

PRIKAZ KNJIGE

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 PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD
 SETTINGS INSIGHTS FROM FIVE EUROPEAN
 COUNTRIES
 London and New York: Routledge, 2021.

The first edition of the book “Partnership with Parents in Early Childhood Settings: Insights from Five European Countries” by Liz Hryniewicz and Paulette Luff was published in 2021 by Routledge, a part of the Taylor and Francis Group based in the UK and the USA. Liz Hryniewicz is Head of Undergraduate Programmes at the Faculty of Education at Canterbury Christ Church University. Paulette Luff is a Senior Lecturer at the School of Education and Social Care at Anglia Ruskin University. Both authors are members of OMEP (the World Organisation for Early Childhood Education), and the latter is currently the President of OMEP UK.

The manuscript has 181 pages and contains acknowledgements, notes on contributors, a foreword, an introduction, five thematic parts, a conclusion and an index. Each of the five thematic parts consists of three subparts – the first addresses the policy context in the country, the second gives examples from practice, and the third gives insights from five European countries: England, Croatia, Norway, Greece and Poland.

In the introductory part, the authors claim that strong relationships between educators and parents bring numerous benefits, including improved educational outcomes for children. The well-being of children and families is essential to sustainability in this challenging and globalised world. An effective collaborative partnership could be developed, so the educators should have in-depth knowledge about families.

At the end of the introduction, there are reflection points. The authors ask questions about the book: “What is your motivation for reading the book? What insights do you hope to gain? From what perspective are you reading: are you a parent, a policy maker, a practitioner, an academic or a student in the field of early childhood? What are your starting points when reading about parent partnerships?” so the readers can think about them before, while and after reading the book.

Part one is titled “England: parents as partners in a marketised economy”. The first part is “Policy: a divided context? Early childhood education and care in England” and the authors are Liz Hryniewicz and Kerry Holman. The second part is “Examples from practice: parents as partners in private nursery provision in England” by Vanessa Callan. The third part is “Insights

from research: models of partnership with parents in early childhood settings in England” and the authors are Paulette Luff and Liz Hryniewicz.

The UK consists of four countries, but the information given in this book relates only to England. The governments have focused on the importance of early years care and education for economic reasons, seeing investment in young children and their families as a cost-effective way to provide long-term benefits to society. The pedagogical approach to children’s learning and development is based on Montessori pedagogy and effective learning, which consists of playing, exploring, active learning, creating and thinking critically. Parental partnership in the early years is embedded in everyday practice, particularly from birth to four-year-old before the children start compulsory schooling.

Part two is titled “Understanding family-school relationships in Croatia”. The first part is “Policy context: early childhood education and care in Croatia” and the authors are Adrijana Višnjić-Jevtić, Katarina Bogatić and Eleonora Glavina. The second part is “Examples from practice: partnering and/or cooperating in Croatia” by Matea Galinec, Edita Rogulj and Ana Stefanec. The third part is “Insights from research: collaborative competencies of kindergarten teachers” and the authors are Adrijana Višnjić-Jevtić and Ivana Visković.

A discussion about early childhood education in Croatia focuses on two different perspectives: a historical view, as early childhood education has been a part of the educational system from the beginning, and a contemporary curricular approach. The authors elaborate on how future educators should have skills for forming a collaborative relationship between the family and the educational institution. They claim that the role of educators is to strengthen parents’ pedagogical competencies. Unlike in England, there are minimal guidelines for early childhood professionals to follow in relation to parents. Nevertheless, collaborative relations between parents and educators in preschool institutions are considered very important for the overall development of children.

Part three is titled “Norway: autonomy and learning outdoors”. The first part is “Policy context: early childhood and care in Norway”, and the authors are Anne E. Teigland, Linn Vatnedal, Jannicke Sagosen and Ina Juell. The second part is “Examples from practice: Kidsa Øvsttun – nature as an arena for learning through wonder, sense and movement” by the same authors as the first part. The third part is “Insights from research: “translating” the kindergarten to international parents” by Alicja R. Sadownik.

The authors inform the readers how the Norwegians have a long tradition related to outdoor living, and a love of nature is passed down from generation to generation, so their kindergartens also have a long tradition of outdoor life. Educators think that wonder is the gateway to knowledge, experience and wisdom. The programme Circle of security is established for cooperation with parents. It is a tool for analysing children’s behaviour, needs and feelings to increase educators’ understanding of the signals the children send out as their needs. After

participating in the project, the authors became aware of the importance of social events for parents, respect for diversity and educators' attitude towards parents as a positive attitude is crucial.

Part four is titled "Greece: valuing the family, traditional and current approaches". The first part is "Policy context: early childhood education and care in Greece". The second part is "Examples from practice: Greece". The third part is "Insights from research: Greece: a small-scale exploratory study exploring Greek practitioners' views on partnership with parents and families of young children". The authors of all three parts are Effrosyni Katsikonouri, Sofia Saiti, Christina Vassi and Zoi Nikiforidou.

The authors claim that the aims of Child Centres are, among others, to offer comprehensive preschool care following the most up-to-date scientific developments, support children in developing physically, mentally, emotionally and socially in a holistic manner and raise parents' awareness of modern pedagogy. Preschool programmes are legally obliged to involve parents in governing boards and councils, but parental engagement is voluntary. There are various ways of daily communication between educators and parents, both direct and indirect. The authors especially emphasise communication through technology. According to their research, the most important features of effective partnership are collaboration, respect and honesty.

Part five is titled "Poland: changing the balance of power: parents and professionals". The first part is "Policy context: preschool education in Poland". The second part is "Practice in Poland – a new dimension of professionalisation". The third part is "Insights from research – kindergarden in Poland: parental responsibility versus teacher responsibility." The authors of all three parts are Ewa Lewandowska and Jolanta Andrzejewska.

The authors inform the readers that the aim of preschool education is to support the overall development of the child. Parents and educators have rights and duties, and they are obliged to cooperate in order to educate a child effectively. The authors give many examples of effective partnerships between parents and educators.

In conclusion, the authors compare the five European countries in aspects of their government's policies, early and preschool education practices and insights from educators. A global consensus is that quality early childhood education should support children's cognitive and social development. They conclude that the most important features of positive partnerships between early years settings and families are the importance of supporting children's emotional well-being, joint organisation and cooperation, explorations in nature, use of digital technology, sharing documentation and responding to diversity.

In accordance with the introductory part, the conclusion ends with final reflection points: "What further projects and research could or should be done to explore partnerships with parents and families in different contexts? What insights have you gained from reading this

book? Were there any surprises? Is there anything that you can take forward into your own practice? What main challenges remain when aiming for inclusive, equitable ways of working in partnership?"

This book offers new insights for all educators – not just in early and preschool education but also in primary, secondary and tertiary education. On the one hand, not just educators from Europe but educators around the globe can learn how to form partnerships with the parents of their students, as well as gain practical advice on examples of five European countries. On the other hand, parents also gain wonderful insight into the world of their children's education and become rightful partners in the educational process. The book is also recommended for future educators and educators who would like to join Erasmus+ mobility projects, as this book serves as an example of a good international project.

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