

# Play in Direct Practice in Preschools of Vojvodina

Svetlana Lazić, Vesna Colić and Milenko Janković  
*Preschool Teachers Training College Novi Sad*

## Abstract

*The paper presents the research carried out in the school year 2018-19 in preschools of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. The aim of the research was to assess the role of preschool teachers in supporting and enriching child's play, gain insight into children's actions in relation to it, as well as to ascertain the dominant perspective of the children and adults in the play. One hundred forty-five preschool teachers had been interviewed. The results have shown that teachers have had a shift of focus in understanding child's play and assessing its efficiency. Even though teachers in general see play as a free child's activity, it has become apparent they perceive it more as a learning method than a free child's action. Play with rules was introduced to all age groups of children, including nursery. The play implemented in the research was assessed as successful, and the preschool teacher's role was to guide or observe it. Even though the question of the relation in which the child enters and builds its own experiences is seen as an imperative in contemporary educational policies, teachers have stated that they are mostly focused on either their own or the child's perspective. The research has confirmed the presence of a tendency for didactisation of play and showed the need for new insights into this significant child's activity.*

**Keywords:** *child; play; preschool teacher; relationship; perspective.*

## Introduction

Preschool programs which focus on the holistic development of the child and respect children's rights have been very present throughout the world in the last decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. National programs that nurture the pedagogical approach based on play have replaced traditional didactic methods of learning and studying. They are based on the belief that the key to economic prosperity and productivity lies in highly educated and skilled workforce and that investment in the early age consequently gives back

good public funds in terms of life benefits for both individuals and society (McKeown et al., 2015), and represents the first step of long-term, strategic and purposeful investment in children. The Australian Early Childhood Education Program focuses on playful learning, while Canadian directs attention to training teachers in creating an environment that will help children reach their full potential through playtime experiences (Gray & Ryan, 2016; Wood, 2010). Among others, play is supported by the Estonian and Polish national curricula, the Swedish revised program Lpfö 98 and the UK's statutory foundation for early development and learning (Gray & Ryan, 2016; Klemenović, 2009; *National Curriculum for Basic Schools*, 2011; *The System of Education in Poland*, 2010; Wood, 2014).

As development and learning take place through relations, the issue of social power and marginalization strongly influences children's choices in relation to children and adults, especially knowing how much power and influence adults have on ethical values and behaviour of children (Milutinović, 2016; Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2017; Wood, 2014). It seems that, even in a relatively democratic environment, adults most often determine the choices that children can make, allowing them a degree of freedom, setting institutional rules, and reminding them of boundaries in free play, their choices and behaviour (Klemenović, 2014). Therefore, the question of children's free choice in preschool institutions is raised (Millei, 2012). In order to protect their own interests, the desire for freedom and participation sometimes makes children show antagonism toward adults because they are often forced to seek the help of adults in numerous activities. In that sense, free play and activities sometimes have different status when compared to play guided by adults, precisely because it is necessary to break the rules (Henricks 2010, 2011; Sutton-Smith 1997, acc. to Wood, 2014). Perceived from a post-structural perspective, children's choices are a reflection of actual interests in activities which pursue and practice power against others or with them, as a form of expressing peer culture and identity. Child's development, which occurs through constant interactions with the environment in the broad sense, should be considered in this context, because every observation and research of child development, every intervention and attempt to influence development, must proceed from this premise (Lazić & Colić, 2017).

The roles of adults in child's play are numerous, with a common denominator of creating a safe context for play in which the child is satisfied and feels safe. At the same time, the child starts to feel that play is worthwhile, gains freedom and autonomy, and builds relationships with others (Krnjaja, 2012). There is a wide range of roles played by adults in child's play: a planner, designer, manager, organizer, resource person (procurement of toys), observer, mediator, playmate, trainer and representative (Bruce, 1996; Dockett & Fleer, 2002; Jones & Reynolds, 1992, acc. to Kernan, 2007). In other words, the teacher can be a playmate, decision maker, leader, mediator, responsive participant, and a participant who resolves misunderstandings and verbalises what is happening (Bodrova & Leong, 2006; Perry, 2001; Rengel, 2014). Their roles extend from

observation, listening, dialogue and partner involvement in play, that is, from developing sensitivity and relationships with children, through observation and direct participation in play to ensuring a suitable environment for child's play (Klemenović, 2014; Krnjaja, 2012; Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2017; Santer et al., 2007). Providing materials for playing and then leaving the play to the children does not necessarily imply the lack of adult participation in play. If the teacher supports play, he/she also supports children's interests in the form of subtle presence (Miller & Almon, 2009; Rengel, 2014). Their role in play depends on the age of the children, their work experience, the number of children in a group, and the centres/resources in the room. A recent survey on the involvement of teachers in child's play has shown that they rarely choose the role of the play's creator/initiator, while they most often select the role of the observer (Ivrendi, 2017). It is indisputable that in the process of developing and familiarizing with the culture a child belongs to, an adult is needed to offer context, guide children and at the same time support their participation (Lazić & Colić, 2017). Depending on the role that an adult has in children's play, their development and learning advance. In this sense, the subject of this paper is the status of play in children's upbringing in preschool institutions. The aim is to assess the role of adults in supporting and enriching children's play, gain insight into children's activities in regards to it, as well as determine the dominant perspective of the child and adult in play.

## Method

The sample of subjects is appropriate and includes 145 teachers from preschool institutions in Vojvodina (the Republic of Serbia). The average age of the subjects is 39.6 ( $\pm 9.4$ ), with 12.4 years ( $\pm 8.5$ ) work experience in the teaching profession. Of the total number of preschool teachers, 15.9% graduated from a two-year college for education of preschool teachers, 52.4% from a three-year college (basic vocational studies for preschool teachers), 15.2% completed specialist vocational studies (additional year on completed basic vocational studies), and 16.6% completed four-year academic studies.

The data were collected with the use of a survey. The preschool teachers filled out a questionnaire with open questions in which they wrote about their own and children's participation in the play and expressed their opinion on the success of their own participation in children's play. The given answers are classified into larger categories. The results were processed by calculating response frequencies and percentage values, and the differences between formed groups of subjects were determined by using the Kruskal-Wallis H test.

Questions related to children's activities, teacher's behaviour and assessment of the dominant perspective of the child and/or adult in children's play are analysed in relation to:

(1) education degree of the teachers: *two-year college* (higher, two-years education, which is discontinued); *three-year college* (basic vocational studies for preschool teachers); *specialist vocational studies* (additional year on completed basic vocational

studies); *academic studies* (teachers from the sample with completed academic studies for preschool teachers);

(2) years of work in the teaching profession which were divided into four categories: a) 0-7; b) 8-15; c) 16-25; d) 26 and above.

(3) the children's age at the moment of performing the activities, ranging from nursery age, through young, middle, older, up to the preparatory preschool program.

## Results

Although the research involved 145 preschool teachers, some offered more answers so the survey results contain more answers than subjects. In order to process the obtained answers in a qualitative manner, it was necessary to establish categories for every question discussed in this paper, entailing all individual teachers' answers.

The answers to question about what the children were doing are classified into the categories shown in the first column in table 1.

Category *Role play* is represented in about 20% of the answers. Although there is no statistically significant difference in relation to individual characteristics of the sample, there is a tendency for teachers with completed three-year vocational studies, teachers with the least years of work experience, and those working with the middle group of children, to often state that, according to their assessment of successful play, children choose role play.

Category *Construction with various materials*, where we classified answers concerning constructive play and art activities, involves about 6 % of the teachers' responses. Teachers with a three-year vocational school as well as teachers with the least work experience outline these answers more often, and the same answers are likely to occur in the middle and older group of children. The differences here are also not statistically significant. Category *didactic play* has very similar representation in the teachers' answers.

Category *Play with rules* is the most common category and encompasses almost half of all the answers. Preschool teachers with higher education qualifications tend to perceive play with rules as successful, wherein the teachers with completed specialist studies offered 60% of the answers, and the rest 40-50 %. As far as work experience is concerned, most answers for this category of play came from teachers with 8 to 15 years of work experience, and in terms of children's age, play with rules is most commonly suggested in all ages, somewhat more often in the older and preparatory preschool age.

*Research play* category, which involves experimentation, is present in more than 8 % of all the answers, regardless of the variables.

*Planned learning situations* category, which cannot be considered play because of the dominant role of the adult, appears in about 10 % of the responses, more often with the least experienced teachers. It is highly present in working with toddlers.

Categories of answers to the question about what the teachers were doing are shown in the first column in table 2.

Education degree	Two-year college (n=26)	Three-year college (n=78)	Specialist (n=23)	Academic (n=26)	Total (n=153)	
Role play (content from directed activities and content from imagination)	6 (23,1%)	19 (24,4%)	3 (13,0%)	3 (11,5%)	31 (20,3%)	
Construction with various materials (constructive play and art activities)	1 (3,8%)	5 (6,4%)	1 (4,3%)	2 (7,7%)	9 (5,9%)	
Play with rules	12 (46,2%)	38 (48,7%)	14 (60,9%)	11 (42,3%)	75 (49,0%)	
Didactic play	4 (15,4%)	3 (3,8%)	1 (4,3%)	2 (7,7%)	10 (6,5%)	
Research play (experimentation and research play)	1 (3,8%)	6 (7,7%)	2 (8,7%)	4 (15,4%)	13 (8,5%)	
Planned learning situation (something else)	2 (7,7%)	7 (9,0%)	2 (8,7%)	4 (15,4%)	15 (9,8%)	
	X <sup>2</sup> =3,714		p=.294			
Years of work experience	≤7 (n=45)	8-15 (n=53)	16-25 (n=38)	≥26 (n=13)	Total (n=149)	
Role play (content from directed activities and content from imagination)	11 (24,4%)	8 (15,1%)	9 (23,7%)	3 (23,1%)	31 (20,8%)	
Construction with various materials (constructive play and art activities)	4 (8,9%)	2 (3,8%)	1 (2,6%)	2 (15,4%)	9 (6,0%)	
Play with rules	17 (37,8%)	33 (62,3%)	17 (44,7%)	5 (38,5%)	72 (48,3%)	
Didactic play	2 (4,4%)	2 (3,8%)	4 (10,5%)	1 (7,7%)	9 (6,0%)	
Research play (experimentation and research play)	4 (8,9%)	5 (9,4%)	3 (7,9%)	1 (7,7%)	13 (8,7%)	
Planned learning situation (something else)	7 (15,6%)	3 (5,7%)	4 (10,5%)	1 (7,7%)	15 (10,1%)	
	X <sup>2</sup> =,417		p=.937			
The children's age	Nursery (n=17)	Younger (n=28)	Middle (n=37)	Older (n=34)	Preparatory (n=36)	Total (n=152)
Role play (content from directed activities and content from imagination)	2 (11,8%)	7 (25,0%)	11 (29,7%)	3 (8,8%)	8 (22,2%)	31 (20,4%)
Construction with various materials (constructive play and art activities)	1 (5,9%)	2 (7,1%)	3 (8,1%)	3 (8,8%)	0 (0,0%)	9 (5,9%)
Play with rules	6 (35,3%)	15 (53,6%)	15 (40,5%)	19 (55,9%)	20 (55,6%)	75 (49,3%)
Didactic play	3 (17,6%)	0 (0,0%)	1 (2,7%)	4 (11,8%)	2 (5,6%)	10 (6,6%)
Research play (experimentation and research play)	1 (5,9%)	3 (10,7%)	2 (5,4%)	2 (5,9%)	5 (13,9%)	13 (8,6%)
Planned learning situation (something else)	4 (23,5%)	1 (3,6%)	5 (13,5%)	3 (8,8%)	1 (2,8%)	14 (9,2%)
	X <sup>2</sup> =6,633		p=.157			

Table 2

What were the teachers doing?

Last completed school level	Two-year college (n=27)	Three-year college (n=99)	Specialist (n=26)	Academic (n=29)	Total (n=181)	
Enriches the environment	3 (11,1%)	20 (20,2%)	2 (7,7%)	5 (17,2%)	30 (16,6%)	
Partner participation	10 (37,0%)	31 (31,3%)	11 (42,3%)	6 (20,7%)	58 (32,0%)	
Guides, observes the play process	13 (48,1%)	47 (47,5%)	13 (50,0%)	17 (58,6%)	90 (49,7%)	
Does not participate	1 (3,7%)	1 (1,0%)	0 (0,0%)	1 (3,4%)	3 (1,7%)	
$X^2=1,810$			$p=,613$			
Years of work experience	≤7 (n=57)	8-15 (n=60)	16-25 (n=48)	≥26 (n=12)	Total (n=177)	
Enriches the environment	13 (22,8%)	7 (11,7%)	9 (18,8%)	1 (8,3%)	30 (16,9%)	
Partner participation	17 (29,8%)	21 (35,0%)	15 (31,2%)	4 (33,3%)	57 (32,2%)	
Guides, observes the play process	27 (47,4%)	31 (51,7%)	22 (45,8%)	7 (58,3%)	87 (49,2%)	
Does not participate	0 (0,0%)	1 (1,7%)	2 (4,2%)	0 (0,0%)	3 (1,7%)	
$X^2=1,703$			$p=,636$			
The children's age	Nursery (n=18)	Younger (n=33)	Middle (n=49)	Older (n=40)	Preparatory (n=40)	Total (n=180)
Enriches the environment	4 (22,2%)	5 (15,2%)	13 (26,5%)	2 (5,0%)	6 (15,0%)	30 (16,7%)
Partner participation	4 (22,2%)	11 (33,3%)	11 (22,4%)	14 (35,0%)	18 (45,0%)	58 (32,2%)
Guides, observes the play process	10 (55,6%)	17 (51,5%)	25 (51,0%)	22 (55,0%)	15 (37,5%)	89 (49,4%)
Does not participate	0 (0,0%)	0 (0,0%)	0 (0,0%)	2 (5,0%)	1 (2,5%)	3 (1,7%)
$X^2=4,498$			$p=,343$			

Category *Preschool teacher who enriches the environment* is represented in about 17% of the overall responses on the whole sample level. Although there is no statistically significant difference in relation to individual characteristics of the sample, there is a tendency for teachers with completed three-year vocational studies, as well as teachers with the least working experience (0-7 years), to provide these answers more frequently than those with completed two-year school and academic education, as well as teachers with many years of work experience. Regarding the children's age, this method of teacher participation in children's play is most often used in the play of preschool children of middle age (4 years), while in other ages it is rare.

*Partner participation* is a category where the teacher is expected to play together with the children, accepting children's initiatives, participating as an equal playmate, supporting the play without interruption, and providing a model for participation

in the play. About 32% of these responses were obtained. Within this category of responses, there is also no statistically significant difference with regard to the individual characteristics, but the preschool teachers with completed specialist vocational studies state this type of participation in children's play more often, whereas the teachers who completed academic studies state it less than others. Also, these answers are more often provided by teachers with 8 to 15 years of work experience, while the teachers with the shortest working experience (0-7 years) provide them less than experienced teachers. In relation to the children's age, teacher partner participation in children's play is most often mentioned regarding children of the oldest preschool age, and the rarest with regards to children of nursery age.

*Guides and observes the play* category has the highest percentage of answers, almost half. The highest percentage of the answers are among teachers who have completed academic studies for educators, and the lowest among teachers who have completed three-year vocational studies. Also, the category was recognized more often by teachers with the longest working experience, and less often by teachers with the shortest experience, while in terms of the children's age, these answers are most often present in the description of teacher participation in children's play in nursery, and the rarest in the oldest preschool age.

*Not participating in the play* category is the least chosen category, wherein all responses relate to older preschool age children (not) participating in play.

The results with regard to defining the *dominant perspective of the child/adult* in the play are classified into categories presented in the first column in table 3.

The dominant adult perspective is recognized through the support and encouragement of children's play by giving directions, instructions and observing the play, and by considering that children's knowledge is an indicator of the success of children's participation. The last mentioned category is the least represented among teachers with completed basic vocational studies, and the most among subjects with specialist studies, followed by teachers with academic studies. Teachers with no or little work experience are more willing to support and encourage children's play than experienced ones. The same category of dominant adult perspective is more present in the middle, older and preparatory preschool group compared to the nursery and younger age group

*The child's perspective* is reflected in the enrichment of children's social relationships and in monitoring positive children's reactions as indicators of the success of children's play. In relation to the level of education, it is most common among teachers with completed basic vocational education, with the emphasis on the fact that exactly these teachers follow the children's positive reactions. This perspective is inversely proportional to the work experience's length. As in the previous category, teachers with less than a year of work experience are more willing to follow children's positive reactions. This category is equally observed in all age groups.

Table 3  
Why do teachers think their participation was successful?

Last completed school level	Two-year college (n=28)	Three-year college (n=99)	Specialist (n=29)	Academic (n=30)	Total (n=181)
<b>Dominant perspective of the adult</b>	<b>10 (35,7%)</b>	<b>39 (39,4%)</b>	<b>9 (31,0%)</b>	<b>13 (43,3%)</b>	<b>71 (38,2%)</b>
For supporting and encouraging children's play	4 (14,3%)	18 (18,2%)	1 (3,4%)	5 (16,7%)	28 (15,8%)
Gives directions, instructions and observes	2 (7,1%)	14 (14,1%)	0 (0,0%)	3 (10,0%)	19 (10,2%)
Does not participate in the play, but the children learn from it (use previous knowledge or adopted new ones).	4 (14,3%)	7 (7,1%)	8 (27,6%)	5 (16,7%)	24 (12,9%)
The children's knowledge is an indicator of the success of their participation.					
<b>Dominant perspective of the child</b>	<b>11 (39,3%)</b>	<b>41 (41,4%)</b>	<b>14 (48,3%)</b>	<b>13 (43,3%)</b>	<b>79 (42,5%)</b>
Enriches children's social relations	3 (10,7%)	10 (10,1%)	1 (3,4%)	3 (10,0%)	17 (9,1%)
Children's positive reactions	8 (28,6%)	31 (31,3%)	13 (44,8%)	10 (33,3%)	62 (33,3%)
<b>Present perspective of the adult and the child</b>	<b>5 (17,9%)</b>	<b>19 (19,2%)</b>	<b>6 (20,7%)</b>	<b>4 (13,3%)</b>	<b>34 (18,3%)</b>
Good teacher-child communication	1 (3,6%)	9 (9,1%)	3 (10,3%)	3 (10,0%)	16 (8,6%)
The sole fact of the involvement of teachers in joint activities with children	4 (14,3%)	10 (10,1%)	3 (10,3%)	1 (3,3%)	18 (9,7%)
<b>Other</b>	<b>2 (7,1%)</b>	<b>0 (0,0%)</b>	<b>0 (0,0%)</b>	<b>0 (0,0%)</b>	<b>2 (1,1%)</b>
	X <sup>2</sup> =1,554		p=,670		
<b>Years of work experience</b>	<b>0-7 (n=58)</b>	<b>8-15 (n=66)</b>	<b>16-25 (n=43)</b>	<b>26 and more (n=15)</b>	<b>Total (n=182)</b>
<b>Dominant perspective of the adult</b>	<b>23 (39,7%)</b>	<b>27 (40,9%)</b>	<b>13 (30,2%)</b>	<b>6 (40,0%)</b>	<b>69 (37,9%)</b>
For supporting and encouraging children's play	12 (20,7%)	10 (15,2%)	4 (9,3%)	1 (6,7%)	27 (14,8%)
Gives directions, instructions and observes	5 (8,6%)	10 (15,2%)	2 (4,7%)	2 (13,3%)	19 (10,4%)
Does not participate in the play, but the children learn from it (use previous knowledge or adopted new ones). The children's knowledge is an indicator of the success of their participation.	6 (10,3%)	7 (10,6%)	7 (16,3%)	3 (20,0%)	23 (12,6%)
<b>Dominant perspective of the child</b>	<b>24 (41,4%)</b>	<b>28 (42,4%)</b>	<b>21 (48,8%)</b>	<b>5 (33,3%)</b>	<b>78 (42,9%)</b>
Enriches children's social relations	2 (3,4%)	6 (9,1%)	7 (16,3%)	2 (13,3%)	17 (9,3%)
Children's positive reactions	22 (37,9%)	22 (33,3%)	14 (32,6%)	3 (20,0%)	61 (33,5%)



<b>Present perspective of the adult and the child</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(19,0%)</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(16,7%)</b>	<b>7</b> <b>(16,3%)</b>	<b>4</b> <b>(26,7%)</b>	<b>33</b> <b>(18,1%)</b>	
Good teacher-child communication	6 (10,3%)	4 (6,1%)	3 (7,0%)	2 (13,3%)	15 (8,2%)	
The sole fact of the involvement of teachers in joint activities with children	5 (8,6%)	7 (10,6%)	4 (9,3%)	2 (13,3%)	18 (9,9%)	
<b>Other</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0,0%)</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0,0%)</b>	<b>2</b> <b>(4,7%)</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0,0%)</b>	<b>2</b> <b>(1,1%)</b>	
	$\chi^2=1,438$			$p=,697$		
The children's age	Nursery (n=18)	Younger (n=36)	Middle (n=49)	Older (n=38)	Preparatory (n=44)	Total (n=185)
<b>Dominant perspective of the adult</b>	<b>8</b> <b>(44,4%)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(25,0%)</b>	<b>19</b> <b>(38,8%)</b>	<b>18</b> <b>(47,4%)</b>	<b>16</b> <b>(36,4%)</b>	<b>70</b> <b>(37,8%)</b>
For supporting and encouraging children's play	3 (16,7%)	3 (8,3%)	10 (20,4%)	8 (21,1%)	4 (9,1%)	28 (15,1%)
Gives directions, instructions and observes	1 (5,6%)	2 (5,6%)	5 (10,2%)	6 (15,6%)	5 (11,4%)	19 (10,3%)
Does not participate in the play, but the children learn from it (use previous knowledge or adopted new ones). The children's knowledge is an indicator of the success of their participation.	4 (22,2%)	4 (11,1%)	4 (8,2%)	4 (10,5%)	7 (15,9%)	23 (12,4%)
<b>Dominant perspective of the child</b>	<b>10</b> <b>(55,6%)</b>	<b>16</b> <b>(44,4%)</b>	<b>21</b> <b>(42,9%)</b>	<b>13</b> <b>(34,2%)</b>	<b>19</b> <b>(43,2%)</b>	<b>79</b> <b>(42,7%)</b>
Enriches children's social relations	0 (0,0%)	2 (5,6%)	7 (14,3%)	2 (5,3%)	6 (13,6%)	17 (9,2%)
Children's positive reactions	10 (55,6%)	14 (38,9%)	14 (28,6%)	11 (28,9%)	13 (29,5%)	62 (33,5%)
<b>Present perspective of the adult and the child</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0,0%)</b>	<b>11</b> <b>(30,6%)</b>	<b>8</b> <b>(16,3%)</b>	<b>6</b> <b>(15,8%)</b>	<b>9</b> <b>(20,5%)</b>	<b>34</b> <b>(18,4%)</b>
Good teacher-child communication	0 (0,0%)	6 (16,7%)	6 (12,2%)	3 (7,9%)	1 (2,3%)	16 (8,6%)
The sole fact of the involvement of teachers in joint activities with children	0 (0,0%)	5 (13,9%)	2 (4,1%)	3 (7,9%)	8 (18,2%)	18 (9,7%)
<b>Other</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0,0%)</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0,0%)</b>	<b>1</b> <b>(2,0%)</b>	<b>1</b> <b>(2,6%)</b>	<b>0</b> <b>(0,0%)</b>	<b>2</b> <b>(1,1%)</b>
	$\chi^2=6,362$			$p=,174$		

*The present perspective of an adult and child* is more evident in the fact that the teacher participates in joint play with the child, rather than being perceived as good child-teacher communication. This relation is present in all research variables.

The stated differences in the categories of dominant perspective are not statistically significant, with regards to variables of education degree, years of work experience, children's age and the time of the play's realisation. However, they point to a significant tendency of perceiving the adult-child relationship in the context of observing and supporting the play more than in the context of understanding the child-teacher communication.

## Discussion

Teachers with completed higher education at all levels have shown to a large extent that they offer children content for play that is subject to rules. This would imply the existence of a structure, a time frame for the play's duration, clarity in any activity, and the fact that the play is collaborative or competitive. This has been written about in other studies as well (Lazić et al., 2019, Mayne et al., 2018; Wood, 2014), and some emphasized the fact that heterogeneity of children's groups, integrated approach in work, program diversification and other contribute to play chosen by children, considering the preschool teacher's offer (Koruga, 2000; Stojanović et al., 2018), as is confirmed by this research. When compared to other teachers, the teachers with a two-year college degree mostly choose didactic approach to play. It is assumed that this is due to the notion that during play and through the play method children can learn the most (Stojanović et al., 2018). Contrastly, the least represented selection of research play with or without experimental activities by teachers from this variable indicates insufficient freedom to initiate such activities, possibly springing from the thought that children in such activities may learn little or nothing (Klemenović, 2009). When assessing the success of children's play, preschool teachers with completed academic studies place knowledge as the outcome of play at the dominant place, thus they choose research play with or without experimentation and planned learning situations. Therefore, the play is brought to the same level as a planned learning situation, which is in contrast to the basic nature of child's play (Colić, 2018; Colić et al., 2018; Milošević et al., 2017; White, 2012).

Although all subjects, regardless of their work experience in the teaching profession, show a tendency to primarily choose play with rules, and then role play springing from a directed activity and from imagination, it is noted that teachers with least work experience find support for their work in literature and prescribed programs, and accordingly assess children's play on the basis of knowledge and skills in the planned learning situations (Valenčič Zuljan & Blanuša Trošelj, 2014; Vizek Vidović & Vlahović Štetić, 2007; Klemenović, 2014). The selection of didactic play or planned learning situations is observed among teachers with 16 to 25 years of work experience, which would correspond to the notion that children learn something in this type of play (Klemenović, 2009). In this way, play can be understood as an adult-controlled activity rather than a free child activity in which the child chooses what he/she wants to do, how and for how long (Krnjaja, 2012; Millei, 2012). This is why children sometimes need to break the rules and practice their freedom in activities for which adults only claim are free, while actually denying freedom (Henriks, 2011; Wood, 2014).

If we perceive child's play as a trigger that leads the child to new discoveries and a higher level of development (Rajić & Petrović Sočo, 2015), we consider play a free activity which is a goal in itself, free from the pressure of others, especially adults, and in that case we understand it as an authentic child's activity. The answers of the teachers

who offered play with rules and didactic play to children in the nursery, at the same time offering constructive and research play considerably less, point to the fact that the research subjects are not sufficiently aware of the fact that it is important to have appropriate, well-timed and dosed adult activities in order for the child to develop successfully and experience competence (Colić et al., 2018). Children of early age live in the moment, and the experiences they are exposed to affect their understanding of reality and perception (Lazić & Colić, 2017). The lack of a child's independent creation and research, which can become a daily reality (Krnjaja, 2010), puts the adult into a dominant role in relation to the child, leaving him/her in a position of obedience, without even considering the age characteristics.

The most common way (about half of the teachers' responses) of participating in child's play regarded as successful by the teachers is guiding and observing by an adult. This information brings into mind the presence of distrust in the child's capacity and competence to independently organize successful play by a relatively large number of teachers. Furthermore, the obtained answers point to relatively frequent presence of the "culture of obedience" in the surveyed environment (Colić & Nišević, 2011), thus calling into question the children's ability to choose, which is crucial for the internal motivation of the child to participate in any activity or play. Altogether, it can be interpreted as the dominant position of the teacher in child's play, which by its definition should be a free and independent child's activity of their own choice, due to the satisfaction it gives, resulting in great significance for the child's development (Duran, 2003). This does not mean that children's play should not be supported and enriched, but the feeling of freedom must be preserved, which is the responsibility of adults.

According to the number of the obtained answers (32%), the second category is adult partner participation in child's play. These answers prove that children can initiate and are able to play; also, that a number of teachers are able to use their imagination and do not hesitate to join the children in the adventure of true play. The least represented category of teacher participation in children's play is the enrichment of the playing environment, 17% of the answers, which can be considered very poor. There is evidence that an incentive environment with rich and diverse materials for play, well-organized in space, directly encourages free research, expression and communication of children (Colić, 1997; Guyton, 2011; Pavlović et al., 2017; Rinaldi, 2006).

Not participating in the child's play, although a relatively rare answer in the examined sample, is another unfavourable result of this research. Bearing in mind that play is the most important activity of a preschool child, through which children learn and develop, by failing to support and encourage it, the most valuable opportunity to contribute to the development, learning and overall well-being of the child is lost.

It is important to note that the dominant perspective of an adult in child's play is present in all variables. This way of perceiving children's play supports the idea that play is a strategy suitable for teaching children (Perry, 2001; Rengel, 2014), which

implies the conceptualization of play as a tool, as a learning resource that is put into play (Rengel, 2014). On the other hand, within the dominant perspective of the child, play is understood as an intrinsic child's activity that is expressive, self-regulating, prone to change, and oriented to the process (Babić & Irović, 2004; Gleave, 2009). It is mostly seen in observing the positive children's reactions, and it appears in relation to all variables. Once more, the enrichment of child's play is perceived less than the children's positive reactions, as well as in the teachers' answers to the previous question and in relation to all the variables. The significance of good communication between the child and the teacher is not remarkably noted, although relationships are generally listed in national programs as an imperative in preschool children's development (Pavlović Breneselović, 2012; Pavlović Breneselović & Krnjaja, 2017; *The Act on the Basics of Preschool Education Programme*, 2018).

The obtained results indicate the presence of a serious problem of "didacticisation of child's play" in the work of the examined teachers. There is a continuity in pointing out to this problem, written about by Sanda Marjanović (Marjanović, 1987), and in recent significant works by Svetozar Bogojević et al. (Bogojević & David, 2012). Marjanović considered the process of "pedagogizing childhood and instrumentalisation of play" (Marjanović, 1985) in the context of civilization's development and the creation of persons in new industrial society, which included some pedagogical measures for the development of a disciplined, productive and rational personality. On the other hand, Bogojević et al. warn about the problem of didacticisation of children's play in the institutions for raising young children. By systemic observation and monitoring children's play, they found that didactic play is prematurely introduced into the work with children, therefore, play is openly controlled, its spontaneity and authenticity is suppressed, as well as the development of creativity in children. (Bogojević & David, 2012).

All obtained data point to the need to provide additional support to teachers in the process of introducing new national programs for working with children of preschool age, which are based on relationships and put children's play in the centre. This does not disregard the fact that the child is a 'being of play', learning in situations and activities based on the playing pattern: volunteerism, initiative, dynamism, negotiation, dedication, openness and retrospect. If the preschool has enough resources and supports play, the child acquires an authentic experience that is important and meaningful at the same time, learns patterns of behaviour, develops communication and language, explores materials and their possibilities, uses imagination, expresses feelings and gains other experiences.

This research is an attempt to review the status of play in the educational process in preschools in Vojvodina. Like any other research done on an appropriate sample, it raises important questions related to understanding the importance of play for children and adults and the relationships built through it. The experience of practitioners from other countries is valuable in the adaptation of play in fostering the overall development of children, but each environment requires their adjustment to the given socio-cultural

context. Therefore, the authors believe that, in order to gain a better insight into the problem and suggest a solution in the particular context of preschools in Vojvodina, it would be good to repeat the research on a larger, representative sample. Similarly, many benefits would come out of action researches in preschools during which practitioners would have a more active role and the opportunity to experience for themselves the possibilities of play. By changing educational practices, our understanding of the increasingly deeper layers of practice would improve, and the process of its continuous improvement and modification would start.

## Acknowledgment

This paper is the result of a research within the project *Support to Early Development and Learning through Child's Play Enrichment* (Decision No. 142-451-2732 / 2018-02-1) funded by the Provincial Secretariat for Higher Education and Scientific Research of AP Vojvodina in 2018.

## References

- Bodrova, E., & Leong, D. J. (2003). The importance of being playful. *Educational Leadership*, 60(7), 50–53.
- Bogojević, S., & David, G. (2012). Didaktizacija igre predškolske dece. *Časopis za humanističke i društvene nauke*, 16, 49–62.
- Colić, V. (1997). *Dečje jaslice – gledane iz antropološkog ugla*. Institut za pedagogiju i andragogiju Filozofskog fakulteta.
- Colić, V., & Nišević, S. (2011). Poželjne osobine deteta iz ugla vaspitača. *Nastava i vaspitanje*, 60(2), 320–327.
- Colić, V. (2018, November 16-17). Children's play in everyday life [Paper presentation]. Everyday Life of Children International Conference, Novi Sad, Vojvodina. <http://www.vaspitacns.edu.rs/konferencija/Program%20konferencije%20SZD%202018%20SRP-ENGL.pdf>
- Colić, V., Lazić, S., Ulić, J., Janković, M., & Galić, M. (2018). *Podrška ranom razvoju i učenju kroz bogaćenje dečje igre*. Visoka škola strukovnih studija za obrazovanje vaspitača.
- Duran, M. (2003). *Dijete i igra*. Naklada Slap.
- Gray, S., & Ryan, A. (2016). Aistear vis-à-vis the Primary Curriculum: The experiences of early years teachers in Ireland. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 24(2), 188–205. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2016.1155973>
- Guyton, G. (2011). Using toys to support infant-toddler learning and development. *Young Children*, 66(5), 50–56.
- Estonia. (2011). *National Curriculum for Basic Schools*.
- Ivrendi, A. (2017). Early childhood teachers' roles in free play. *Early Years*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2017.1403416>

- Kernan, M. (2007). *Play as a context for early learning and development*. National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.
- Klemenović, J. (2009). *Savremeni predškolski programi* [Contemporary Preschool Programs]. Savez pedagoških društava Vojvodine.
- Klemenović, J. (2014). How do today's children play and with which toys? *Croatian Journal of Education*, 16(1), 181-200.
- Koruga, D. (2000). Saradnja porodice i predškolske ustanove [Family and Preschool Cooperation.] In J. Pearl (ed.) *Predškolsko vaspitanje i obrazovanje u SR Jugoslaviji*, 76-85. Catholic Relief Services.
- Krnjaja, Ž. (2010). Igra, stvaralaštvo, otvoreni vaspitni sistem: šta ih povezuje? *Nastava i vaspitanje*, 59(2), 264-277.
- Krnjaja, Ž. (2012). Igra na ranim uzrastima. In A. Baucal (ed.), *Standardi za razvoj i učenje dece ranih uzrasta u Srbiji* (str. 113-132). Institut za psihologiju Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu i UNICEF.
- Lazić, S., & Colić, V. (2017). Kontekstne dimenzije u jaslama viđene očima budućih vaspitača. *Nastava i vaspitanje*, 66(1), 129-142. <https://doi.org/10.5937/nasvas1701129L>
- Lazić, S., Matović, M., & Velišek-Braško, O. (2019). Integracija pokreta u metodičkim aktivnostima studenata – budućih vaspitača. *TimsActa*, 13(1). <https://doi.org/10.5937/timsact13-20421>
- Marjanović, A. (1985). Teorijsko-metodološka pitanja u projektu „Antologije tradicionalnih igara“. *Predškolsko dete*, 4, 247-258.
- Mayne, F, Howitt, C., & Rennie, L.J. (2018). A hierarchical model of children's research participation rights based on information, understanding, voice, and influence. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 26(5), 644-656. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2018.1522480>
- Millei, Z. (2012). Thinking differently about guidance: Power, children's autonomy and democratic environments. *Journal of Early Childhood Research*, 10(1), 88-99. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1476718X11406243>
- Miller, E., & Almon, J. (2009). *Crisis in the kindergarten: Why children need to play in school*. Alliance for Childhood.
- Milošević, B., Zorić, M., Ulić, J., Colić, V., & Matović, M. (2017). *Integrisani pristup u razvoju veština dece predškolskog uzrasta*. Visoka škola strukovnih studija za obrazovanje vaspitača.
- Milutinović, J. (2016). *Socijalni i kritički konstruktivizam u obrazovanju*. Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Novom Sadu.
- McKeown, K, Haase, T., & Pratschke, J. (2015). Determinants of child outcomes in a cohort of children in the free pre-school year in Ireland, 2012/2013. *Irish Educational Studies*, 34(3), 245-263. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03323315.2015.1065430>
- Pavlović Breneselović, D. (2012). Odnosi na ranim uzrastima. In A. Baucal (ed.), *Standardi za razvoj i učenje dece ranih uzrasta u Srbiji*, 133-150. Institut za psihologiju Filozofskog fakulteta Univerziteta u Beogradu i UNICEF.
- Pavlović Breneselović, D., & Krnjaja, Ž. (2017). *Kaleidoskop. Osnove diversifikovanih programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja*. Institut za pedagogiju i andragogiju, Filozofski fakultet Univerziteta u Beogradu.

- Perry, J. P. (2001). *Outdoor play teaching strategies with young children*. Teachers College Press.
- Polish Eurydice Unit. (2010.) *The System of Education in Poland*.
- RS. (2018). *Pravilnik o osnovama programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja*. Službeni glasnik RS – Prosvetni glasnik, 16.
- Rajić, V., & Petrović Sočo, B. (2015). Dječji doživljaj igre u predškolskoj i ranoj školskoj dobi. *Školski vjesnik: časopis za pedagoški teoriju i praksu*, 64(4), 603-620.
- Rengel, K. (2014). Preschool teacher's attitudes towards play. *Croatian Journal of Education*, 16(1), 113–125.
- Rinaldi, C. (2006). *In dialogue with Reggio Emilia: Listening, researching and learning*. Routledge.
- Santer, J., Griffiths, C., & Goodal, D. (2007). *Free play in early childhood: A literature review*. National Children's Bureau.
- Stojanović, A., Kovacević, Z., & Bogavac, D. (2018). From obsolete to contemporary preschool education (experiences in Serbia). *Early Years. An International Research Journal*, 34(4), 363-377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09575146.2018.1444584>
- UK. National Children's Bureau. (2007). *Free Play in Early Childhood*.
- Valenčič Zuljan, M., & Blanuša Trošelj, D. (2014). Profesionalni razvoj vzgojiteljev z vidika vzgojiteljevih pojmovanj. *Andragoška spoznaja*, 20(1), 43-60.
- Vizek Vidović, V., & Vlahović Štetić, V. (2007). Modeli učenja odraslih i profesionalni razvoj. *Ljetopis socijalnog rada*, 14(2), 283-310.
- White, E. R. (2012). *The power of play - A research summary on play and learning*. Minnesota Children's Museum.
- Wood, E. (2010). Reconceptualising the play-pedagogy relationship: From control to complexity. In L. Brooker and S. Edwards (eds.), *Engaging Play* (pp. 11-24). Open University Press.
- Wood, E. (2014). Free choice & free play in early childhood education: Troubling the discourse. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 22(1), 4–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09669760.2013.830562>

---

**Svetlana Lazić**

Preschool Teachers Training College  
Petra Drapšina 8, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia  
[pedagogns@gmail.com](mailto:pedagogns@gmail.com)

**Vesna Colić**

Preschool Teachers Training College  
Petra Drapšina 8, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia  
[colic.vesna@gmail.com](mailto:colic.vesna@gmail.com)

**Milenko Janković**

Preschool Teachers Training College  
Petra Drapšina 8, 21000 Novi Sad, Serbia  
[milenkojankovic@live.com](mailto:milenkojankovic@live.com)

# Igra u izravnoj praksi u vrtićima Vojvodine

---

## Sažetak

*U radu je prikazano istraživanje koje je provedeno u školskoj godini 2018./19. u dječjim vrtićima na području Autonomne Pokrajine Vojvodine. Cilj je istraživanja procijeniti ulogu odgajatelja u podržavanju i obogaćivanju dječjih igara, uvid u stvaranje djece u odnosu na igru kao i percepciju dominantne perspektive djeteta ili odrasle osobe u igri. Intervjuirano je 145 odgajatelja. Rezultati su pokazali da se odgajatelj usredotočio na razumijevanje dječje igre i procjenu njezine izvedbe. Iako odgajatelji u načelu shvaćaju igru kao slobodnu dječju aktivnost, pokazalo se da je ona viđena kao metoda učenja, a ne kao slobodno dječje djelovanje. Uvodili su igru s pravilima u sve dobne skupine djece, uključujući jasllice. U procesu igre uspješno su ocijenili svoju ulogu upravljanja i nadzora. Iako pitanje odnosa u koje dijete ulazi i gradi vlastita iskustva vide kao imperativ u suvremenim odgojno-obrazovnim politikama, odgajatelji su izjavili da su uglavnom usmjereni ili na vlastitu ili na dječju perspektivu. Istraživanje je potvrdilo postojanje tendencije za didaktizaciju igre i otvorilo potrebu za novim spoznajama o ovoj značajnoj dječjoj aktivnosti.*

**Ključne riječi:** *dijete; igra; odgajatelj; odnos; perspektiva.*

## Uvod

Predškolski programi koji su usmjereni na djetetov holistički razvoj i zadovoljavanje prava djeteta, prisutni su u cijelom svijetu u drugom desetljeću 21. stoljeća. Nacionalni programi koji njeguju pedagoški pristup temeljen na igri zamijenili su tradicionalne didaktičke metode učenja i poučavanja. Oni se oslanjaju na uvjerenje da je ključ ekonomskoga razvoja i produktivnosti u visoko obrazovanoj i kvalificiranoj radnoj snazi te da ulaganja u ranim godinama daju dobar povrat javnih sredstava u smislu životnih koristi za pojedince i društvo (McKeown, Haase i Pratschke, 2015) i čini prvi korak dugoročnih, strateških i svrsishodnih ulaganja u djecu. Australijski program učenja u ranom djetinjstvu usredotočio se na učenje kroz igru, dok je pažnja kanadskih programa usmjerena na edukaciju edukatora kako bi se stvorilo okruženje koje će pomoći djeci da ostvare puni potencijal kroz doživljaje igranja (Gray i Ryan, 2016; Wood, 2010). Igra je, između ostaloga, podržana estonskim



i poljskim nacionalnim kurikulumom, švedskim revidiranim Lpfö 98 programom i zakonskim temeljima Velike Britanije za rani razvoj i učenje (Gray i Ryan, 2016; Klemenović, 2009; *National Curriculum for Basic Schools*, 2011; *The System of Education in Poland*, 2010; Wood, 2014).

Kako se razvoj i učenje odvijaju kroz odnose, pitanje društvene moći i marginalizacije snažno utječe na dječje izbore u odnosu na djecu i odrasle, posebno znajući koliko moć i utjecaj odrasli imaju na etičke vrijednosti i ponašanje djece (Milutinović, 2016; Pavlović Breneselović i Krnjaja, 2017; Wood, 2010). Čini se da, čak i u relativno demokratskom okruženju, odrasli najčešće određuju izbore koje djeca mogu učiniti, dopuštaju im stupanj slobode, postavljaju institucionalna pravila i podsjećaju na granice slobodne igre djece, njihov izbor i ponašanje (Klemenović, 2014). Stoga se postavlja pitanje slobodnoga izbora djece u predškolskim ustanovama (Millei, 2012). Želja za slobodom i sudjelovanjem govori djeci da ponekad, kako bi zaštitili svoje interese, pokazuju antagonizam prema odraslima jer su prisiljeni često tražiti pomoć odraslih u brojnim aktivnostima. U tom smislu, slobodna igra i slobodne aktivnosti ponekad imaju drugačiji status u odnosu na igre odraslih, upravo zbog činjenice da je potrebno prekršiti pravila (Henricks 2010, 2011; Sutton-Smith 1997, prema Woodu, 2014). Gledano iz poststrukturalne perspektive, dječji su izbori odraz postojećih interesa u aktivnostima koje prakticiraju i uvježbavaju moć protiv drugih ili s njima, kao oblik izražavanja vršnjačke kulture i identiteta. U tom kontekstu treba promatrati i dječji razvoj koji se odvija kroz konstantne interakcije sa sredinom u širokom smislu te riječi, zbog čega svako promatranje i istraživanje dječjega razvoja, svaka intervencija i svaki pokušaj da se na razvoj utječe, mora polaziti od te pretpostavke (Lazić i Colić, 2017).

Uloge odraslih u dječjoj igri brojne su sa zajedničkim nazivnikom koji stvara siguran kontekst za igru u kojoj je dijete zadovoljno i osjeća se sigurno. U isto vrijeme, razvija osjećaj da je igra vrijedna, uz nju razvija slobodu te izgrađuje samostalnost i izgrađuje odnose s drugima (Krnjaja, 2012). Širok je raspon uloga odraslih osoba u dječjoj igri, kao što je osoba koja osmišljava igru, dizajneri, menadžeri, organizatori, resursne osobe (dopuna igračkama), promatrači, posrednici, suigrači, treneri i agenti (Bruce, 1996; Dockett i Fleer, 2002; Jones i Reynolds, 1992, prema Kernanu, 2007). Drugim riječima, odgajatelji mogu biti suigrači, donositelji odluka, vođe, posrednici, odgovorni sudionici i učitelji koji rješavaju nesporazume i verbaliziraju ono što se događa (Bodrova i Leong, 2006; Perry, 2001; Rengel, 2014). Njihove su se uloge kretale od promatranja, slušanja, dijaloga do partnerskoga angažmana odrasle osobe u igri, odnosno od razvijanja osjetljivosti i odnosa s djecom, kroz promatranje, izravno sudjelovanje u igri pa sve do osiguravanja prikladnoga okruženja za dječju igru (Klemenović, 2014; Krnjaja, 2012; Pavlović Breneselović i Krnjaja, 2017; Santer, Griffiths i Goodal, 2007). Pružanje materijala za igru, a zatim prepuštanje igre djeci od strane odrasle osobe, ne znači nužno i njegovo nesudjelovanje u igri. Ako podupire igru, odgajatelj također podržava dječje interese u obliku suptilne prisutnosti (Miller

i Almon, 2009; Rengel, 2014). Njihova uloga u igri ovisi o dobi djece, radnom iskustvu, broju djece u skupini i raznovrsnosti poticaja u prostoriji. Nedavna anketa o uključenosti odgajatelja u dječju igru pokazala je da oni najvjerojatnije odabiru ulogu pokretača/inicijatora igre, ali se najčešće odlučuju za ulogu promatrača, a ne sudionika igre (Ivrendi, 2017). Nesporno je da je djetetu, u procesu razvoja i upoznavanja s kulturom kojoj pripada, potrebna odrasla osoba koja će mu ponuditi kontekst i usmjeriti ga te istodobno njegovati njegovo sudjelovanje (Lazić i Colić, 2017). Ovisno o ulozi koju odrasla osoba ima u dječjoj igri značajno je dječji razvoj i učenje. U tom smislu, *predmet* rada je status igara u institucionalnom podizanju djece predškolske dobi. *Cilj* je procijeniti ulogu odraslih u podržavanju i obogaćivanju dječjih igara, uvidu u stvaranje djece u odnosu na nju i percepciju dominantne perspektive djeteta ili odrasle osobe u igri.

## Metoda

*Uzorak* ispitanika je prikladan i obuhvaća 145 odgajatelja iz predškolskih ustanova u Vojvodini (Republika Srbija). Prosječna dob ispitanika je 39,6 godina ( $\pm 9,4$ ), s 12,4 godine ( $\pm 8,5$ ) radnoga iskustva u profesiji odgajatelja. Od ukupnoga broja odgajatelja, 15,9 % završilo je dvogodišnju školu za odgajatelje, 52,4 % trogodišnju školu (osnovni strukovni studiji za odgajatelje), 15,2 % specijalističke strukovne studije (dodatne godine na završenim stručnim studijima) i 16,6 % četverogodišnjih sveučilišnih studija.

Podatci se prikupljaju anketiranjem. Odgajatelji su ispunjavali upitnik s otvorenim pitanjima u kojima su pisali svoje i dječje sudjelovanje u igri i dali mišljenje o uspjehu vlastitoga sudjelovanja u dječjoj igri. Odgovori su razvrstani u veće kategorije. Rezultati su izračunati izračunavanjem učestalosti odgovora i postotka vrijednosti, a razlike između formiranih skupina ispitanika određene su pomoću Kruskal-Vallisova H testa (Kruskal-Wallis H test).

Pitanja koja se tiču dječjih aktivnosti, postupanje odgajatelja i procjene dominantne perspektive djeteta i/ili odrasle osobe u dječjoj igri, analizirane su u odnosu na:

(1) posljednju završenu školu u kojoj se pojavljuje *dvogodišnja škola* (*dvogodišnje* visoko obrazovanje, koja više nije aktualna); *trogodišnja škola* (osnovni strukovni studij za odgajatelje); *specijalistički strukovni studij* (dodatne godine na završenim stručnim studijima); *sveučilišni studij* (odgajatelji iz uzorka sa završenim akademskim studijima za odgajatelje)

(2) godine rada u profesiji odgajatelja koji su podijeljeni u četiri kategorije: a) 0-7; b) 8-15; c) 16-25; d) 26 i više godina

(3) dob djece u trenutku obavljanja aktivnosti, u kojima su pronađena djeca iz mlađe dobi, preko mlađih, srednjih, starijih, do pripremnoga predškolskoga programa.

## Rezultati

Iako je istraživanje obuhvatilo 145 odgojatelja, neki su ponudili više odgovora, tako

da je u rezultatima istraživanja više odgovora nego ispitanika. Da bi se kvalitetno obradili dobiveni odgovori, bilo je nužno za svako pitanje o kojem se raspravlja u ovom radu, napraviti kategorije unutar kojih su se našli svi odgovori pojedinih odgajatelja.

Rezultati odgovora na pitanje *Što su radila djeca?* razvrstavaju se u kategorije prikazane u prvom stupcu (Tablica 1).

#### Tablica 1.

*Igra uloga* je zastupljena u oko 20 % dobivenih odgovora. Iako ne postoji statistički značajna razlika u odnosu na pojedinačne karakteristike uzorka, postoji tendencija da odgajatelji sa završenim trogodišnjim strukovnim studijem, odgajatelji s najmanjim radnim iskustvom i oni koji rade s djecom srednje dobi, najčešće navode, da su, prema njihovoj procjeni uspješne igre, djeca birala igru uloga.

*Konstruiranje različitim materijalima*, u njima su svrstani odgovori koji se tiču konstruktivnih igara i likovne umjetnosti i uključuje oko 6 % odgovora odgajatelja. Odgajatelji s trogodišnjom strukovnom školom, kao i odgajatelji s najmanje iskustva, najčešće navode ove odgovore, a isti se odgovori češće javljaju u srednjoj i starijoj skupini djece. Ni ovdje razlike nisu statistički značajne. Vrlo sličnu zastupljenost u odgovorima ispitanih odgajatelja imaju i *didaktičke igre*.

*Igra s pravilima* najčešće je zastupljena kategorija i zahtijeva gotovo polovinu svih dobijenih odgovora. Odgajatelji sa završenim svim razinama visokoga obrazovanja iskazuju tendenciju da igre s pravilima prikažu kao uspješne, s tom razlikom što su odgajatelji sa završenim specijalističkim studijama ponudili 60 % odgovora, a ostali od 40 do 50 %. Kad je riječ o radnome stažu, najviše odgovora za ovu kategoriju igara ima odgajateljica koja ima između 8 i 15 godina radnoga iskustva, a što se tiče dobi djece, pravila igre najčešće se navode u svim dobnim skupinama, ali nešto češće u starijoj i pripreмноj fazi predškolskoga odgoja.

*Istraživačke igre*, koje u sebi nose i eksperimentiranje, prisutne su u nešto više od 8 % svih odgovora odgajatelja, neovisno od varijabli.

*Planirane situacije učenja*, koje se ne mogu smatrati igrom jer je u njima dominantna uloga odrasle osobe, pojavljuju se u oko 10 % odgovora, češće kod odgajatelja s najmanje radnoga iskustva. Vrlo je prisutna u radu s djecom starije dobi.

Kategorije odgovora na pitanje *Što su radili odgajatelji?* prikazane su u prvoj koloni (Tablica 2).

#### Tablica 2.

Odgajatelj koji *obogaćuje okolinu* prisutan je u oko 17 % odgovora na razini cijeloga uzorka. Iako ne postoji statistički značajna razlika u odnosu na pojedinačne karakteristike uzorka, postoji tendencija da ovakve odgovore češće daju odgajatelji s trogodišnjom stručnom školom za odgajatelje, kao i odgajatelji s najmanje radnoga

iskustva (0-7 godina) od onih sa završenom dvogodišnjom školom i akademskim obrazovanjem, kao i odgajatelji s dugogodišnjim radnim iskustvom. S obzirom na dob djece, ovaj način sudjelovanja odgajatelja u dječjoj igri najčešće se koristi u dječjoj igri srednje predškolske dobi (4 godine), dok je u drugim godinama rijetkost.

*Partnersko sudjelovanje* je kategorija u kojoj odgajatelj promišlja o igranju zajedno s djecom, prihvaćajući dječje inicijative, sudjelujući kao jedan od ravnopravnih partnera, podupirući igru bez prekida te osiguravajući model za sudjelovanje u igri. Primljeno je oko 32 % ovakvih odgovora. Unutar ove kategorije odgovora ne postoji statistički značajna razlika u odnosu na pojedinačne karakteristike uzorka, ali odgajatelji iz uzorka sa završenim specijalističkim strukovnim studijima za odgajatelje često navode ovu vrstu sudjelovanja u dječjoj igri, dok odgajatelji iz uzorka koji su završili sveučilišni studij za odgajatelje manje od ostalih. Također, ove odgovore češće daju odgajatelji s radnim iskustvom od 8 do 15 godina, dok su odgajatelji iz uzorka koji imaju najkraće radno iskustvo (0-7 godina) nešto rjeđe od iskusnih odgajatelja. U odnosu na dob djece, partnersko sudjelovanje odgajatelja u dječjoj igri najčešće se spominje kod djece najstarije predškolske dobi, a najrjeđe kod djece jasličke dobi.

*Rukovodi, nadgleda proces igre* ima najveći postotak odgovora, gotovo polovicu. Najbrojniji su među odgajateljima koji su završili akademske studije za odgajatelje, a najrjeđi među odgajateljima sa završenim trogodišnjim strukovnim studijem. Također ih češće navode odgajatelji i s najdužim radnim iskustvom, a rjeđe s najkraćim, dok su u pogledu dobi djece, ovakvi odgovori najčešće prisutni u opisu sudjelovanja odgajatelja u igri djece u jaslicama, a najrjeđe u najstarijoj dječjoj dobi djece.

*Ne sudjeluje u igri* najmanje je birana kategorija u kojoj se svi odgovori i odnose na (ne)sudjelovanje u igri djece starijih predškolskih dobi.

Rezultati odgovora na definiranje *dominantne perspektive djeteta / odrasle osobe* u igri svrstavaju se u kategorije i nalaze se u prvom stupcu (Tablica 3).

Tablica 3.

*Dominantna perspektiva odraslog* prepoznata je kroz podržavanje i poticanje dječje igre, kroz usmjeravanje i davanje uputa i nadgledanje igre, kao i kroz stajalište da je znanje djece pokazatelj njihove uspješnosti sudjelovanja u igri. Posljednja spomenuta kategorija najmanje je zastupljena među odgajateljima sa završenim osnovnim strukovnim studijem, a najviše kod ispitanika sa završenim specijalističkim studijima nakon kojih slijede odgajatelji sa sveučilišnim studijem. Odgajatelji koji nemaju ili imaju malo radnoga iskustva, spremniji su podržati i poticati dječju igru, nego iskusni. Ista kategorija dominantne perspektive odrasle osobe prisutnija je u srednjoj, starijoj i pripremačkoj predškolskoj grupi u odnosu na jasličku i mlađu dobnu skupinu.

*Perspektiva djeteta* ogleda se u obogaćivanju dječjih društvenih odnosa i praćenju pozitivnih reakcija djece, kao pokazatelj uspjeha dječje igre. U odnosu na razinu

obrazovanja, najprisutnija je među odgajateljima koji imaju završeno strukovno obrazovanje, s naglaskom na činjenicu da ovi odgajatelji prate pozitivne reakcije djece.

Ova je perspektiva obrnuto proporcionalna duljini radnoga staža. Kao i u prethodnoj kategoriji, odgajatelji s manje radnoga iskustva spremniji su pratiti pozitivne reakcije djece. Ova kategorija se podjednako prati u svim dobnim skupinama.

*Prisutnost perspektive odrasle osobe i djeteta* vidljivija je u činjenici da odgajatelj sudjeluje u zajedničkoj igri s djetetom, što se podrazumijeva kao dobra komunikacija na relaciji dijete – odgajatelj. Taj je odnos prisutan u svim varijantama istraživanja.

Navedene razlike u kategorijama dominantne perspektive u igri u odnosu na varijable posljednje završene škole, godine radnoga staža i dob djece u vrijeme realizacije igre, nisu statistički značajne. Međutim, oni ukazuju na značajnu tendenciju sagledavanja odnosa između odraslih i djece više u kontekstu praćenja i podržavanja igre, nego razumijevanja komunikacije o djetetu-odgajatelju.

## Rasprava

Odgajatelji sa završenim visokim obrazovanjem na svim razinama pokazali su da u velikoj mjeri djeci nude sadržaj za igru koja podliježe pravilima. To bi značilo postojanje strukture, vremenskoga okvira za trajanje igre, jasnoće u bilo kojoj aktivnosti i činjenici da je igra suradnička ili natjecateljska. To je zapisano i u drugim studijama (Lazić, Matović i Velišek-Braško, 2019, Mayne, Howitt i Rennie, 2018; Wood, 2014), a u nekima je naglašena činjenica da heterogena skupina djece, integrirani pristup u radu, diversifikacija programa i drugo, pridonosi dječjem izboru igara u odnosu na ponudu odgajatelja (Koruga, 2000; Stojanović, Kovačević i Bogavac, 2018), što potvrđuje i ovo istraživanje. Odgajatelji s dvogodišnjom visokom stručnom spremom u usporedbi s drugim skupinama odgajatelja, uglavnom biraju didaktičke igre. Pretpostavlja se da je to zbog promišljanja da se u igri i kroz metodu igre može najviše naučiti (Stojanović i sur., 2018). Za razliku od toga, najmanji odabir istraživačkih igara sa ili bez eksperimentalnih aktivnosti, kod odgajatelja iz ove varijable, ukazuje na nedovoljnu slobodu da se otisnu u takve aktivnosti, vjerojatno tražeći uporište u promišljanju da djeca u takvim djelatnostima ne nauče ništa ili malo (Klemenović, 2009). Odgajatelji sa završenim akademskim studijima na dominantnom mjestu u odabiru uspjeha dječjih igara postavljaju znanje kao rezultat igre birajući istraživačke igre s ili bez eksperimentiranja i planirane situacije učenja. U tom smislu, igra dovodi učenje na razinu planirane situacije što je suprotno osnovnoj prirodi dječje igre (Colić, 2018; Colić, Lazić, Ulić, Janković i Galić, 2018; Milošević, Zorić, Ulić, Colić i Matović, 2017; White, 2012).

Iako svi ispitanici, bez obzira na godine radnoga iskustva u odgojno-obrazovnoj profesiji, pokazuju tendenciju odabira ponajprije igre s pravilima, zatim igre uloga iz fokusirane aktivnosti i mašte, primijećeno je da odgajatelji s najmanje radnoga iskustva nalaze podršku za svoj rad u literaturi i propisanim programima, na temelju kojih ocjenjuju dječju igru znanjem i vještinama u planiranim situacijama

učenja (Valenčić Zuljan i Blanuša Trošelj, 2014; Vizek Vidović i Vlahović Štetić, 2007; Klemenović, 2014). Odabir didaktičkih igara ili planiranih situacija učenja primjećuje se među odgajateljima koji imaju između 16 i 25 godina radnoga staža, što bi odgovaralo stavu da kroz ovakve igre djeca nešto uče (Klemenović, 2009). Igra, viđena na ovaj način, može se shvatiti kao kontrolirana aktivnost odrasle osobe, a ne kao slobodna dječja aktivnost u kojoj dijete odabire što i kako želi raditi i koliko će trajati (Krnjaja, 2012; Millei, 2012) zbog čega djeca ponekad moraju prekršiti pravila, ne bi li pokazala svoju slobodu u aktivnostima za koje im odrasli tvrde da je slobodna, a uskraćuju im (Henriks, 2011; Wood, 2014).

Ako razumijemo dječju igru kao pokretač koji dijete vodi do novih otkrića i na višem stupnju razvoja (Rajić i Petrović Sočo, 2015), onda tu igru smatramo slobodnom aktivnošću koja je sama sebi svrha, slobodna od pritiska drugih, osobito odraslih, tada je razumijemo kao autentičnu dječju aktivnost. Odgovori odgajatelja da su djeci u jasličkoj dobi ponudili igre s pravilima i didaktičkim igrama, a znatno manje konstruktivne i istraživačke igre, ukazuju na činjenicu da ispitanici iz ovoga istraživanja nisu dovoljno svjesni činjenice da je za uspješan razvoj i dječje iskustvo kompetencija, važno da imaju prikladne, ograničene i dozirane aktivnosti za odrasle (Colić i sur., 2018). Djeca rane dobi žive u trenutku, a iskustva kojima su izložena utječu na njihovo razumijevanje stvarnosti i doživljaj (Lazić i Colić, 2017). Izostanak dječje nezavisne kreacije i istraživanja koja mogu postati svakodnevna stvarnost (Krnjaja, 2010), vodi odraslu osobu u dominantnu ulogu u odnosu na dijete, ostavljajući ga u poziciji poslušnosti i bez razmatranja karakteristika dječje dobi.

Najčešći način sudjelovanja u dječjoj igri koji odgajatelji procjenjuju kao uspješan (oko polovica odgovora odgajatelja obuhvaćenih uzorkom) je upravljanje i nadgledanje koje provodi odrasla osoba. Ove informacije, upućuju na moguću prisutnost nepovjerenja relativno velikog broja ispitanih odgajatelja u kapacitete i kompetenciju djece da samostalno organiziraju uspješnu igru. Također, dobiveni odgovori upućuju na još uvijek relativno čestu prisutnost „kulture poslušnosti” u istraživačkom okruženju (Colić i Nišević, 2011) te dovode u pitanje mogućnost izbora djece, koji je ključan za djetetovu unutaršnju motivaciju za sudjelovanjem u bilo kojoj aktivnosti, a posebno igri. Sve zajedno može se tumačiti kao dominantan položaj odgajatelja u dječjoj igri, koja po svojoj definiciji treba biti slobodna i neovisna dječja aktivnost, koju preuzima slučajnim izborom zbog zadovoljstva koje mu daje, što rezultira velikim značajem za dječji razvoj (Duran, 2003). To ne znači da dječja igra ne bi trebala biti podržana i učvršćena, ali iskustvo djetinjstva mora se čuvati cijelo vrijeme, što je odgovornost odraslih.

Druga kategorija, prema broju primljenih odgovora, 32 %, je sudjelovanje odraslih u dječjoj igri, što je upravo odgovor koji dokazuje da djeca mogu pokrenuti igru, znaju se igrati, a i jedan broj odgajatelja zna koristiti svoju maštu i ne oklijeva pridružiti se djeci u avanturi istinske igre. Najmanje zastupljena kategorija sudjelovanja odgajatelja u dječjoj igri je obogaćivanje okoline za igru, 17 % odgovora, što se

može smatrati vrlo lošim. Postoje brojni dokazi da poticajno okruženje, bogat i raznolik materijal za igru dobro organiziranu u prostoru, izravno potiče slobodno istraživanje, izražavanje i komunikaciju djece (Colić, 1997; Guyton, 2011; Pavlović Breneselović i Krnjaja, 2017; Rinaldi, 2006).

Nesudjelovanje u dječjoj igri, premda rijetki odgovori u ispitanom uzorku, još je jedan nepovoljan rezultat ovoga istraživanja. Imajući na umu da je igra najvažnija aktivnost predškolske djece kroz koju djeca uče i razvijaju se, a ne podržavajući je i ne potičući, ne doprinosi razvoju, učenju i općoj dobrobiti djeteta.

Važno je napomenuti da je dominantna perspektiva odrasle osobe u djetetovoj igri prisutna u svim varijablama. Taj način gledanja na dječje igre podržava ideju da je strategija igre prikladna za podučavanje djece (Perry, 2001; Rengel, 2014), što podrazumijeva „konceptualizaciju igre kao alata, kao resursa za učenje koji se stavlja u igru” (Rengel, 2014). S druge strane, dominantna perspektiva djeteta u sebi nosi razumijevanje igre kao intrinzičnu dječju aktivnost koja je ekspresivna, samoregulatorna, sklona promjenama, orijentirana na proces (Babić i Irović, 2004; Gleave, 2009). To se najčešće vidi u testiranju pozitivnih reakcija djece, a pojavljuje se u odnosu na sve varijable. Ponovno obogaćivanje dječje igre, kao i odgovori odgojitelja na prethodno pitanje, a u odnosu na sve varijable, pojavljuje se u manjoj mjeri od praćenja pozitivnih reakcija djece. Značaj dobre komunikacije između djeteta i odgajatelja nije u velikoj mjeri vidljiv, iako su odnosi navedeni kao imperativ općenito u razvoju predškolske djece u nacionalnim programima (Pavlović Breneselović, 2012; Pavlović Breneselović i Krnjaja, 2017; *Pravilnik o osnovama programa predškolskog vaspitanja i obrazovanja*, 2018).

Dobiveni rezultati ukazuju na postojanje ozbiljnoga problema „didaktizacije dječje igre” u radu ispitivanih odgajatelja. Postoji kontinuitet u ukazivanju na taj problem, na koji je upozorila Sanda Marjanović (Marjanović, 1987), a u novije vrijeme važna su djela Svetozara Bogojevića i suradnika (Bogoević i David, 2012). Marjanović je proces „pedagogiranja djetinjstva i instrumentalizacije igre” (Marjanović, 1985) razmatrala u kontekstu civilizacijskoga razvoja i stvaranja čovjeka novoga industrijskoga društva, što je uključivalo i neke pedagoške mjere za razvoj disciplinirane, produktivne i racionalne osobnosti. Bogoević i njegovi suradnici upozoravaju na problem didaktizacije dječje igre u institucionalnim uvjetima za odgoj male djece, pri čemu je sustavno promatranje i praćenje dječje igre u vrtićima pokazalo da je didaktička igra prerano uvedena u rad s djecom te se tako „otvoreno kalkulira s igrom čime se suzbija njezina spontanost i autentičnost, a time i razvoj kreativnosti kod djece.” (Bogoević i David, 2012).

Svi dobiveni podatci upućuju na potrebu pružanja dodatne podrške odgajateljima u procesu uvođenja novih nacionalnih programa za rad s djecom predškolske dobi koji se temelje na odnosima i u središte stavljaju dječju igru. Time se gubi iz vida činjenica da je dijete biće igre, koje uči u situacijama i aktivnostima koje se temelje na obrascu igre - dobrovoljnosti, inicijativi, dinamičnosti, pregovaranju, posvećenosti, otvorenosti

i preispitivanju. Ako predškolska ustanova ima dovoljno sredstava i odgovara igri, dijete stiče autentično iskustvo koje je u isto vrijeme važno i smisleno, uči obrazac ponašanja, razvija komunikaciju i jezik, istražuje materijale i njihove mogućnosti, koristi maštu, i izražava osjećaja te stječe druga iskustava.

Ovo je istraživanje pokušaj da se preispita status igre u odgojno-obrazovnom procesu u vrtićima u Vojvodini. Kao i sva druga istraživanja koja se provode na prikladnom uzorku, ona postavljaju važna pitanja vezana uz razumijevanje važnosti igre za dijete i odrasle i odnose koji se kroz nju grade. Iskustvo praktičara iz drugih zemalja vrijedno je u primjeni igara za poticanje ukupnoga razvoja djece, ali svako okruženje zahtijeva njihovu prilagodbu određenom sociokulturnom kontekstu. Stoga, autori smatraju, da bi radi boljšega uvida u problem i predlaganja rješenja u konkretnom kontekstu vojvođanskih vrtića, bilo dobro ponoviti istraživanje na većem, reprezentativnom uzorku. Također, vrlo korisna bila bi akcijska istraživanja u predškolskim ustanovama u kojima bi praktičari imali aktivniju ulogu, a kroz koja bi dobili priliku da se vlastitim iskustvom uvjere u mogućnosti koje igra nosi. Promjenom obrazovnih praksi, povećali bi svoje razumijevanje sve dubljih slojeva prakse i započeli proces njezina kontinuiranoga nadopunjavanja i modificiranja.

### **Napomena**

Rad je rezultat istraživanja u okviru projekta *Podrška ranom razvoju i učenju kroz bogaćenje dječje igre* (Rešenje br. 142-451-2732/2018-02-1) koji je financirao Pokrajinski sekretarijat za visoko obrazovanje i naučnoistraživačku delatnost AP Vojvodine tijekom 2018. godine.