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Encouraging the Development of a Potentially Gifted Child in the Croatian Preschool Curriculum

Višnja Vekić-Kljaić[1] and Vesnica Mlinarević[2]
[1]University of Slavonski Brod, Department of Social Sciences and Humanities
[2]Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek, Faculty of Kinesiology

Abstract

Early identification is an important factor of the development of giftedness. The research was aimed at encouraging the development of a potentially gifted child in the preschool curriculum. It was conducted in the Osijek Kindergarten (the Republic of Croatia) during the 2016/17 and 2017/18 pedagogical years, including a boy (M), his parents and teachers. Action research methodology with ethnographic elements was used here. The methods included a systematic observation and a collection of documentation based on ethnographic records. Appropriate strategies for encouraging this gifted boy were discussed and analyzed, relying on the ethnographic records (documentation), the reflexive meetings of the teachers and the external collaborator-the researcher from the faculty. The research had three stages. The stimulating environment for learning, the differentiation of learning experiences and the cooperation with parents and the community stand out in the research results as the strategies for encouraging the development of a gifted child. Apart from encouraging the boy's giftedness, the teachers, the preschool curriculum, the institution and the social environment developed professionally during the research. The research is methodologically limited because of its small sample size, but it is potentially significant due to its phenomenological aspects.

Key words: *action research; ethnographic records; learning environment; parents; preschool teacher.*

Introduction

A gifted child is considered to be the one who manifests exceptional potentials in one or more areas (Koren, 1989). There are different approaches to the theories of

giftedness, such as genetic, cognitive, social, and achievement-oriented approaches (Gardner, 1983; Koren, 1989; Renzulli, 1978; Sternberg, 2001). The paper particularly supports Tannenbaum's sociocultural theory (2000), which emphasizes that the support of the environment (parents, teachers, peers), but also the wider social environment, culture and politics is the most important for encouraging and developing giftedness. The social environment affects the child and the realization of his/her giftedness (Heller et al., 2005). The work is based on socio-constructivism, according to which the child actively builds new knowledge on the basis of previous learning, in a stimulating social and material environment (Vygotsky, 1978).

The preschool curriculum is a complex area of relationships between teachers, children, parents, contents, the kindergarten and the wider social context. By its nature, it is integrated, developmental, humanistic and co-constructivist. To identify and foster giftedness in a child at an early age is important for his/her well-being. To achieve this, the holistic, team and interdisciplinary approaches to assessing the child's abilities are the most desirable ones, but the teacher plays a significant role in multiple ways of identifying the gifted. Parents, teachers, psychologists, pedagogues, special educators, as well as the actively participating child and his/her peers should equally contribute to the identification process (Chamberlin et al., 2007; Diamond and Hopson, 2006; Karadağ et al., 2016; Webb, 2010; Yahnke Walker, 2007).

Many countries use different approaches to enrich their regular curricula for gifted children. Chen and Chen (2020) present two approaches to upgrading the curriculum for gifted children in Taiwan with the goal of empowering competencies and encouraging giftedness. Johnsen (2013) states that in the U.S., the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC) develops standards for working with gifted children, created after the analysis and research results of theory and practice have been provided. Vreysa et al. (2017) point out that educational institutions in Belgium promote differentiation as a primary educational intervention for gifted children in the regular education system, and in the Netherlands, competencies are determined for teachers working with gifted children. In a high-quality curriculum, learning activities are tailored to individual needs, the abilities and interests of each child, including gifted children.

Vreysa et al. (2017) claim that there is often a lack of knowledge and experience in practice considering the effective educational interventions for gifted children that result in misconceptions about giftedness and education for the gifted. Yahnke Walker (2007) describes a high-quality teacher as a person who understands and appreciates gifted children, encourages them to set and achieve high goals, studies the tasks of content in more details, praises, listens, is responsible, innovative and caring. Some countries have developed the standards for training gifted teachers, and these standards define the knowledge and skills which teachers must have to ensure that gifted children are adequately identified and supported in the educational context. For example, in the United States, the Standards for Teacher Training in Gifted Education

have been published by the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC, 2013), while a competency matrix for teachers has been developed in the Netherlands. Vreysa et al. (2017) cite an example of the positive impact of e*xcentre training*, an additional education for Belgian teachers where they are given the necessary knowledge, skills and tools to create a stimulating learning environment for gifted children. Cvetković-Lay (2010) also proposes additional gifted education at the undergraduate and postgraduate level, as well as through additional professional development of teachers.

Ensuring a curriculum to satisfy the interests, developmental abilities and overall abilities of the child is one of the goals of modern upbringing and education, which is also prescribed by the legislation of the Republic of Croatia. The National Preschool Curriculum ((Ministry of science, education and sport, 2015) aims to ensure the well-being of all children by supporting the integrated, developmental, humanistic and co-constructivist features as the basis of the modern educational process. The Strategy of Education, Science and Technology of the Republic of Croatia (Ministry of science, education and sport, 2014, p.22) refers to the strategy of equal opportunities according to which "every child and young person in the education system can reach their full individual potential in accordance with the Constitution and legislation, irrespective of gender, national or social origin, sexual or religious orientation, academic ability or other characteristic." The Preschool Education Act (Ministry of science, education and sport, 2013) prescribes programs for gifted children at preschool age. The State Pedagogical Standard for Preschool Education (Ministry of science, education and sport, 2008) sets out the provisions for the preschool education of children with special needs (children with disabilities and gifted children). The National Framework Curriculum for Preschool Education and General Compulsory and Secondary Education (Ministry of science, education and sport, 2010) provides gifted and talented children with the recognition and development of their abilities. The principles of learning and teaching, in the aforementioned curriculum, determine the strategies and approaches that respect individual differences and provide additional support (intellectual, social, emotional) to children and young people because each child and young person develops and progresses at their own pace. The proposal of the National Framework for Encouraging the Experience of Learning and Evaluating the Achievements of Gifted Children and Students (Ministry of science and education, 2017) refers to educational work for the gifted including all educational levels and cycles in the Republic of Croatia, from preschool to higher education.

These documents indicate the need for specific support for gifted children because the educational system of the Republic of Croatia determines equal educational support for children with specific needs, gifts and talents. This paper aims to show the necessity for conducting a systematic early identification of the child's developmental needs in order to create a differentiated curriculum for the quality upbringing and education of each gifted child.

Methodology

Aim and research question

Encouraging giftedness in the preschool curriculum is the research problem. The goal was to promote the development of personality, specific interests and abilities of a potentially gifted child in the kindergarten curriculum. Considering the nature of the research (qualitative, action with ethnographic elements), the following research question was asked: *What are the most effective strategies for supporting and encouraging a child's giftedness in the preschool curriculum?*

Participants

The research participants were: a boy M, his parents and teachers. The research was conducted during the 2016/17 and 2017/18 pedagogical years in the Osijek Kindergarten, in a mixed-age educational group with 24 children from five to seven. An external collaborator, a university researcher, led the research. M's giftedness was recognized and developed by two teachers, who simultaneously got improved in the field of theory and practice of giftedness. Through testing, the expert associate psychologist confirmed the teachers' assessments.

Instruments and procedure

The research used various data collection procedures and instruments, following an ethnographic approach (written documentation of the research participants, photographs and videos, systematic observation with the use of technical aids, transcripts of conversations, child art works, and the like).

The methods used here included a systematic observation and documentation of the educational process that follows the principles of individualization and differentiation. By documenting (ethnography) the boy's interests, achievements and works, his development was monitored, also the offer of incentives and materials for further activities was planned. A new period of research followed the reflections made by the teachers and the researcher. The meanings of certain actions were analysed and reconstructed with the help of ethnographic records, which were the basis for revising the action plan.

The research was based on the ethical standards and the protection of respondents in accordance with the Code of Ethics (Committee for Ethics in Science and Higher Education, 2006) and the Code of Ethics for Research with Children (Dulčić, 2003). The child's parents and the kindergarten director were asked to sign a consent to participate in the research.

Results

The expert associate psychologist confirmed the teachers' assessments through testing. The first research period began after identifying the boy's abilities and interests in different areas (logical and mathematical problems, word games, geography, music,

writing, speaking skills), his social skills and competencies (leadership skills, perseverance, independence). He started showing his interests as soon as he felt safe and satisfied in the educational group. During the first research period, the teachers discussed and analysed the learning process together with the researcher, they chronologically monitored and documented every change, and recorded it in the teacher's research diary:

The boy M. has a great interest in numbers and mathematics. At the age of 5, he adds and subtracts single-digit numbers, and over time this has expanded to double-digits and other arithmetic operations (multiplication). He would often ask other children about their dates of birthday, so he would compare who was younger, who was older, and calculate how many months or days there were left until someone's birthday. The activities were expanded with various incentives and materials, and the boy M. had the opportunity to help himself in the calculation with various incentives (calendar, corn kernels, colorful glass stones, lids with numbers, etc.).

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, December 2016)

M is an individual, seeks attention and additional stimuli, designs the game himself, involves other children in his interests, introduces rules and gives the game instructions, explores the environment of the kindergarten context.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, January 2017)

The boy M. shows interest in geographical maps and knows how to orient himself spatially. He knows how to show and name states and their capitals, and includes other children from the group in this game.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, February 2017)

Logical thinking was evident when solving mathematical problems. The boy M. often uses unusual ways to come up with a solution to mathematical problems he was asking himself. He explains the calculation of the day of the month and the use of annual leave, he knows that some months have 30 and others 31 days.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, March 2017)

In the educational group, the boy initiates word games and gathers children to play with him. In these games, he always wins, which makes him proud and important, and he enjoys it. Often, he asks for the explanations of unknown words, and then passes them to other children.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, April 2017)

The boy M. in the educational group plays with simple game cards (Black Peter, Weeks), together with the boy K. who is his best friend and supports all his interests and initiatives.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, May 2017)

M. often plays with Lego bricks and constructs his own buildings. He demonstrates an interest in modeling and participates in all activities, including design and construction materials. He arranges his own models in space, builds constructions, connects them, measures them, explores stability and statics.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, June 2017)

Table 1
Actions of the research participants during the first research period

Child (Intellectual and personality traits)	Teachers (Direct and indirect procedures)
Highly developed ability to reason and logical reasoning ability • Analytical thinking • Word games • Interest in geography • Need to be intellectually challenged • Great goal orientation and intrinsic motivation • Ability to lead • Perseverance and persistence, great work energy • Independence and autonomy • Interest in writing	• Encouraging autonomy, independence, creativity, divergent thinking • Asking stimulus questions • Supplementing the math center with incentives • Supplementing the reading and writing center • Anecdotal findings about the child • Professional development • Writing a research diary

The second research period was characteristic for strengthening the teachers' competencies to further support and encourage the boy's giftedness. This was achieved through providing reflective workshops, analyzing documentation, discussing incentives and reading relevant literature in the field of giftedness.

In the Jungle project (using various wild animals-related activities in the kindergarten, initiated by the children after visiting the ZOO), M. pointed out his great interest in measuring and comparing the obtained values. The transcript of the teacher's note shows how he measured the lengths of snakes and compared the obtained values.

The children shaped clay animals. When clay was offered to them, modelling was difficult for them, so they mostly made snakes out of it. When they dried up, M. played with them and asked which of them was the longest (some snakes were curled up). The teacher asked him how he would measure it. The boy found pieces of rope and tried this, he was offered a ruler and a tailor's meter. The boy knew how to write and made an evaluation of his activities by himself. He arranged the snakes from the shortest to the longest, and wrote a numerical value (the length of each snake) on the paper.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, January 2018)

In case of a mathematical problem, M. used divergent thinking by solving it on his own, explaining the procedures used to obtain the results. The boy recorded and wrote down his insights, and also explained them to the other children. His independent research and problem solving was additionally encouraged by his initiative, entrepreneurship and self-organization in activities. His efforts were directed towards a higher-level self-regulation in learning and the development of meta-cognitive skills which take into consideration the expressed potential of the gifted boy.

In the Space project (activities about planets, spacecrafts, rockets), at M's initiative, the teachers changed the spatial and material environment, arranged the center of

the universe and supplied it with various stimuli (posters, books, picture books, stick planets, laminated balloon planets, space images, spacecrafts, rockets).

In the Space project, M. explored a distance between the planets, then measured and converted the units of measurement - centimeters to meters, meters to kilometers. He explained to the other children how many years before the planets had been from the Earth, which one was closer and which one was farther. Books and encyclopedias about the Universe had long been his area of interest, and with the other children he often studied them, tucked away in a "rocket" that was an integral part of the Space Center.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, February 2018)

The boy was particularly interested in the planets and he drew them every day, also measured the spatial distance between the planets and their distance from the Sun. He used books, picture books and encyclopaedias, and encouraged the other children to study and research. The contextual conditions of the activity (the environment and the teacher's actions) favored M's development of giftedness and included positive emotional atmosphere, appropriateness and flexibility of the environment and a wide range of complex of materials for playing and learning.

M. was allowed to initiate and think in planning activities, according to the principles of enrichment diversity, which is illustrated by the following teacher's note:

The Project on the chemical elements was initiated by M. He asked if I knew what water is made of and explained that water has two hydrogens and one oxygen and that it is written by using the formula H2O. He lists the chemical elements, their symbols and where they could be found in nature. This is how the boy's interest in the periodic table of elements was discovered, after a visit to the primary school and the participation in experiments with the chemical elements. Upon visiting the school, the boy himself made the periodic table of elements and put it on the door of the educational group in the kindergarten. This boy's interest was stimulated by a visit to the School of Agriculture and the Faculty of Food Technology and the participation in various chemical and physical experiments with students and teachers.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, March 2018).

In the Project on the chemical elements (activities with water, chemical experiments), collaborative and cooperative learning was encouraged, including cooperation with parents and the community, also learning experiences in a new and changing context were expanded. The gifted boy's needs and interests were met by supplying means and materials (periodic table of elements, different bottles, measuring cups) and providing new learning strategies in different spaces (visit to the chemical office in the primary school, visit to the Secondary Agricultural School, visit to the Faculty of Food Technology and the library).

Table 2
Actions of the research participants during the second research period

Child (Intellectual and personality traits)	Teachers (Direct and indirect procedures)
• Highly developed ability to connect information and perceive relationships • Creativity / divergent thinking, originality, inventiveness • Ability to produce numerous ideas • Fast learning • Intellectual curiosity • Emphasized specific interests	• Providing new strategies in encouraging giftedness • Supporting the initiative • Organizing space • Enabling professional development • Giving anecdotal findings about the child • Writing a research diary

In the third research period, the parents were involved in activities and expanded their knowledge about the benefits for the boy. During the reflection process with the parents, the teachers learned about the boy's behavior at home, his activities and games in which he took part.

M. is the older of two children in the family, lives with his parents in a large residential area of the city. The boy's grandfather is intensively involved in his upbringing; he encourages and supports the boy in all his interests and expands his knowledge by playing board games, giving him various research materials. His grandfather often uses a meter when doing carpentry and his work has sparkled the boy's interest in measuring and using numbers. Therefore, by measuring and recording values, the boy showed a growing interest in these activities, which spread to various areas, such as: the number of centimeters in one kilometer; the number of days in one month, the value of an apartment in euros.

(Transcript of a note from the teacher's research diary, May 2018)

Table 3
Actions of the research participants during the third research period

Child (Intellectual and personality traits)	Teachers (Direct and indirect procedures)	Parents
• Increased emotional sensitivity due to the parental involvement in the curriculum • Internal conflicts due to the large disparity between the intellectual and socio-emotional development	• Give the parents appropriate feedback on incentive guidelines • Provide the parents with appropriate feedback on the boy's progress in order to engage them in the appropriate forms of educational support • Encourage parental autonomy in creating the educational process	• Participating in activities with children • Initiating activities • Complementing the knowledge of teachers and children • Monitoring the boy's progress in another environment

The boy's mother volunteered at school and did experiments with various liquids, for instance, examining the liquid's density. The boy encouraged these activities with

his mother after attending the workshops at the Faculty of Food Technology. The boy's father also participated in the group activities and presented his hobby, beekeeping and honey production, in which M. is also actively involved.

Discussion

Despite a number of quality studies on the peculiarities and characteristics of gifted children, the encouragement of giftedness in the settings of early and preschool education is rather neglected. Some researchers (Grant, 2013) suggest that preschool teachers lack education which should enable them to identify giftedness, while others (Kettler et al., 2017) state that identifying and encouraging gifted children in preschools result from the intrinsic motivation of preschool teachers. In addition to this, in the practice of early and preschool education, a gifted child is often separated from other children and placed in special programs outside the regular curriculum being implemented at the kindergarten level. Mlinarević and Zrilić (2021) warn us that, in practice, the care for gifted children is not always systematic. It takes place in certain educational institutions and is unbalanced, and often does not meet the real needs of the gifted, so they consider this to be the reason for the development of new programs with the aim to encourage giftedness (Nikola Tesla Center, various associations that offer specialized programs for gifted children, parents' associations, playrooms for the gifted in kindergartens, etc.). Similarly, Kettler et al. (2017) have investigated the implementation of preschool curriculum for the gifted child in the United States. The results of their study show that preschool teachers do not understand and misinterpret the data about gifted children. The authors realize that a special policy and practice for recognizing and motivating gifted children in preschools should be established.

So, there are many areas where problems are present, but there is also a significant number of researchers dealing with them. We highlight the results of the Seedorf (2014) study, which identifies five themes (awareness, support, professional development, time, and high-quality differentiation) to be implemented in educational programs for gifted children. Cukierkorn et al. (2007) outline a triarchic approach (integrated curriculum, ongoing evaluation and parental involvement) to preschool programs for the gifted.

Based on the results of this study, four strategies were identified, i.e., areas of encouragement related to the development of preschool child giftedness. These are also the four areas of implication for follow-up research and advocacy see below.

Learning environment

This area includes the spatial-material and social environment of the preschool institution, i.e., the educational group in which M. was included. The spatial-material environment is considered as 'the third educator' in early and preschool education because it is given special attention and role in children's learning (Edwards et al., 1998). Kornmanna et al. (2015) investigate the peculiarities of cognitive development of gifted children and propose learning environments that encourage active learning

and, at the same time, control the adequacy of incentives and materials by teachers, to provide quality support for the optimal learning of gifted children. Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) state that the learning environment is one of the most important factors determining whether to support the creative potential of a gifted child, and Cukierkorn et al. (2007) emphasize that the learning environment should be child-centered, natural, flexible; high mobility and variability should encourage the independence of the child. Preschool children should have more learning centers such as an art center, science center, construction center, math center, reading and writing center. Bright walls, multimedia technology, animals and plants should also be represented, as well as hidden small spaces, but also large, public, common spaces must be ensured (Edwards et al., 1998).

Educational support for the gifted boy (M.) presupposed an enriched material environment in which the contextual conditions (environment) were planned for stimulating activities and gaining diverse learning experiences. The space was divided into activity centers that were being supplemented and changed depending on his interest, especially the math center (counting aids, meter, calendar), the initial reading and writing center (books, encyclopedias, picture books) and the research Nature center (scales, vessels). The whole environment and materials used for playing and learning were rich, complex and set at a developmentally more demanding level than usual for a certain chronological age in order to encourage more complex forms of thinking. The spatial-material environment and social relations are in a positive correlation, i.e., the qualitative and quantitative increase of materials and incentives provides more opportunities for diverse social relations (Jurčević Lozančić, 2016).

Van Tassel-Baska (2013) states that the socio-emotional development of a gifted child can be improved due to an emphasis on leadership skills and strategies, which was also expressed in our research. M. often had the role of initiator and leader of the activity, and a group of children followed him. To develop giftedness, Yahnke Walker (2007) suggests socializing children with similar interests and abilities to be able to encourage each other, and flexible grouping that changes based on learning readiness, interests, or learning styles. It is important that the child is surrounded by one or two close and good friends who understand and accept him/her. The results of this research show that the boy socialized with the children of similar intellectual abilities and interests. He had one friend of whom he was particularly fond, and who accompanied him in all his activities, often without understanding the problems and topics which M. dealt with.

Differentiation of learning experiences

Differentiation means adapting and modifying the curriculum to meet the needs of a gifted child. We point out the authors who deal with the problem of curriculum differentiation. Vreysa et al. (2017) claim that Belgian educational institutions promote differentiation as a primary educational intervention for gifted children in groups with children with mixed abilities, and Van Tassel-Baska (2013) provides guidelines for curriculum differentiation in terms of gifted children. The author proposes

advanced and complex materials, projects and research, development of skills and habits that support innovation. A gifted child needs to develop metacognitive skills, such as planning, monitoring and assessing his/her own learning. These skills need to be strengthened by thinking about learning and experiences that shape thinking and values. Kettler et al. (2017) state that differentiation involves an individualized approach and a developmental curriculum with complex, creative, and challenging activities. According to Copple and Bredekamp (2008), a developmental curriculum involves diverse and meaningful play with educator support, integrated approach to learning, stimulating environment, flexibility of time and space, and tailoring teaching strategies to help each child make optimal progress.

After identifying the gifted boy, the work guidelines were jointly set by the teachers during their reflections as follows: specific interests were taken into account and M. was enabled to explore, and learn. The expansion of experience and knowledge, skills and abilities were encouraged, he was enabled to learn in the way that suits him best, especially considering the development of his meta-cognitive skills. More complex activities and different materials were organized in terms of abstract thinking and higher levels of thought processes, higher expectations for perseverance were set. Sufficient time was ensured, and the duration of activities was adjusted to the child's concentration and commitment. The contents of the activities were focused on the child's interests, experiences, knowledge, age and the environment in which the child lives. Educational work was planned and shaped in its entirety (thematic, project), and not partially. It was noted that the boy liked to initiate projects, discover and create new knowledge, coming to a conclusion on his own.

The curriculum was developed by implementing a differentiated curriculum and enriching contextual conditions with a variety of activities, in accordance with the advanced abilities and educational aspirations of the gifted child. Differentiation was carried out through more complex and diverse contents, deepening and expanding the topics of interest, throughout giving the child freedom to choose ways in which to solve problems, flexible time for activities, showing different learning products, visiting various institutions, enabling professionals and parents to organize activities that were of interest to the gifted boy. The teachers differentiated the learning process by finding ways for the child to learn content, giving him freedom to choose the methods of solving problems, etc. All forms of documentation were created due to the systematic collection of documentation preceded by the observation and listening to the teachers in order to better understand the child and thus ensure some quality support for the boy's development.

Involving parents in the curriculum

The family has the primary responsibility in building the child skills and fostering his/her talents. The parents of gifted children are often the first teachers and maintain an optimal balance between freedom and pressure that favorably affect the child's motivation to learn. The results of the Bicknell (2014) study showed that parents play a

key role as motivators, resource providers, and counselors. They often see the interests and advanced abilities, shown by their gifted children, and take a role in educating them.

It is especially important that parents work closely with teachers and other professionals to establish good relationships and cooperatively set goals for the child. In such cooperation, children gain the most because their needs are met by joint efforts. When teachers include parents in the curriculum, parents increase their interaction with the child at home and feel more positive about their ability to help children (Mudrak, 2011).

M's parents got involved in activities with the children, initiated activities in the educational group and expanded the knowledge of the children and teachers about the areas that were of interest to the gifted boy. In addition, his parents participated in the reflections during the research, also suggested new learning strategies and cooperation with the social environment. Shavinina (2013) claims that the educational level of parents and their socio-economic status are important in the parental involvement, and that the mother's educational level is especially important. M's mother often got involved in the activities, organized the experiments with chemical elements, accompanied the children in various visits, but was also the boy's emotional support.

Lifelong learning and continuous professional development of teachers

It has been determined that, throughout history, the family has played a major role in the development of a child's giftedness. Apart from the family, in the second place are teachers characterized by intrinsic motivation, playfulness and passion for teaching, esp. a different way of teaching (Shavinina, 2013). Such teachers show a deep interest in children, encouraging them with inspiration and challenge. It is interesting to note that these findings coincide with our research in which the teachers show great interest in encouraging M's giftedness, although they neither have additional education nor adequate support. Beghetto and Kaufman (2014) state that teachers should be creative, provide choices in everyday situations, monitor children's motivation, model and support their creativity. After the identification, the teachers followed the developmental characteristics and needs of the given gifted boy; in addition, the teachers constantly supplemented the activity centers with new incentives, wrote anecdotal notes in their research diaries, improved their talents by reading professional literature, participated in reflections and established a deeper cooperation with the parents and the social environment.

The results of the study by Vreys et al. (2017) show that the professional development of preschool teachers, combined with sufficient time, support and resources, is crucial in achieving the goal, i.e., encouraging the child's giftedness. These authors also believe that teachers need adequate training and assistance to be able to follow the needs of gifted children. Unfortunately, in this research, the teachers themselves had to find their own ways to act effectively. The teachers cooperated with the Faculty of Education

and received assistance in directing the research. At that time, the kindergarten did not have professional and competent staff in the field of giftedness.

The importance of this study lies in the unique, individual presentation of how to encourage the development of a gifted boy within the preschool curriculum by intrinsically motivated teachers. Encouraging the development of giftedness in the kindergarten should be viewed holistically indeed, and the current research surely singled out the areas that jointly influence some thoughtful practice which results in encouraging the child giftedness.

Conclusion

The relevance of the research is reflected in the need to identify and encourage giftedness as early as possible. Its focus is on the gifted child in the preschool curriculum. The current research has shown that the phenomenon of giftedness should be approached holistically and also included all the stakeholders in the educational process. The strategies for supporting the development of giftedness in the preschool curriculum, as resulted from this research, are: the rich spatial-material and social environment of the preschool institution, the differentiation of learning experiences, lifelong learning and the continuous professional development of teachers, the involvement of parents and the wider community in the kindergarten curriculum. The above-mentioned strategies are considered as useful for preschool teachers, theorists who deal with giftedness, at the same time as an incentive for further research in this area.

In conclusion, the regular curriculum has been enriched and expanded (the expanding and deepening of creative techniques and strategies in educational work). The early identification and encouragement of giftedness in this paper should raise awareness among educators, institutions, universities and the Ministry towards their greater professional engagement, as well as ensure the stronger competencies of teachers and students. Their competencies would be strengthened by designing new courses in study programs, creating professional development teams in educational institutions, supporting a variety of new research methods and forms of professional development in case of teachers, professional teams and scientists.

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Višnja Vekić-Kljaić
University of Slavonski Brod
Department of Social Sciences and Humanities
Gundulićeva 20, 35000 Slavonski Brod, Croatia
vvkljaic@unisb.hr

Vesnica Mlinarević
Josip Juraj Strossmayer University of Osijek
Faculty of Kinesiology
Drinska 16a, 31000 Osijek, Croatia
vmlinarevic@kifos.hr

Poticanje razvoja potencijalno darovitoga djeteta u kurikulu ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja Republike Hrvatske

Sažetak

Važan čimbenik razvoja darovitosti je rana identifikacija. Cilj istraživanja bio je poticanje razvoja potencijalno darovitoga djeteta u kurikulu ranoga odgoja. Istraživanje je provedeno tijekom 2016./17. i 2017/18. pedagoške godine. Sudionici istraživanja bili su dječak M, njegovi roditelji i odgojiteljice. Istraživanje je provedeno u Dječjem vrtiću Osijek, Republika Hrvatska. Korištena je metodologija akcijskoga istraživanja s etnografskim elementima. Metode su bile sustavno promatranje i dokumentiranje pomoću etnografskih zapisa. Na refleksivnim sastancima odgojitelja i vanjske suradnice, istraživačice s fakulteta, pomoću etnografskih zapisa (dokumentacije) raspravljalo se i analiziralo o primjerenim strategijama poticanja darovitoga dječaka M. Istraživanje se provodilo kroz tri razdoblja. Poticajna okolina za učenje, diferencijacija iskustva učenja i suradnja s roditeljima i zajednicom izdvajaju se u rezultatima istraživanja kao strategije poticanja razvoja darovitoga djeteta. Osim što se poticala darovitost dječaka M., istovremeno su se profesionalno razvijali odgojitelji, kurikul ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja, ustanova, ali i društvena sredina. Metodološki opseg istraživanja je ograničen zbog malog uzorka, ali je potencijalno značajan zbog svojih fenomenoloških aspekata.

Ključne riječi: *akcijsko istraživanje; etnografski elementi; odgojitelji; okolina za učenje; roditelji.*

Uvod

Darovitim se djetetom smatra ono koje očituje iznimne potencijale u jednom ili više područja (Koren, 1989). Različiti su pristupi teorijama darovitosti, a uključuju genetičke, kognitivne, socijalne te pristupe usmjerene postignuću (Gardner,1983; Sternberg, 2001; Renzulli, 1978; Koren, 1989). U radu se osobito podržava socijalno-kulturna teorija Tannenbauma (2000) koja ističe da je za poticanje i razvoj darovitosti najvažnija podrška okoline (roditelja, odgojitelja, vršnjaka), ali i šire društvene sredine, kulture i politike. Društvena sredina djeluje na dijete i na realizaciju njegove darovitosti (Heller i sur., 2005). Osim teorija darovitosti, rad je utemeljen na sociokonstruktivizmu

prema kojem dijete aktivno gradi nova znanja na temeljima prethodnoga učenja, u poticajnom socijalnom i materijalnom okružju (Vygotsky, 1978).

Kurikul ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja složeno je područje međuodnosa odgojitelja, djece, roditelja, sadržaja, dječjega vrtića i širega društvenog konteksta. On je po svojoj prirodi integriran, razvojan, humanistički i sukonstruktivistički Rano prepoznavanje i poticanje darovitosti važno je za dobrobit darovitoga djeteta. Najpoželjniji su holistički, timski i interdisciplinarni pristupi procjeni djetetovih sposobnosti, no u višestrukim pristupima identifikaciji darovitih značajnu ulogu ima i uloga odgojitelja. U procesu identifikacije trebaju ravnopravno sudjelovati roditelji, odgojitelji, psiholozi, pedagozi, defektolozi te dijete koje aktivno sudjeluje i njegovi vršnjaci (Chamberlin i sur., 2007; Diamond i Hopson, 2006; Karadağ i sur., 2016; Webb, 2010.; Yahnke Walker, 2007.).

Mnoge zemlje imaju pristupe obogaćivanja redovnih kurikula za darovitu djecu. Chen i Chen (2020) predstavljaju dva pristupa obogaćivanja kurikula za darovitu djecu u Tajvanu s ciljem osnaživanja kompetencija i poticanja darovitosti. Johnsen (2013) navodi kako u SAD-u, Nacionalno udruženje nadarene djece (NAGC) razvija standarde za rad s darovitom djecom nastalih nakon istraživanja teorije i prakse. Vreysa i sur. (2017) ističu kako obrazovne institucije u Belgiji promoviraju diferencijaciju kao primarnu obrazovnu intervenciju za darovitu djecu u redovnom odgojno-obrazovnom sustavu, a u Nizozemskoj su zadane kompetencije za učitelje koji rade s darovitom djecom. U kvalitetnim kurikulima aktivnosti učenja prilagođene su individualnim potrebama, mogućnostima i interesima svakog djeteta, pa tako i darovitoga.

Vreysa i sur. (2017) upozoravaju da u praksi često postoji nedostatak znanja i iskustva o učinkovitim obrazovnim intervencijama za darovitu djecu što rezultira pogrešnim predodžbama o darovitosti i obrazovanju za darovite. Yahnke Walker (2007) kvalitetnoga učitelja opisuje kao osobu koja razumije i cijeni darovitu djecu, potiče ih na postavljanje i postizanje visokih ciljeva, detaljnije proučava sadržajne zadatke, hvali, sluša, odgovorna je, inovativna i brižna. Neke su zemlje razvile standarde za obuku darovitih učitelja, a ti standardi definiraju znanja i vještine koje učitelji moraju imati kako bi osigurali da darovita djeca budu adekvatno identificirana i podržana u obrazovnom kontekstu. Na primjer, u Sjedinjenim Državama Nacionalna udruga darovite djece (NAGC, 2013.) objavila je Standarde za osposobljavanje učitelja u obrazovanju darovitih, a u Nizozemskoj je razvijena matrica kompetencija za učitelje. Vreysa i sur. (2017.) navode primjer pozitivnoga utjecaja Exentre treninga, dodatnoga obrazovanja za belgijske učitelje kojim su dobili potrebna znanja, vještine i alate za stvaranje poticajnoga okružja za učenje za darovitu djecu. Cvetković-Lay (2010) također predlaže dodatno obrazovanje darovitih na preddiplomskoj i poslijediplomskoj razini, kao i kroz dodatno stručno usavršavanje nastavnika.

Osiguravanje primjerenoga kurikula u skladu s interesima, razvojnim mogućnostima i sposobnostima djeteta jedan je od ciljeva suvremenoga odgoja i obrazovanja što pripisuje i zakonska legislativa Republike Hrvatske. Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje (MZOS, 2015) usmjeren je prema osiguranju

dobrobiti za svu djecu. U njemu su podržane integrirane, razvojne, humanističke i sukonstruktivističke značajke kao osnova suvremenoga odgojno-obrazovnoga procesa. U Strategiji obrazovanja, znanosti i tehnologije Republike Hrvatske (MZOS, 2014, str.22) navodi se strategija jednakih mogućnosti prema kojoj „svako dijete i mlada osoba u sustavu odgoja i obrazovanja može ostvariti svoj puni individualni potencijal, u skladu s Ustavom i zakonskim propisima, neovisno o spolu, rodu, nacionalnom ili socijalnom podrijetlu, spolnoj ili religijskoj orijentaciji, akademskim sposobnostima ili drugim osobinama." Zakon o predškolskom odgoju i obrazovanju (MZOS, 2013) propisuje programe za darovitu djecu rane i predškolske dobi. Državni pedagoški standard predškolskoga odgoja i naobrazbe (MZOS, 2008) utvrđuje odredbe predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja djece s posebnim potrebama (djece s teškoćama i darovite djece). Nacionalni okvirni kurikulum za predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje te opće obvezno i srednjoškolsko obrazovanje (MZOS, 2010) darovitoj i talentiranoj djeci osigurava prepoznavanje i razvoj njihovih mogućnosti. Načela učenja i poučavanja istog dokumenta određuju strategije i pristupe kod uvažavanja individualnih razlika kojima se osigurava dodatna podrška (intelektualna, socijalna, emocionalna) pojedinoj djeci, mladim osobama s ciljem ostvarivanja obrazovnih ciljeva s obzirom da se razvijaju i napreduju različitom brzinom i načinima. Prijedlog Nacionalnog okvira za poticanje iskustva učenja i vrednovanja postignuća darovite djece i učenika (MZO, 2017) odnosi se na odgojno-obrazovni rad za darovite na svim odgojno-obrazovnim razinama i ciklusima u Republici Hrvatskoj, od dječjega vrtića do sveučilišnoga obrazovanja.

Navedeni važeći dokumenti upućuju na potrebe specifične podrške darovitoj djeci jer obrazovni sustav Republike Hrvatske utvrđuje jednake obrazovne podrške djeci specifičnih potreba, darova i talenata. Polazište je ovoga rada ukazivanje na potrebu provođenja sustavne rane identifikacije razvojnih potreba djeteta i kreiranje diferenciranoga kurikula za kvalitetan odgoj i obrazovanje svakog darovitoga djeteta.

Metodologija

Cilj i istraživačko pitanje

Problem istraživanja je poticanje darovitosti u kurikulu ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja. Cilj je bio unaprijediti poticanje razvoja osobnosti, specifičnih interesa i sposobnosti potencijalno darovitoga djeteta u kurikulu dječjega vrtića.

S obzirom na prirodu istraživanja (kvalitativno, akcijsko s etnografskim elementima) postavljeno je istraživačko pitanje:

Koje su najučinkovitije strategije za podržavanje i poticanje darovitosti djeteta u kurikulu ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja?

Sudionici istraživanja

Sudionici istraživanja bili su: dječak M, njegovi roditelji i odgojiteljice. Istraživanje je provedeno tijekom 2016./17. i 2017/18. pedagoške godine u Dječjem vrtiću *Osijek*, u dobno mješovitoj odgojnoj skupini sa 24 djece od pet do sedam godina. Vanjska

suradnica, istraživačica sa sveučilišta vodila je istraživanje. Darovitost dječaka M. prepoznale su i razvijale dvije odgojiteljice, istodobno se profesionalno razvijajući u području teorije i prakse darovitosti, a stručni suradnik psiholog testiranjem je potvrdio procjene odgojiteljica.

Instrumenti i postupak istraživanja

U istraživanju su uporabljeni različiti postupci i instrumenti prikupljanja podataka temeljeni na etnografskom pristupu (pisana dokumentacija sudionika istraživanja, fotografije i vídeozapisi, sustavno promatranje uz korištenje tehničkih pomagala, transkripti razgovora, dječji likovni radovi i slično).

Metode su bile sustavno promatranje i dokumentiranje odgojno-obrazovnoga procesa koji slijedi načela individualizacije i diferencijacije. Dokumentiranjem (etnografijom) interesa, postignuća i dječakovih uradaka pratio se njegov razvoj te se planirala ponuda poticaja i materijala za daljnji razvoj aktivnosti. Novo razdoblje istraživanja uslijedilo bi nakon refleksije odgojitelja i istraživača, pri čemu su se pomoću etnografskih zapisa analizirala i rekonstruirala značenja određenih akcija koji su bile osnova za reviziju akcijskoga plana.

Istraživanje je bilo usmjereno prema etičkim standardima i zaštiti ispitanika u skladu s Etičkim kodeksom Odbora za etiku u znanosti i visokom obrazovanju (2006) i Etičkim kodeksom istraživanja s djecom (Dulčić, 2003). Od roditelja djece i ravnateljice dječjega vrtića zatražen je pristanak za sudjelovanje u istraživanju putem obrazaca.

Rezultati

Darovitost dječaka M. prepoznale su i razvijale dvije odgojiteljice, istodobno se profesionalno razvijajući u području teorije i prakse darovitosti, a stručni suradnik psiholog testiranjem je potvrdio procjene odgojiteljica. Prvo istraživačko razdoblje počelo je nakon identifikacije sposobnosti i interesa dječaka M. u različitim područjima (logički i matematički problemi, igre riječima, zemljopis, glazba, pisanje, govorne sposobnosti), njegovih socijalnih vještina i kompetencija (sposobnosti vođenja, ustrajnosti, neovisnosti). Dječak M. je počeo pokazivati svoje interese čim se osjećao sigurno i zadovoljno u odgojnoj skupini. Za vrijeme prvoga istraživačkog razdoblja odgojiteljice su sa istraživačem raspravljale i analizirale proces učenja, svaku promjenu su pratile i dokumentirale kronološki bilježeći u dnevnik istraživanja:

Dječak M. ima veliki interes prema brojevima i matematici. U petoj godini zbraja i oduzima jednoznamenkaste brojeve, a vremenom se to proširivalo i na dvoznamenkaste, te na druge računske operacije (množenje). Često bi djecu ispitivao kada imaju rođendan pa bi uspoređivao tko je mlađi, tko stariji i računao za koliko mjeseci ili dana je čiji rođendan. Aktivnosti se proširivalo raznim poticajima i materijalim, te je dječak M. imao mogućnosti pomoći si u računanju koristeći se različitim poticajima (kalendar, zrna kukuruza, raznobojni stakleni kamenčići, poklopci s brojevima i sl.).

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, prosinac, 2016.)

Dječak M je individualac, traži pažnju i dodatne poticaje, sam osmišljava igru, uključuje drugu djecu u svoje interese, uvodi pravila i daje smjer igri, istražuje okružje konteksta dječjeg vrtića.

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkog dnevnika odgojiteljice, siječanj, 2017.)

Dječak M. pokazuje interes za zemljopisne karte te se zna prostorno orijentirati na njima. Dječak M zna pokazati i imenovati države i njihove glavne gradove, a u tu igru uključuje i ostalu djecu u odgojnoj skupini.

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, veljača, 2017.)

Logičko mišljenje bilo je vidljivo prilikom rješavanja matematičkih problema. Dječak M. često koristi neobične načine da dođe do rješenja matematičkih problema koje si je sam zadavao. Objašnjava računanje dana u mjesecu i korištenje godišnjeg odmora, zna da neki mjeseci imaju 30, a neki 31 dan.

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, ožujak, 2017.)

U odgojnoj skupini inicira igre riječima te okuplja djecu koja se s njim igraju. U takvim igrama dječak M. uvijek pobjeđuje što ga čini jako ponosnim i važnim te u tome uživa. Često traži da mu se objasne nepoznate riječi te on drugoj djeci objašnjava značenje pojedinih riječi.

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, travanj, 2017.)

Dječak M. u odgojnoj skupini igra se kartama jednostavne igre (Crni Petar, Sedmice) s dječakom K. koji mu je najbolji prijatelj i podržava sve njegove interese i inicijative.

(Transkript bilješka iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, svibanj, 2017.)

Dječak M. često se igra Lego kockama te je konstruirao svoje građevine. Pokazuje interes za modeliranje i uključuje se u sve aktivnosti koje sadrže materijale za oblikovanje i konstruiranje. Modele koje napravi raspoređuje u prostoru, gradi konstrukcije, spaja ih, mjeri, istražuje stabilnost i statiku.

(Transkript bilješka iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, lipanj, 2017.)

Tablica 1

Drugo istraživačko razdoblje obilježava osnaživanje kompetencija odgojitelja, a posljedično podržavanje i poticanje razvoja sposobnosti darovitoga dječaka M. Na refleksivnim sastancima, analizirajući dokumentaciju, raspravljajući o poticajima i čitajući relevantnu literaturu iz područja darovitosti, odgojiteljice su pronalazile različite strategije za poticanje darovitosti dječaka.

Tijekom projekta o džungli (različite aktivnosti u dječjem vrtiću, o divljim životinjama, koje su inicirala djeca nakon posjeta ZOO vrtu) koji se provodio u odgojnoj skupini dječak M. pokazivao je veliki interes za razna mjerenja i uspoređivanja dobivenih vrijednosti. Transkript bilješke odgojiteljice prikazuje kako je dječak mjerio dužinu zmija te uspoređivao dobivene vrijednosti.

Od gline su djeca oblikovala životinje. Kada im je glina ponuđena, bila im je teška za modeliranje te su uglavnom od nje izrađivali zmije. Kada su se zmije osušile, dječak M. se igrao s njima te je postavio pitanja koja je od njih najduža (neke zmije su bile sklupčane). Odgojiteljica ga je pitala kako će to izmjeriti. Dječak je pronašao komade špage te pokušao s njima, ponuđeno mu je i ravnalo i krojački metar. Dječak M. znao je pisati te je sam napravio evaluaciju svojih aktivnosti. Zmije je poslagao od najkraće do najduže, a na papiru je napisao brojčanu vrijednost (dužinu svake zmije).

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, siječanj, 2018.)

U rješavanju matematičkih zadataka dječak M. koristio je divergentno mišljenje rješavajući zadatak na svoj način, istovremeno objašnjavajući postupke koje je koristio u dobivanju rezultata. Dječak M. bilježio je i zapisivao te tako drugoj djeci objašnjavao do kakvih je spoznaja došao. Poticalo se samostalno istraživanje dječaka M. i rješavanje problema te se uvažavala inicijativa, poduzetnost i samoorganizacija aktivnosti. Postignuća se nastojalo produbiti kao važan dio učenja i stjecanja kompetencija. Pristupi su bili usmjereni k višoj razini samoregulacije u učenju te razvoju metakognitivnih vještina s obzirom na izraženi potencijal darovitoga dječaka.

Tijekom projekta o svemiru, na poticaj dječaka M., odgojiteljice su promijenile prostorno-materijalno okružje, aranžirale centar svemira te ga opskrbile različitim poticajima (posteri, knjige, slikovnice, štapne planete, planete od kaširanih balona, slike svemira, letjelica, raketa od kartonskih kutija).

U projektu o svemiru dječak M. istraživao je udaljenost između planeta te mjerio i pretvarao mjerne jedinice, centimetre u metre, metre u kilometre. Djeci je objašnjavao koliko milijuna godina su planete udaljene od Zemlje te koja je bliže, a koja dalje. Knjige i enciklopedije o svemiru dugo su bile njegovo područje interesa, a s ostalom djecom često ih je proučavao zavučen u „raketi" koja je bila sastavni dio Centra svemira.

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice, veljača 2018.)

Osobito je bio izražen interes za planetima, dječak ih je svakodnevno crtao te mjerio prostornu udaljenost između planeta i njihovu odaljenost od Sunca. Koristio je knjige, slikovnice i enciklopedije te poticao drugu djecu na učenje i istraživanje. Kontekstualni uvjeti aktivnosti (okružje i postupci odgojitelja) pogodovali su razvoju darovitosti dječaka M. te uključivali pozitivno emocionalno ozračje, primjerenost i fleksibilnost okružja i veliki raspon složenosti materijala za igru i učenje.

Dječaku M. omogućavalo se da svoje iznadprosječne sposobnosti pokaže iniciranjem, promišljam u planiranju aktivnosti prema načelima razlikovnosti obogaćivanja. Bilješka odgojiteljice ilustrira inicijativu dječaka te njegove interese.

Projekt o kemijskim elementima inicirao je dječak M. (6, 8. g). Pitao je znam li od čega je sastavljena voda te objašnjavao kako voda ima dva vodika i jedan kisik te da se to piše pomoću formule H2O. Dječak M. nabraja kemijske elemente, njihove simbole te gdje ih se sve može naći u prirodi. Tako je otkriven interes dječaka za periodni sustav elemenata, te

nakon toga organiziran posjet osnovnoj školi. Profesorice kemije i biologije pripremile su razne pokuse s kemijskim elementima, a dječaku su poklonile Periodni sustav elemenata. Nakon posjeta školi dječak ga je sam napravio na vratima odgojne skupine u dječjem vrtiću. Ovaj interes dječaka potaknuo je i posjet Poljoprivrednoj i veterinarskoj školi te sudjelovanje na raznim kemijskim i fizikalnim pokusima s učenicima i profesorima škole te Prehrambeno-tehnološkom fakultetu i sudjelovanje na radionicama prilagođenima predškolskoj djeci.

(*Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkoga dnevnika odgojiteljice*, ožujak, 2018.)

Tijekom projekta o kemijskim elementima poticalo se suradničko i kooperativno učenje što je uključivalo suradnju s roditeljima, lokalnom i širom zajednicom koji su unaprijedili iskustva učenja u novom i promjenjivom kontekstu. Promoviranje humanih vrijednosti bilo je izraženo podržavanjem inicijative dječaka M., a potrebe i interesi zadovoljavali su se, osim opskrbljivanja sredstvima i materijalima (periodni sustav elemenata, različite bočice, mjerice za pokuse), novim strategijama učenja koje su organizirali odgojitelji (posjet kemijskom kabinetu osnovne škole, posjet srednjoj poljoprivrednoj školi, posjet Prehrambeno-tehnološkom fakultetu i knjižnici).

Tablica 2

U trećem razdoblju istraživanja dolazi do uključivanja roditelja u aktivnosti i proširivanja spoznaja o dobiti za dječaka. Prilikom refleksije s roditeljima odgojiteljice saznaju i dječakovo ponašanje kod kuće te aktivnosti i igre u koje je uključen.

Dječak M. je stariji od dvoje djece u obitelji, živi s roditeljima u velikom stambenom naselju grada, a u njegov odgoj je intenzivno uključen i dječakov djed. On ga potiče i podržava u svim njegovim interesima te proširuje njegove spoznaje igrajući s njim društvene igre, dajući mu razne materijale za istraživanje te ga potiče ga u rješavanju različitih logičkih problema i zadataka. Djed je utjecao na dječakovu kreativnost jer se bavio slikanjem portreta, a dječak ga je u ovoj aktivnosti oponašao i vrlo rano počeo crtati ljudske likove s puno različitih detalja i u pokretu. Djed je kod dječaka razvio interes za mjerenje i brojeve jer baveći se stolarskim obrtom često se služio metrom koji je dječaku bio zanimljiv od perioda ranog djetinjstva. Mjereći i bilježeći vrijednosti dječak je pokazivao sve veći interes za ove aktivnosti koje su se proširile na razna područja interesa. Od toga koliko metar ima centimetara pa koliko mjesec ima dana do vrijednosti nekog stana u eurima.

(Transkript bilješke iz istraživačkog dnevnika odgojiteljice, svibanj, 2018.)

Majka dječaka uključila se u aktivnosti u dječjem vrtiću organizirajući pokuse s raznim vrstama tekućina ispitujući njihovu gustoću. Dječak M. je potaknuo ove aktivnosti s majkom nakon posjete radionicama na Prehrambeno-tehnološkom fakultetu. Dječakov otac također je sudjelovao u aktivnostima skupine te predstavio svoj hobi, uzgajanje pčela i proizvodnju meda u što je aktivno uključen i dječak M.

Tablica 3

Rasprava

Iako postoji niz kvalitetnih istraživanja o posebnostima i karakteristikama darovite djece, poticanje darovitosti u okvirima ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja prilično je zanemareno. Neka istraživanja (Grant, 2013) sugeriraju da odgojitelji predškolske djece nisu dovoljno educirani za prepoznavanje darovitosti, dok druga (Kettler i sur., 2017) navode da prepoznavanje i poticanje darovite djece u predškolskim ustanovama proizlazi iz intrinzične motivacije odgojitelja predškolske djece. Osim ovoga problema, u praksi ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja često je prisutno izdvajanje darovitoga djeteta u posebne programe izvan redovnoga kurikula koji se provodi u vrtiću. Mlinarević i Zrilić (2021) upozoravaju da u praksi briga o darovitoj djeci nije uvijek sustavna. Ono se odvija u pojedinim odgojno-obrazovnim ustanovama i neravnomjerno je, a često i ne zadovoljava stvarne potrebe darovitih, te smatraju da je to razlog razvoja novih programa za poticanje darovitosti (Centar Nikola Tesla, razne udruge koje nude specijalizirane programi za darovitu djecu, udruge roditelja, igraonice za darovite u vrtićima i dr.). Slično, Kettler i sur. (2017) istraživali su provedbu kurikula za darovitu djecu u američkim predškolskim ustanovama. Rezultati njihova istraživanja pokazuju da odgojitelji ne razumiju i pogrešno tumače podatke o darovitoj djeci. Autori shvaćaju da je potrebno uspostaviti posebnu politiku i praksu za prepoznavanje i motiviranje darovite djece u predškolskim ustanovama.

Dakle, mnogo je područja u kojima postoje problemi, ali postoji i značajan broj istraživača koji se tim problemima bave. Ističemo rezultate studije Seedorf (2014) koja identificira pet tema (svijest, podrška, profesionalni razvoj, vrijeme i diferencijacija visoke kvalitete) koje treba implementirati u obrazovne programe za darovitu djecu. Cukierkorn i sur. (2007) prikazuju pristup trijade (integrirani kurikul, stalna evaluacija i uključenost roditelja) u predškolske programe za darovite.

Na temelju rezultata ovoga istraživanja identificirane su četiri strategije, odnosno područja poticanja razvoja darovitosti djeteta. Ovo su također četiri područja implikacija za daljnje istraživanje i zagovaranje koja su predstavljena u sljedećem tekstu.

Okolina za učenje

Ovo područje obuhvaća prostorno-materijalno i socijalno okružje predškolske ustanove, odnosno odgojne skupine u koju je bio uključen dječak M. Prostorno-materijalno okružje smatra se *trećim odgojiteljem* u ranom i predškolskom odgoju i obrazovanju jer mu se pridaje posebna pozornost i uloga u učenju djece (Edwards i sur., 1998). Kornmanna i sur. (2015) istražuju osobitosti kognitivnoga razvoja darovite djece i predlažu okružja za učenje koja potiču aktivno učenje i istovremeno kontroliraju primjerenost poticaja i materijala koje pripremaju odgojitelji, kako bi se osigurala kvalitetna podrška optimalnom učenju darovite djece. Beghetto i Kaufman (2014) navode da je okružje za učenje jedan od najvažnijih čimbenika koji određuju hoće li podržati kreativni potencijal darovitoga djeteta, a Cukierkorn i sur. (2007) naglašavaju da okružje za učenje treba biti usmjereno na dijete, prirodno, fleksibilno,

a visoka mobilnost i varijabilnost treba poticati djetetovu samostalnost. Predškolska djeca trebaju imati više centara za učenje kao što su umjetnički centar, znanstveni centar, građevinski centar, matematički centar, centar za čitanje i pisanje. Svijetli zidovi, multimedijska tehnologija, životinje i biljke također trebaju biti zastupljeni, kao i skriveni mali prostori, ali i veliki, javni, zajednički prostori (Edwards i sur. 1998).

Obrazovna potpora darovitom dječaku M. pretpostavljala je obogaćeno materijalno okružje u kojem su planirani kontekstualni uvjeti (okružje) za poticajne aktivnosti i stjecanje raznolikih iskustava učenja. Prostor je bio podijeljen na centre aktivnosti koji su se nadopunjavali i mijenjali ovisno o interesu nadarenoga dječaka M., a posebno centar za matematiku (brojila, mjerač, kalendar), centar za početno čitanje i pisanje (knjige, enciklopedije, slikovnice) i centar za istraživanje prirode (vage, vage, posude). Cjelokupno okružje i materijali za igru i učenje bili su bogati, složeni i postavljeni na razvojno zahtjevniju razinu od uobičajene za određenu kronološku dob kako bi se potaknuli složeniji oblici mišljenja. Prostorno-materijalni okoliš i društveni odnosi u pozitivnoj su korelaciji, odnosno kvalitativno i kvantitativno povećanje materijala i poticaja daje više mogućnosti za raznolike društvene odnose (Jurčević Lozančić, 2016).

Van Tassel-Baska (2013) navodi da se socioemocionalni razvoj darovitoga djeteta može unaprijediti naglašavajući liderske vještine i strategije, što je izraženo u istraživanju. Dječak M. je bio često bio u ulozi inicijatora i voditelja aktivnosti, a skupina djece ga je pratila. Da bi se razvila darovitost, Yahnke Walker (2007) predlaže druženje djece sa sličnim interesima i sposobnostima kako bi se međusobno poticali te fleksibilno grupiranje koje se mijenja na temelju spremnosti za učenje, interesa ili stila učenja. Važno je da dijete bude okruženo s jednim ili dva bliska i dobra prijatelja koji ga razumiju i prihvaćaju. Rezultati ovoga istraživanja pokazuju da se dječak M. družio s djecom sličnih intelektualnih sposobnosti i interesa. Imao je jednoga prijatelja kojeg je posebno volio i koji ga je pratio u svim njegovim aktivnostima, često ne shvaćajući probleme i teme kojima se dječak M. bavio.

Diferencijacija iskustava učenja

Diferencijacija znači prilagođavanje i modificiranje kurikula kako bi se zadovoljile potrebe darovitoga djeteta. Izdvajamo autore koji se bave problemom diferencijacije kurikula. Vreysa i sur. (2017) navode da belgijske obrazovne institucije promiču diferencijaciju kao primarnu obrazovnu intervenciju za darovitu djecu u grupama s djecom s mješovitim sposobnostima, a Van Tassel-Baska (2013) daje smjernice za diferencijaciju kurikula za darovitu djecu. Autor predlaže napredne i složene materijale, projekte i istraživanja, razvoj vještina i navika koje podržavaju inovativnost. Darovito dijete mora razviti metakognitivne vještine kao što su planiranje, praćenje i procjenjivanje vlastitoga učenja. Ove vještine treba ojačati razmišljanjem o učenju i iskustvima koja oblikuju mišljenje i vrijednosti. Kettler i sur. (2017) navodi da diferencijacija uključuje individualizirani pristup i razvojni kurikul sa složenim, kreativnim i izazovnim aktivnostima. Prema Coppleu i Bredekamp (2008), razvojni kurikul uključuje raznoliku

i smislenu igru uz podršku odgojitelja, integrirani pristup učenju, poticajno okružje, fleksibilnost vremena i prostora te prilagođavanje strategija poučavanja kako bi se pomoglo svakom djetetu da postigne optimalan napredak.

Nakon identifikacije darovitoga dječaka, na refleksijama odgojitelja i istraživača dogovorene su smjernice za rad. Uvaženi su specifični interesi te je dječak M. potaknut za istraživanje i učenje onoga što ga zanima. Poticalo se proširenje iskustva i znanja, vještina i sposobnosti, omogućeno mu je učenje na način koji mu najviše odgovara, posebice razvoj metakognitivnih vještina. Organizirane su složenije aktivnosti i različiti materijali u smislu apstraktnoga mišljenja i viših razina misaonih procesa, postavljena su veća očekivanja ustrajnosti te osiguravanje dovoljno vremena i prilagođavanje trajanja aktivnosti u skladu s djetetovom koncentracijom i zalaganjem. Sadržaji aktivnosti bili su usmjereni na djetetove interese, iskustva, znanja, dob i okolinu u kojoj dijete živi. Odgojno-obrazovni rad planiran je i oblikovan cjelovito (tematski, projektno), a ne parcelizirano. Uočilo se da je dječak volio pokretati projekte, otkrivati i stvarati nova znanja, samostalno dolazeći do zaključaka.

Kurikul se razvijao provedbom diferenciranoga kurikula i obogaćivanjem kontekstualnih uvjeta raznovrsnim aktivnostima, u skladu s naprednim sposobnostima i obrazovnim težnjama darovitoga djeteta. Diferencijacija se provodila primjenom složenijih i raznovrsnijih sadržaja, produbljivanjem i proširivanjem tema interesa, kroz slobodu izbora načina rješavanja problema, fleksibilno vrijeme za aktivnosti, prikazivanje različitih produkata učenja, posjete raznim ustanovama, omogućavanje stručnjacima i roditeljima da organiziraju aktivnosti koje bile su zanimljive. Odgojitelji su diferencirali proces učenja pronalaženjem načina usvajanja sadržaja, davanjem slobode djetetu u izboru načina rješavanja problema i sl. Svi oblici dokumentacije nastali su sustavnim prikupljanjem dokumentacije kojemu je prethodilo promatranje i slušanje odgojitelja kako bi što bolje razumjeli dijete i tako osigurati kvalitetnu podršku razvoju dječaka.

Uključivanje roditelja u kurikul

Obitelj ima primarnu odgovornost u izgradnji vještina i poticanju talenata djeteta. Roditelji darovite djece često su prvi učitelji i održavaju optimalnu ravnotežu slobode i pritiska koji povoljno utječe na djetetovu motivaciju za učenje. Rezultati studije Bicknell (2014) pokazali su da roditelji imaju ključnu ulogu kao motivatori, pružatelji resursa i savjetnici. Oni često vide interese i napredne sposobnosti koje pokazuju njihova darovita djeca i preuzimaju ulogu u obrazovanju svoje djece.

Posebno je važno da roditelji blisko surađuju s odgojiteljima i drugim stručnjacima kako bi uspostavili dobar odnos i zajedničke ciljeve za dijete. Takvom suradnjom najviše dobivaju djeca jer se zajedničkim snagama zadovoljavaju njihove potrebe. Kada odgojitelji uključe roditelje u kurikul, roditelji povećavaju svoju interakciju s djetetom kod kuće i osjećaju se pozitivnije u pogledu svoje sposobnosti da pomognu djeci (Mudrak, 2011).

Roditelji dječaka M. uključili su se u aktivnosti s djecom, pokrenuli aktivnosti u odgojnoj skupini te proširili znanja djece i odgojitelja o područjima koja su bila od

interesa za darovitog dječaka. Osim toga, roditelji su sudjelovali u promišljanjima tijekom istraživanja te predlagali nove strategije učenja i suradnje s društvenom okolinom. Shavinina (2013) navodi da je u roditeljskoj uključenosti važna obrazovna razina roditelja i njihov socioekonomski status, a posebno je važna obrazovna razina majke. Majka dječaka M. često se uključivala u aktivnosti, organizirala pokuse s kemijskim elementima, bila pratnja u raznim posjetima, ali i emotivna podrška dječaku M.

Cjeloživotno učenje i kontinuirano stručno usavršavanje odgojitelja

Utvrđeno je da je tijekom povijesti obitelj imala veliku ulogu u razvoju darovitosti djeteta. Osim obitelji, na drugom su mjestu odgojitelji koje karakterizira intrinzična motivacija, razigranost i strast prema poučavanju i drugačijem načinu poučavanja (Shavinina, 2013). Takvi odgojitelji pokazuju duboko zanimanje za djecu, potičući ih nadahnuto i izazovno. Zanimljivo je da se ovi nalazi podudaraju s našim istraživanjem u kojem odgojitelji pokazuju veliki interes za poticanje darovitosti dječaka M., iako nemaju dodatnu edukaciju i odgovarajuću podršku. Beghetto i Kaufman (2014) navode da bi odgojitelji trebali biti kreativni, omogućiti izbor u svakodnevnim situacijama, pratiti motivaciju djece, modelirati i poticati kreativnost. Nakon identifikacije darovitoga dječaka, odgojitelji su pratili njegove razvojne karakteristike i potrebe. Uz to, odgojitelji su nadopunjavali centre aktivnosti novim poticajima, zapisivali anegdotske bilješke u istraživačke dnevnike, čitali stručnu literaturu, sudjelovali u refleksijama i uspostavljali dublju suradnju s roditeljima i socijalnom okolinom.

Rezultati istraživanja Vreysa i sur. (2017.) pokazuju da je profesionalni razvoj odgojitelja uz dovoljno vremena, podrške i resursa ključan u postizanju cilja, odnosno poticanju djetetove darovitosti. Ovi autori također navode da je odgojiteljima potrebna odgovarajuća obuka i pomoć kako bi mogli pratiti potrebe darovite djece. Nažalost, u ovom istraživanju odgojitelji su sami pronalazili načine kako učinkovito djelovati. Surađivali su s Fakultetom za odgojne i obrazovne znanosti i istraživačicom koja je vodila istraživanje. Dječji vrtić u to vrijeme nije imao stručan i kompetentan tim za područje darovitosti.

Važnost ovoga istraživanja jest u jedinstvenom, individualnom prikazu poticanja razvoja darovitog dječaka u kurikulu ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja od strane intrinzično motiviranih odgojitelja. Poticanje razvoja darovitosti u dječjem vrtiću svakako treba promatrati cjelovito, a istraživanjem su izdvojena područja koja utječu na promišljenost prakse koja rezultira poticanjem djetetove darovitosti.

Zaključak

Relevantnost istraživanja očituje se u potrebi što ranijega identificiranja i poticanja darovitosti. Fokus istraživanja je na darovitom djetetu u kurikulu ranoga odgoja. Istraživanje je pokazalo da fenomenu darovitosti treba pristupiti holistički te uključiti sve dionike odgojno-obrazovnoga procesa. Strategije poticanja razvoja darovitosti u

redovitom kurikulu ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja proizašle iz istraživanja su: bogato prostorno-materijalno i socijalno okružje predškolske ustanove, diferencijacija iskustava učenja, cjeloživotno učenje i kontinuirano stručno usavršavanje odgojitelja te uključivanje roditelja i šire zajednice u kurikul dječjega vrtića. Navedene strategije smatraju se korisnima za praktičare ranoga i predškolskoga odgoja i obrazovanja, teoretičare koji se bave darovitošću te kao poticaj za daljnja istraživanja u ovom području.

Zaključno, redoviti kurikul obogaćen je i proširen (proširivanje i produbljivanje kreativnih tehnika i strategija u odgojno-obrazovnom radu). Rano prepoznavanje i poticanje darovitosti u ovom je radu poticaj podizanju svijesti odgojno-obrazovnoga osoblja, institucija, sveučilišta, Agencije za odgoj i obrazovanje i Ministarstva znanosti i obrazovanja za veći profesionalni angažman, jačanje kompetencija odgojitelja i djece. Kompetencije bi se jačale uvođenjem novih kolegija u programiranju studija, stvaranjem stručnih razvojnih timova u obrazovnim institucijama, poticanjem novih istraživanja i oblika stručnoga usavršavanja odgojitelja, stručnih timova i znanstvenika.

Napomena

Ovo je proširena i dorađena verzija znanstvenog izvješća Vekić-Kljaić. V. & Mlinarević V. pod nazivom "Promicanje razvoja potencijalno darovite djece u vrtićkom kontekstu", ECHA – Europsko vijeće za visoke sposobnosti, Dubrovnik, Hrvatska, 16. – 18. listopada 2019. Aktivnosti i fotografije iz istraživanja objavljene su u knjizi autora Zrilić, S. & Mlinarević, V. (2021). Integralni pristup darovitosti - perspektiva u odgoju i obrazovanju, str. 218-231. Zagreb: Hrvatska sveučilišna naklada