EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY CHILDHOOD: SOCIAL PROBLEM AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract
This article examines the problem of efficiency of education in modern childhood, emphasizes the need to strengthen the content of the education of children before the school attendance, perception of structure, in conjunction with the current period’s Lithuanian educational context. The focus is on the analysis of problems that arise for pre-school teachers, parents and children. The research is based on education efficiency perspective; the curriculum, the structure of the exact influence on the child's perception of the success and the quality of life in a pre-school institution and school attendance are discussed. The research highlighted the need to ensure the success of communicative competence education throughout the child's activities, development of linguistic, socio-cultural needs.

KEYWORDS: modern childhood, the quality of education, perspective.

Introduction
Attitude towards the essence of human life, quality of education, achievement results is changing in the constantly changing social, cultural, information environment; the context of world economy is affected by globalization. It is emphasized that the path towards learning, society starts from the first days of life: infancy and especially childhood which has been recently assumed to be a particular period of individual development. It is emphasized in psychological literature that “babyhood is a period from birth until a child learns to walk and childhood continues until adolescence” (Myers D.G., 2000, P. 76). The nodes for further life of a man emerge in the childhood; the processes of perception, thinking, cognition, consciousness are taking place in a socio-cultural context. Researches of pedagogues, psychologists and other scientists (Juodaitytė A., 2003; Gullov E., 2005; Hviid P., 2005; Žukauskienė R., 2012; Piaget J., 2002; Myers D.G., 2008; Glebuvienė V.S., Monkevičienė O., Tarasonienė A.L., 2009; Braslauskienė R., 2013, etc.) confirm that education before attendance of school is a very important step for the current and further development of personality, it includes a significant period of time in the whole system of education, it has to open possibilities for formation of communication, cognition, social, health care, artistic competencies. Universal activity skills, foundations of value perception of a growing personality are forming before attendance of school.

A changing attitude towards the child, childhood, pedagogical impact measures and public attitude towards children allow evaluating childhood as a social construct and to evaluate a child as an active social participant in its development inseparable from all values accepted in the society, surrounding socio-cultural environment. A Swiss philosopher, psychologist J. Piaget that researched the questions of human language, thinking, morality disclosed big possibilities for the development of child’s understanding, defined the most important guidelines for cognitive development, encouraged to take interest in the development of reason, emphasized that a child needs non academic teaching and natural playing activities for disclosure of all powers since children create understanding about the world in their own way, therefore, it is necessary to encourage children to think themselves (Piaget J., 2002; Juodaitytė A., 2003, etc.). Mutual understanding, listening, feeling of community, possibilities for satisfaction of interests, needs emerge during the game and children create them themselves. A space for learning to communicate, know, learn opens during well-organized playing activities, cultural knowledge is expanded and mastered, the reality of existence is familiarized with. Educators must be able to pay attention to individual and different development of child’s education, find ways to influence, have impact on their own understanding, expression, self-development, independence and duty from the point of dependence on others, feeling of responsibility, self-discipline, self-control. It is particularly important to be able to support, guide towards the right director the natural spontaneity, energy, initiative, searches, discoveries, interest of the child (Piaget J., 2002; Hviid P., 2005; Oaklander V., 2012, etc.). Implementation of this task raises unique requirements for an educational institution, all participants of the education process. The balance of educational content, process organisation quality, child's experience, relationship of socio-cultural environment must ensure the success of leaning before attendance of school; help the child avoiding social separation during the next phase of learning.
The quality of childhood depends on the dynamics of contemporary society, on its change as a social structure during the flow of time, in the material, social, cultural, educational environment. The change of technological, economic, cultural, social structures, human relationship affect the child's education, development conditions in its own way. In order to know possibilities of children as social individuals, members of society, positive socialisation, we raise a question how the child's education is taking place before attendance of school, what difficulties are faced by participants of the educational process in the practice of organisation, improvement of the educational process since depending on education, ability an possibilities to fully participate in the public life of each growing man, the quality of the country, global community rises to the higher level.

**Research objective:** to disclose possibilities of children's education before attendance of school, perspectives of making education more efficient.

**Object:** education before attendance of school.

**Tasks:** to clarify the expression of education efficiency before attendance of school; identify problems, tendencies of making education more efficient.

**Methods:** analysis of scientific literature, documents regulating elementary, preschool education, survey and observation.

The objective of the analysis of the scientific literature, documents regulating education of the child before attendance of school was used to disclose the expression of efficiency of education, how education (learning) of the child is taking place before attendance of school, what requirements are raised for child's achievements, organisation of the educational process.

**Education Before Attendance of School as a Condition of Development of the Child's Personality, Positive Socialisation**

In Lithuania, education is based on the country's cultural traditions by protecting and creating national identity, transferring values making human life meaningful, public life balanced, solidary, the life of the state more progressive and safe (Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, 2011, P. 8) The changes in contemporary public life open their unique conditions of socialisation, achievements, possibilities of tendency development, education of necessary competencies for growing children. The development of the child's personality is primarily affected by the family as the closest environment that cannot be changed by anything. However, recently its structure, functions, responsibility is significantly changing, and often life is transferred to completely new social spaces that are not known to the child and even family (emigration). When the family is not the guarantee of existence any more, the majority of children spend a part of their daily life in educational institutions, foster homes together with their peers, others remain in the custody of their grandparents, relatives when parents go abroad to work. It is important for educators to understand how social development of the child is taking place, what its activities are, how it is defined and affected by living space.

Since the early childhood the child gradually learns to adhere with the norms established, requirements, desirable behaviour, communication logic, to live in more than one social context. According to peculiarities of its age period, individual possibilities, the child has to acquire experience, develop appropriate competencies enabling to live in the surrounding environment (Žukauskiene R., 2012, etc.). If earlier the traditional family attempted to transfer the norms of behaviour to children, form the system of human values, standards by their own example, the weakening impact of the parents' example on the child's socialization has been recently felt. Moral principles, values change significantly and become the object of discussions. The child becomes free to choose his life priorities, objectives himself. More and more attention is paid to the learning of the child to live together, identify with their peers. It is attempted to develop personal value orientations allowing to become a decent, knowledge seeking, independent, responsible, patriotic, develop communication skills, help mastering information culture, writing literacy by ensuring the knowledge of the national language, foreign language, mother tongue. Communication skills, competence include ability to listen, talk, attempt to read, write. It is important to expand the intuitive understanding about the uniqueness of the Lithuanian language, develop love, respect for a Lithuanian language. During all activities of a preschool student it is attempted to encourage the child's willingness to communicate by enriching, developing sociocultural experience, social competence and abilities to live healthily (Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania, 2011, P. 14).
In Lithuania preschool education takes place in the family and upon request of parents and carers - in accordance with a preschool education programme which is prepared according to Criteria of Preschool Education Programmes approved by the Minister of Education and Science. A child is provided with preschool education in Lithuania from birth until pre-primary or elementary education is started. It is attempted to start satisfying natural, cultural, social, cognitive needs. All the activities are organized by developing competencies important for personality formation: communication, health protection, cognition, artistic, social competencies. Achievements and progress are evaluated during the process of activity.

Pre-primary education is carried out according to Pre-primary Education General Programme approved by the Minister of Education and Science. It is provided to a child when it becomes 6 years old during that calendar year and upon request of parents and carers and in accordance with the Description of the Procedure of Evaluation of the Child's Maturity to Study According to Pre-Primary and Elementary Education Programmes, when a child becomes 5 years old. It is attempted to help preparing to study according to elementary education programme. High quality education is based on contemporary education focused on the child, it has to satisfy natural, social, cognitive, cultural needs of the child, ensure continuity of education, well-being of life. Education shall include the most important areas of education, i.e. it has to be integral, organized by applying contemporary technologies, favourable educational environment (Lansbergienė A., Jankauskienė L., 2004, etc.).

The efficiency of education is correspondingly affected by the fact how process participants perceive quality. Observation during practice of students, conversations with pedagogues, parents whose children attend preschool education institutions allow stating that parents perceive quality of education as good care of a child, well being, pleasant, caring pedagogues, other experts. A small part of parents also mention good achievements of a child, thoughtful education. Parents understand functions of contemporary preschool education institution, impact of high quality education on a child insufficiently, they are not familiarized with preschool education programmes prepared by preschool education institutions. It allows thinking that education of parents is insufficient. The research shows that pedagogues evaluate programmes prepared by their institutions very well, they do not notice shortages of programmes, essential directions of programme improvement (Glebuvienė V.S., Monkevičienė O., Tarasonienė A.L., 2009; Neifachas S., 2008, etc.). It was determined that based on compliance with quality criteria, the part of general regulations is properly prepared, regional and institutional peculiarities are sufficiently reflected in the majority of kindergarten programmes, the content of certain kindergarten programmes clearly reflects the purpose of education, tasks, areas of implementation, competencies to be achieved by children are accurately defined, programmes are oriented towards satisfaction of individual needs of children, preparation of proper self education possibilities, However, methods for evaluation of children's achievements are not specified. The needs of children are reflected only formally, philosophical grounds of programme preparation are not understood sufficiently, the content of certain areas or even the whole education is too narrow, not suitable to preschool age children, presented inconsistently.

It is important to emphasize the fact that the life of the child in a preschool education institution, communication with peers is a part of educational process and it significantly supplements the development of the child's personality. It is learned to adapt to the environment, situations, i.e. social flexibility, ability to choose, evaluate others from the point of others, self discipline, associate their experience with the whole, reason, perceive, express its opinion, trust its possibilities, perceive them. The child lives and develops together with others, masters the essence of mutual communication, relationship during the process of the whole activity, many possibilities, space of experiences open for them. The observation shows that particular attention is paid to linguistic expression of the child, ability to efficiently use it in social communication; children that speak better are doing better. By living together with others the child feels mutual essence of people, learns to understand that coordination of intentions, purposes, reasons of activity, ideas, adjustment to each other, mutual and internal balance is characteristic to social relationship. Therefore, education before school attendance lays grounds for positive socialisation of the child, universal development of personality.

Expression of Education Efficiency

The child spends a big part of the day in an educational institution; it is very significant to take care of, look after, and support activeness, initiative. Activity and care, custody must be parts of the education process that supplement each other rather than contradict and contrast. They must uniquely support
stability of internal harmony of the child affecting development. The child’s educator must understand who he is himself and who his students are, be able to organize, correct activities based on knowledge, abilities, skills acquired, the total of moral values. The research shows what problems pedagogues face when working according to programmes prepared by own institutions: a part of pedagogues still follow previous national programmes, the system for evaluation of the child's achievements is missing, problems emerge when individualizing education, parents are included to the process of education with difficulty, too large work load of pedagogues, significant problems of children's behaviour (Glebuvienė V. S., Monkevičienė O., Tarasonienė A. L., 2009, etc.).

When looking at preschool education from new perspectives, it is important to emphasize that the content of education, daily education practice are changing and updating, the child must have to be active itself and make appropriate impact on its own development. The fact what the content, forms of daily education of children, education efficiency results should be like depend not only on tutors. A pedagogue must be able to help the child, stimulate its powers, expand knowledge and possibilities of cognition and the achievements of the child personality's education and professionalism of the pedagogue are disclosed through this when trying to make the child more active in meaningful social activities, make positive impact on important factors affecting the child's life.

Education is a complicated, continuous, life long process supplemented with acquisition of more and more complicated competencies, ability to qualitatively participate in various areas of life (Jovaiša L., 2011; Gudynas P., 2005, etc.). When creating a continuous, integrated life of children in the kindergarten, general activities, being together, pedagogical interaction mingle together where aesthetical feeling, understanding of ethics, culture, traditions and human values are developed during prevalence of the contact of safety, pleasant activities, positive emotions (Monkevičienė O., Glebuvienė V.S., Tarasoinė A. 2000, 2006, etc.). The meaning, objective, motives of activity are particularly important. A tutor acts at a certain level during the very process and outside its limits. The work of family, pedagogues, other specialists having impact on the quality of the child's education (learning) must be based on universal knowledge about the child and evaluated from the child's perspective in accordance with the individualized, differentiated attitude towards the child since not everyone benefits equally from being together, education activity process, differences of each child are vary, specific, important individual powers and possibilities to the child are disclosed.

Expression of education efficiency, pedagogues’ competence is disclosed through results of children's activities: general and individual ones. It means, how each child is getting used to know, discover, create play together with others by taking into consideration individual differences. It is particularly important to teach using the language as the most universal measure of communication, self expression since mastering of language opens possibilities for the whole spread of personality. Family, experts of preschool education institution should be concerned what conditions children are provided with not only for listening to the language but also learning to hear, pronounce, understand verbal tales, folklore, fiction and cognitive literary works but also how structures of thinking formed on the grounds of the child's development and experience are used. Recently particularly significant focus was paid to formation, developing of skills of telling of a preschool students without violating individual speaking style of the child, protecting peculiarities of dialect, mother tongue. The child's interest in a book, graphic symbols, imitation of wring, understanding of linguistic communication ethics are important. As well as education of attention, tolerance to speaking of another person. This lays grounds for the success of learning in the elementary classes.

The Research Results and their Interpretation

When planning the research, a questionnaire was prepared to pedagogues and it consisted of three parts: instruction, part of demographical variables and the main part of diagnostic variables. The objective of the survey method was to disclose the problems of children education before attendance of school, perspectives of making education more efficient, determine what difficulties arise to participants of the educational process in the practice of educational process, education improvement. The scope of the research was 300 pedagogues working in preschool education institutions of Klaipėda, Kretinga, Plungė, Telšiai, Panevėžys, Tauragė cities. The survey was organized during March - June 2013.

Social - demographic characteristics of the surveyed pedagogues: according to age the largest part consisted of 25-39 years old pedagogues (64%); there were 36% of 40-45 years old pedagogues. All the
surveyed have acquired tertiary education. During the research most pedagogues surveyed had 5-10 years of pedagogical work experience (32%), 16% of the surveyed noted that they have 11-15 years of work experience, 30% of respondents mentioned that they have 16-20 years of experience and 22% mentioned that they have 21 and more years of work experience. Respondents were classified according to qualification category in the following way: tutor - 24%, senior tutor - 52%, tutor - supervisor - 22%, tutor-expert - 2%.

Problems of Education in Contemporary Childhood. Pedagogues that participated in the survey (100%) notify that recently the attitude of the society towards the quality of education and preschool education is changing; the very understanding of education is changing. Self education to a child has to be like an active understanding of information, creation, specification of a universal view by using individual powers in the context of meaningful education. Respondents notify that the quality of child's self-education, their results must be important to the family too. However not all parents understand the essence of education. Pedagogues (24%) declare that the major part of parents of children being educated by them assume good activity of kindergarten to be such where health of the child is being protected, proper, warm psychological atmosphere is provided, good communication of educators and children is formed. Parents pay less attention to the universal development of the child's personality, maturation, cognitive activities, to what benefit the child receives from high quality preschool education. Pedagogues declare that children come from different social environment, the environment of a harmonious family encourages, supports development of the child's personality and environment of non harmonious families interferes with it (6%). The unwillingness of parents to acknowledge the issues of child's education, their negation (48%), the lack of children's communication with parents in the family (36%), unwillingness of parents to contribute to the child's education continuity at home (48%), even ignorance of the child in the family (8%). A part of respondents emphasize that parents often ignore recommendations of pedagogues for education of children at home. Pedagogues think that the most important need of contemporary family is that the child would be safe while parents are at work.

The pedagogues surveyed assume language education, development of linguistic experience of the child to be a very important factor for the whole development of personality. They state that during the daily activities children have possibilities to listen, hear each other; however, the difficulties of communication, expression arise as a distinct problem. Respondents emphasize that children of large families are distinguished for their richer, more developed language. It is emphasized that due do the lack of time in daily activities, sometimes the words, changes in speaking of the child are not always listened to (12%). Another problem is conflictual situations in the communication of children, certain children are not accepted to play, they are ignored because of individual features. Pedagogues (100%) emphasize that such difficulties are faced both by younger and older children, the tutor must be able to help them recognizing their feelings, managing emotions (56%), learning tolerance (42%), show that each child is very important, welcome and necessary in the group (16%) since that has influence on quality of education.

Another problem of education efficiency named by respondents is the lack of children's knowledge about topics of games they are interested in. This is notified by 48% of surveyed pedagogues. In order this activity would not be disturbed, become attractive and pleasant to the child, it is necessary to supply appropriate material, try to make their students to better familiarize with the surrounding environment, phenomena. However funds are often missing for that (34%), time is missing, it is necessary to also pay attention to the possibilities and logic of improvement of preschool education programmes (34%).

Pedagogues that participated in the research (28%) emphasize the assurance of the child's imagination, fantasy development possibilities during playing activities, performing of creative tasks to be an important task. When observing activities it is necessary to take into account how children communicate; this discloses the stronger and weaker features of each child and the whole group. Tutors declare (22%) that cognition of the child's communication peculiarities, games, deeper analysis of needs and problems show clearer where the help of the tutor or another expert is necessary during the process of social development.

The pedagogues surveyed also highlighted the problems that they face at work themselves. It is particularly difficult to correct development of the child's language: when talking the „child's language gets stuck”, he repeats the same word several times, misses important episodes of the tale (45.3%); language disturbances cause language improvement problems of many children (28%), inability to accumulate attention (8%), poverty of vocabulary (8%). Bilingualism, multilingualism, mixed, non-native families are assumed to be a relevant problem of the child's education (26%). During the process of
education problems are caused by children having special education needs (32%). The lack of learning motivation during activities in the speech therapist's office is also significant (8%), disorders of emotions and behaviour disturb learning correct pronunciation (10%).

A part of respondents emphasize the problem of the lack of methodical material, measures necessary in the education process (46%). 12% of tutors state that pedagogues a busy therefore they are often short of time for the enrichment of the child's vocabulary, development of clear, coherent language of the child. Difficulties arise when organizing the child's hand training exercises (96%). Respondents name a large number of children in groups to be another important problem (100%), that decreases possibilities of education individualisation, differentiation.

Pedagogues notified how they resolve problems that children face: attention to the child's playing, its organization (12%); selection of literature, reading of folklore works, discussion of illustrations of works (58%); teaching to listen to fairy tales, poems, songs (40%). The pedagogue's language is assumed to be an example for the child's talking (68%). Pedagogues emphasize that many competencies necessary to the child are developing when responsibly organizing staging of literary works, folklore works, performances, telling of fairy tales (32%); teaching patters, counting-out rhymes, poems (28%).

A half of the surveyed tutors declare that speaking to children, encouragement of speaking (52%); inspired, inspiring, influencing, encouraging activity of the child: ethnocultural events, festivals, entertainment, excursions (34%) are particularly important. As well as individual conversations with children by taking into consideration language peculiarities of each child (18%). Observation of nature, conversation about visible phenomena directs the child's attitude towards environment, native country towards the right direction (6%).

Pedagogues allocate difficulties of 1-3 years old children education to a different group. They state that after resolution of these problems, removal of their reasons many education (learning) problems are prevented from during the following period of age. It is the lack of the child's courage, it is difficult to make children talk in the group of all children, even though some of them talk (12%); language of children is not developed in families, the lack of parent's attention to the child (42%); fair of new environment and the lack of child's self confidence (6%); adaptation in the new environment (58%); talking to the child like to a baby (46%). During this period of age, pedagogues assume honest, attentive communication of parents with the child to be a particularly important factor, however even 22% of the pedagogues surveyed stated that recently problematic communication of parents with children is getting clearer, therefore, the child talks in its "own" language. Hyperactivity of children (16%); health problems (18%); difficulties when learning correct pronunciation (68%) cause problems; the number of children with language disturbances is increasing, speech therapists pay more attention to 3-6 years old children and they do not always have time for smaller children (10%). Pedagogues emphasize that due to being very busy and sometimes due to the lack of competencies it is problematic to observe the development of children's speaking, differentiate pathology from possible signs of pronunciation in that period of age (32%).

Pedagogues emphasize most commonly applied methods of solution of education problems in the group of 1-3 years old children: the skills of children speaking are developed during the whole activities of the day, particularly playing activities; much attention is paid to sensory games related to the child's feelings, senso-motility, i.e. the total of processes which include feelings and reciprocal movement (40%); drawing, modelling, plaster application (48%); musical activities (12%); teaching of short poems (26%); observation, correction of the whole activities of the child (30%).

Pedagogues also emphasize how they are encouraged to seek for efficiency of pedagogical work. The major part of respondents (68%) state that they are provided with possibilities to participate in retraining courses; 12% notify that they are encouraged to participate in project activities; appreciations, appraisal are expressed, seminars, trainings are organized in preschool education institutions too (22%); it is attempted to ensure favourable working conditions in a group (42%); costs of courses are paid (96%).

When generalizing it is important to emphasize that recently in order to achieve efficiency of preschool education, it is necessary to pay attention to concretisation of preschool education objectives, tasks at the national level, standards of achievement of preschool age children education, improve quality of kindergarten programmes, organize competency improvement seminars about questions of efficiency of work in the institution, programme improvement, parent education, their involvement into the process of children education, education of children with special needs more available to pedagogues. To encourage preschool education institutions to make creation of education environment in the group and support more efficient.
Conclusions

The analysis of the scientific literature, documents regulating education of the child before attendance of school allows stating that the basis of education quality in contemporary childhood consists of joint activities of all participants of the education process by understanding, planning the content of education, taking context into consideration, resolving problems arising when seeking for efficiency.

The research data show that the expression of efficiency of education before attendance of school is emphasized by the quality of the child's life in a preschool institution; the high level of education of competencies necessary for the development of the child's personality, proper preparation to study in elementary classes without aggravating the child's life before attendance of school in order that all activities performed by the child would be pleasant and causing positive emotions to him.

The problems of education before school attendance arise to all participants of this process: possibilities and needs of children are not yet sufficiently evaluated; parents most often do not understand and do not assume themselves to be equivalent partners during the process of satisfaction of the children's education needs. Forms of unidirectional information prevail when communicating with parents. This restricts possible interaction, does not encourage complex interaction of all participants of the education process and common resolution of problems; a pedagogue most often remains alone with all problems.

The research data allowed determining the tendencies of actions of making the process more efficient: change of attitude of parents towards children's education process towards positive direction, acknowledgement of children's problems, organization of help to the child; it is necessary to strengthen the perception of content, structure of children's education before attendance of school, ensure the success of communication competence in the whole activity of the child when developing satisfaction of linguistic, sociocultural needs. Participants of the education process must understand their roles in the process of satisfaction of children's education needs; a pedagogue shall anticipate factors causing successful team work, construct the model of education process organisation.

References

Šiandieninė vaikystė: socialinė problema ir perspektyvos

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama ugdymo efektyvumo šiuolaikinėje vaikystėje problema, akcentuojama būtinybė stipinti vaikų ugdymo iki mokyklos lankymo turinio, struktūros suvokimą, siejant su dabartinio laikotarpio Lietuvos švietimo kontekstu. 

Tyrimo tikslas: atskleisti vaikų ugdymo iki mokyklos lankymo problemas, ugdymo efektyvinimo perspektyvas. 

Uždaviniai: išsiaiškinti ugdymo iki mokyklos lankymo efektyvumo raišką; nustatyti problemas, ugdymo efektyvinimo tendencijas. 

Metodai: moksliškas literatūros, dokumentų, reglamentuojančių ikimokyklinį, priešmokyklinį ugdymą, analizė, apklausa raštu, stebėjimas. 

Daugiausia dėmesio skiriama analizei sunkumų, kurie kyla ikimokyklinio ugdymo pedagogams, tėvams, vaikams. Tyrimu grindžiamos ugdymo efektyvinimo perspektyvos, aptariama ugdymo turinio, struktūros, tikslų suvokimo tikslų vaikų sėkmingam pasirengimui mokytis mokykloje bei gyvenimo kokybei iki mokyklos lankymo. 

Atliktu tyrimu pabrėžiama būtinybė užtikrinti komunikacinių kompetencijos ugdymosi sėkmę visoje vaiko veikloje, plėtodama kalbinių, sociokultūrinių poreikių tenkinimą. 

RAKTINIAI ŽODŽIAI: šiandieninė vaikystė, ugdymo kokybė, perspektyvos.