criteria; it is well equipped with different materials needed for preschool age children." In addition, there is no mobilization noticed by parties to identify the consequences

resulting from the excessive use of information technology, if necessary.

At the same time, the issue of physical environment, which as a variable is addressed in research question 2 and the auxiliary hypothesis, comes from the area No. 3 of preschool education standards, addressing the environment as an encouraging factor for playing and learning (item a, b, c), supply of didactic material (item d).

The dimension of challenges encountered during cooperation between the two important factors for children education and welfare is related to parents' lack of interest for cooperation, respectively concerning their transfer of professional experience. In this context, we can say that there is a lack of awareness mechanisms and lack of mechanisms to apply motivational strategies for parents. Consequently, lack of sufficient information provided to parents about preschool education policies is stressed through these results and the benefits of relevant documents related to child education and welfare. At the same time, the lack of interest (selfishness) of parents of children with special needs to cooperate with the PSI and educators is challenging as well. In this case, there is a barrier created toward a) a true treatment of these children, b) a serious dedication, and c) identification of their needs. In addition, the issue of parents non respecting the PSI's rules is specified, although they are informed on time about the PSI rules and this is a reflection of the lack of seriousness on the parents' behalf and an emphasized lack of need for cooperation.

If we analyse the differences between public and private institutions, we can conclude that in private institutions educators have a more serious approach both in regards to cooperation with parents and in addressing the issue of cooperation during the process of interviewing whereas a higher degree of negligence can be noticed with the public

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institution educators. The document of standards could be one of the reasons for that, which by institutions is considered a binding document that should be implemented. Such a situation creates uncertainty about shortcomings in policy drafting, lack of competences or relevant qualification of leadership in public institutions to properly apply and understand the standards.

At the same time, in two private institutions, the level of cooperation with parents is moderate and this puts into question the level of the cooperation that would be sufficient to have an impact in child development and education. In addition, in one of private institutions, a more creative approach was noticed. In this institution, there is an informative board in the wall enlisting all the activities applied with children.

Quantitative data analysis

In the quantitative analysis, questions have been structured as per different factors, performing the analysis of the factors' validity, as described below. Questions measuring the same variable (factor) have been integrated in a single factor and have been analyzed.

As indicated in Table (No.1) below, participants (respondents) in the research come from three cities, respectively Prishtina (N=20), Ferizaj (N=20) and Gjakova (N=20). In regards to the child's age, 16 participants stated that their child is between 1-3 years old, 9 others stated that their child belongs to the age group 3-4. 11 participants stated that their child is between 4 and 5 years old, whereas around 40% of participants had a child aged 5-6 years old. Participants in the study were mainly mothers (N=55, 91.7%), and only few of participants were fathers (N=5, 8.3%). Also, the same

participants were asked about their respective profession. Based on their answers, only 6 participants stated to having a profession whereas the majority of them have no profession (N=54).

Table 1. *Demographic data: Place of residence. Child's age, Parent's gender and profession*

	Place of residence		Age (N) (%)		Parent's gender (N) (%)		Parent's profession (N) (%)	
	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)	(N)	(%)
Prishtina	20	33.3%						
Ferizaj	20	33.3%						
Gjakova	20	33.3%						
1-3			16	26.7%				
3-4			9	15%				
4-5			11	18.3%				
5-6			24	40%				
Female					55	91.7%		
Male					5	8.3%		
Having a profession							6	10%
No profession							54	90%

Questions asked to measure the communication between parents and teachers have shown a better consistency level, confirmed as well by the Cronbach alpha value of 0.76, see Table No. 2. On the other hand, questions intending to measure cooperation between parents and educators have indicated a lower consistency level and a Cronbach alpha value of 0.51. Questions measuring the physical environments of the respective PSIs have indicated an unacceptable level of consistency, as indicated by the Cronbach alpha value of 0.44.

Questions used to measure parents' knowledge of preschool education policies have shown a better consistency level, as indicated as well by the Cronbach alpha value of 0.72.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics and Cronbach Alpha*

Note. N=60.

Variables	Cronbach's Alpha	Average	Standard deviation	Range
Parent – educator communication	.76	1.50	.47	1-5
Parent – educator cooperation	.51	1.56	.45	1-5
Physical environment	.44	2.05	.53	1-5
Parents' knowledge of Presch. ed. policies	.72	2.14	.68	1-5

Therefore, we conclude that the best relation toward a constructive cooperation (as the dependent variable) stands precisely in factors, such as communication and opportunity of informing parents with preschool education policies (curriculum, standards).

Table 3. *Correlation between variables*

	1	2	3	4
1. Communication	-			
2. Cooperation	.543**	-		
3. Physical environment	.139	-.134	-	
4. Parents' knowledge of Preschool education policies	.487**	.249	.241	-

Based on the analysis of the correlation between variables (Tab.3), there is a positive correlation between the cooperation and communication of parents with the PSI, $r(60) = .543$, $p < 0.001$. Also, based on the analysis of the correlation between

variables, there is a positive correlation between parents' knowledge of preschool education policies (opportunities of parents to get familiar with the Preschool education curriculum) and communication between parents and the PSI, $r(60) = .487, p < 0.001$.

Conclusions and recommendations

Based on the research findings the conclusions can be identified and divided according to the specifics tackled in line with the study purpose.

In the theoretical aspect, the pedagogical role of parents was addressed and, within this context, the importance of creating a culture of cooperation and motivating parents to cooperate with the PSI was accentuated. This establishes coherence with the research results, precisely in the aspect of understanding the importance of cooperation, by recognizing parents' pedagogical role. In addition, it highlights the aspect of understanding the importance of parents' motivation in creating a solid ground for constructive cooperation.

If we refer to *preschool education standards* and the field of cooperation with parents, we find that standards address and support the field of cooperation with parents, indicating the importance of such a cooperation to increase the quality of educational services (see Hypothesis 1). At the same time, standards envisage a relation between factors (as per auxiliary hypothesis and research question 2), which would contribute in constructive cooperation. Therefore, providing parents with the possibility to access and get familiar with preschool education policies facilitates raising awareness for a constructive cooperation.

On the other hand, after analyzing the data from interviews with educators and the survey with the parents, we can conclude by linking the research questions with the hypotheses presented. In attempts to provide answers to the first research question, our conclusions derive from the findings from interviews.

Conclusions from the qualitative analysis: From the data available from interviews, we can identify the challenges of cooperation in PSIs, such as the lack of parents' interest to cooperate and lack of willingness of parents of children with special needs to accept their children as such. On the other hand, *there is a lack of relevant mechanisms to motivate parents to get familiar with preschool education policies (standards and curriculum)*. Motivation would have a direct impact in raising the awareness of parents about the importance of respecting and applying policies. The parent, being an active participant in making these policies functional, would be the key element to increase the quality of educational services for children's education and welfare. At the same time, *there is a lack of a suitable physical environment* that would offer opportunities for cooperation. Creation of an environment that meets the conditions necessary to work with children would also have an impact in identifying shortcomings or advantages of the usage of technology tools, which would be achieved through cooperation with parents.

In accordance with the situation presented based on data from the research, there is a necessity for more interaction and more participation of parents to transfer their professional experiences within institutions, offering opportunities for children to be acquainted with new professions. Such a necessity would have an impact on children's information at an early age for professional orientation.

There is a cooperation noticed between parents and PSIs, taking place in different ways, such as through daily meetings and general meetings twice a year, and information being transmitted through parents' representatives, However, there is still a lack of creativity and seriousness in the aspect of organizing different forms of cooperation through activities. From the research findings, we can see that in terms of addressing this issue, a more serious approach is noticed in private preschool institutions. We contend that the document of preschool education standards could be an influencing factor due to the fact that preschool institutions consider it a binding document that should be respected and implemented conform legislation.

Conclusions from quantitative analysis: In regards to the relation between factors aiming to develop a constructive cooperation between the parents and PSIs, the best correlation exists between the communication factor and the parents' knowledge of preschool education policies.

In attempts to interpret the conclusions in connection with the verification of the hypotheses, the first hypothesis is confirmed based on findings from interviews, and the auxiliary hypothesis is confirmed precisely from the relation of the two factors above.

From the general point of view (based on preschool education standards, theoretical and practical aspect) it is concluded that by raising the awareness of parents and preschool institutions about the importance of cooperation, numerous challenges can be overcome and many forms of communication can emerge. Compliance with education and preschool education standards and their implementation will play part in building the grounds for a constructive cooperation.

Recommendations: The research results and the current situation bring forth certain recommendations, providing answers for research question 3 as well:

- To build a constructive cooperation and improve quality of educational services in preschool institutions, it is necessary to have preschool education standards applied, first of all by preschool institutions and then educators and parents as well;
- To improve the cooperation between PSIs and parents, it is necessary to raise the awareness of institutions and educators that standards should be respected and strictly implemented. In addition, it is necessary to raise the awareness of parents about their role in improving educational work;
- To overcome challenges, institutions, educators and parents need to get mobilized;
- To motivate parents: the institution should ensure a physical environment that is suitable for cooperation; the educators should demonstrate their ability to cooperate, using their creativity, providing the conditions and a positive climate so that parents feel comfortable within the institution. In addition, educators should demonstrate the ability to engage with parents in supporting their children.
- To improve the culture of cooperation, so that children feel comfortable and motivated to be involved in the educational process, it is necessary to have the triangle - PI, parent, educator - mobilized, acknowledging the importance of parents' cooperation and professional contribution.

ⁱ Parents' involvement in PSIs refers to the aspect of cooperation through different forms, contributing to children's education in early childhood.

ii Although the explanation given is related to school/students, there is no reason not to believe that the logic applied in regards to cooperation with parents applies similarly to preschool institutions/children of preschool age as well

iii If teachers are mentioned throughout literature, the same explanation given applies to educators as well

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