



ANSWERS AND
INNOVATIONS
IN PRE-SCHOOL
EDUCATION IN



PORTUGAL
AND
SLOVENIA



Edited by
Luís Castanheira and Tatjana Devjak

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**Answers and Innovations in Pre-School Education
in Portugal and Slovenia**

Edited by Luís Castanheira, Research Center in Basic
Education, Instituto Politécnico de Bragança,
Portugal
Tatjana Devjak, Faculty of Education, University of
Ljubljana, Slovenia

Reviewed by Deolinda Ribeiro, Instituto Politécnico do Porto,
Portugal and
Jurka Lepičnik Vodopivec, Faculty of Education
Koper, University of Primorska, Slovenia

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Slovene and Portuguese Pre-School Teachers about Collaboration with Parents

Tatjana Devjak¹

tatjana.devjak@pef.uni-lj.si

Luis Castanheira²

luiscastanheira@ipb.pt

Sanja Berčnik¹

sanja.bercnik@pef.uni-lj.si

¹ Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana, Slovenia

² Instituto Politécnico de Bragança, Portugal

Research Center in Basic Education

Abstract

The objectives and strategies of collaboration between parents and pre-school teachers depend on how collaboration is defined at the level of pre-school institutions. In Slovenia, collaboration between parents and pre-school teachers is determined by a formalized framework and legislation (Kindergarten Act, 1996; Organization and Financing of Education Act, 1996; Kindergarten Curriculum, 1999); in our view, individual articles therein already contain parts of partner co-operation policies. Similarly, the pre-school education in Portugal has grasped a sense of support and social assistance to families (Framework Act – Law n. 5/97, of February 10 Art. 4). The purpose of this paper is to compare the views of the Slovenian and Portuguese pre-school teachers on the importance of collaboration

with parents, whereby it highlights some personal views of pre-school teachers on various ways of collaboration with parents, parental influence on the life and work of the pre-school institution, and the competencies of the pre-school teachers regarding their collaboration with parents. The research conducted in 2017 in Slovenia and Portugal (N=386) showed that the Slovenian and Portuguese pre-school teachers were aware of the importance of sharing their responsibilities and powers with parents, although the formal aspects of collaboration (Parents' Council and Public Kindergarten Council) are more clearly defined in the Slovene legislation; consequently, in Slovenia parents can more effectively express their comments and proposals for kindergarten work via their representative in the Parents' Council, and those proposals are considered and decided on.

Key words: *Pre-school teachers, parents, partnership, life and work of the pre-school institution*

Introduction

The objectives and strategies of collaboration between parents and pre-school teachers depend on how cooperation is defined at the level of pre-school institutions. In Slovenia, collaboration between parents (and the limits of their influence) and pre-school teachers is determined by a formalized framework and legislation (Kindergarten Act, 1996; Organization and Financing of Education Act, 1996; Kindergarten Curriculum, 1999); in our view, individual articles therein already contain parts of partner cooperation policies. According to the principle of collaboration with parents as per Kindergarten Curriculum (1999), parents not only have the right to be informed of the programmes and their child, but also have the right to participate in the design of life and work in the pre-school institution, and even the right to actively participate in the educational work. In the parents – pre-school teachers' relation the importance of sharing the responsibilities and powers is stressed as this is the basis for the partnership development. The partnership between parents and the pre-school institution should contribute to the commitment to the success of every child, promote the ethos of understanding and openness in relations between parents and pre-school institutions, and help parents develop a positive attitude towards participation in their child's education. Previous research showed collaboration between pre-school teachers and parents to be crucial for effective education.

Theoretical Background

Pre-School education in Slovenia

Formal Collaboration Framework

The system solutions that were enacted in the Republic of Slovenia 1996, were conceptually justified in the White Paper on Education of the Republic of Slovenia, 1995 (hereinafter: White Paper 1995) and later upgraded in the White Paper on Education 2011 (hereinafter White Paper 2011). With regard to cooperation between parents and kindergarten, according to the White Paper (1995), the state should provide for the possibility of choice at all levels, including at the level of choice of kindergartens and schools, and that parents should be provided with the possibility of “including their children in one of the programmes of pre-school education in public kindergartens” (ibid, p. 48 White Paper, 2011, p. 74). Parents also have the right to choose the programme in accordance with their and the child’s interests and needs” (White Paper, 1995; White Paper, 2011). It also highlights the need to raise the quality of work with parents by more appropriate and accessible information, greater diversity in the range of programmes, and enhancing direct cooperation between kindergarten and parents (ibid, p. 56).

The Kindergarten Act (2005) defines the rights of parents in Article 9, which states that parents have the right to choose /.../ pre-school programmes for their children in public or private kindergarten. For children who cannot be included in the nursery due to illness, it can also perform pre-school education at home /.../ “(ibid). Kindergarten should present parents with a special publication, which should “/.../ mention the running programmes, objectives, contents and methods of work” (Kindergarten Act 2005, Article 11). Rules on Kindergarten Publication (1996) state that the publication should also contain “/.../ the rights of parents and children and the ways of exercising the rights, the obligations of parents towards kindergarten, and the ways of integration and collaboration with parents” (ibid, Article 4). In compliance with the Rules it is necessary to present parents with the publication prior to enrolling their child in kindergarten (ibid, Article 5). The programme for pre-school children in public kindergarten is adopted by the Council of Experts for General Education and should comprise ways and forms of collaboration with parents (ibid. Article 12). Thus, parents are familiar with the collaboration mode prior to enrolment of their children in kindergarten.

Kindergarten Curriculum (1999), a national document, which constitutes the scientific basis for work in kindergartens, defines parental involvement as an important aspect of the quality early childhood education, as it contributes to appropriate complementarities of family and institutional upbringing (ibid. p. 24). The

division of responsibilities and different powers is important for cooperation between parents and kindergarten (ibid). Emphasis is also placed on the duty of the kindergarten to provide services to parents and not to interfere with their privacy; however, parents should also take into account the limits of their involvement, which should not interfere with the professionalism of the institutions (ibid). In the chapter *Working with Parents* (ibid. p. 24) it is stated, that parents can stay in the playroom for a shorter or longer time period and engage in various activities, in consultation with the pre-school teacher (ibid). Thus, the rights of parents and the boundaries of professionalism that are in the domain of professionals are clearly defined, which is also in line with the conceptual framework of the White Paper (1995, p. 26; White Paper, 2011, p. 75). In collaboration with parents, pre-school teachers should respect the private sphere of families, their culture, identity, language, worldview, values, beliefs, attitudes, habits and customs, their right to privacy and to personal data protection (Kindergarten Curriculum, 1999, p. 24). The mentioned principles are in compliance with the general theoretical principles of the White Paper (1995).

Among the objectives of the Kindergarten Curriculum the goal to improve information and collaboration with parents is stressed (Kindergarten Curriculum 1999, p. 10); accordingly, the principle of collaboration with parents was adopted, which defines obligatory public availability of written and oral information about the various programmes in kindergarten (Kindergarten Curriculum, 1999, p. 15). Parents also have the right to prompt exchange of information and to an in-depth interview about their child with pre-school teachers and their assistants; kindergarten should present parents with continuous and systematic information of their rights and responsibilities (ibid).

To conclude, the Kindergarten Curriculum (ibid.) conceptually builds on establishing a partnership between parents and kindergarten. The partnership between parents and the kindergarten is defined as a relationship in which professionals and parents are conventionally involved in setting the optimal conditions for the realization of educational goals. The partnership model of cooperation between parents and kindergarten also implies the involvement of parents in their child's achievement of educational goals.

Formal and Informal Collaboration with Parents

Formal Forms of Collaboration with Parents

It can be concluded, that at the forefront of the partnership model there are joint actions, in which parents, children and pre-school teachers work together to achieve a common goal (Bastiani 1993). This joint actions can be developed

through formal and informal forms of collaboration with parents. Among the formal forms of collaboration parent-teacher meetings, contact hours, Parents' Council and the Public Kindergarten Council can be mentioned, often also written messages, phone calls and e-mails. Meetings of the Parents' Council and of the Public Kindergarten Council fall under the obligations of the kindergarten management, while other forms of formal collaboration are in the domain of pre-school teachers.

Parent-teacher meetings are, according to Vaupotič (1998), the basic form of addressing common issues in education, usually used for the dissemination of information, which is of interest to all the participants. According to OECD (1997), this is the most frequent collective form of collaboration between pre-school teachers and parents in countries, such as Denmark, Germany and Spain. The first parent-teacher meeting is also the first and only option for the pre-school teacher to explain to parents the significance and importance of mutual collaboration and mutual expectations regarding the collaboration. The first parent-teacher meeting is also crucial for the development of further collaboration in the direction of the client or, more desired, the partnership cooperation. Lepičnik-Vodopivec (1996) highlights that often the problem of collaboration between parents and pre-school teachers is entering their communication with different needs, desires and goals. The study (*ibid*, p. 51–52) showed, that parents, in communication with pre-school teachers, expect mostly feelings of acceptance and understanding of their children, to be listened to and to be recognized as good parents. On the other hand, pre-school teachers expect acceptance by parents and their children, respect, companionship and partnership, in order to ensure the quality life at home and in kindergarten and they also expect feedback as regards collaboration. The needs that drive relationships between parents and pre-school teachers are, therefore, often different, which may cause dissatisfaction and discomfort. In our study, the expectations of parents and pre-school teachers as regards collaboration with parents will also be examined.

Office hours are the most widespread form of communication or collaboration between parents and pre-school teachers (Malić 1988). According to Intihar (2002) parents are especially interested in this form of collaboration, as the focus is on the conversation about their children. The aim of the office hours is in-depth information about the child as well as the exchange of information and professional advice on how to handle various issues. In his study Troha (1989) similarly notes that office hours will be at the forefront of parental interest. In his opinion, the office hours allow parents to fulfill their primary interest: to influence the pre-school institution for the benefit of their child. Prodanović (1981) also believes that parents learn about the general development of their child during the office

hours, and, how to act in specific circumstances in order to comply with the social criteria; further, parents get to know more about the extent to which they meet their child's needs, and learn about the child's particular achievements, etc. The pre-school teacher gets to know the parents more personally during the office hours, and also learns about their views and opinions about their child; further, the pre-school teacher learns about the child's development and family life (including about the other family members), and about the conditions in which the child is growing up; all the aforementioned can contribute to a better understanding of the child's kindergarten behaviour. In our opinion, well-planned and well-organized office hours are certainly one of the most important aspects of establishing a partnership between pre-school teachers and parents.

Written messages are an indirect individual form of communication between kindergarten and parents. Written messages are a form of official correspondence, sometimes also less formal, and closer to parents. The contents of the written messages are usually invitations, notices, official notices, letters, sometimes also parents' messages. A telephone conversation is a rarer form of formal collaboration and is usually used when the child is not feeling well (Intihar 2002). A telephone conversation is much used in the introduction period in kindergarten, whereby the pre-school teacher informs the parents of the wellbeing of their child. In the last few years the worldwideweb and electronic messages have quite frequently been used; this kind of communication currently still falls under the informal form of collaboration. A special form of collaboration is also the kindergarten's website through which the kindergarten informs the parents of the kindergarten events, of the latest developments, changes, the food menu, and of other news.

Parents' Council is defined in Article 66 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (2005). It consists of representatives of parents, who advocate their common interests. Each section (in kindergarten and in school) has one representative, elected by the parents at the first parent-teacher meeting. The tasks of the Parents' Council are as follows: to propose local programmes, to give consent to the Principal's proposal of the abovestandard services, to give the opinion on the proposal for the kindergarten's development, to give the opinion on the annual work plan, to give the opinion on the candidates, who fulfil the requirements for Principal, to discuss the Principal's reports on educational issues, to address the complaints of parents regarding the education process, to approve of the representatives in the Kindergarten Council, to perform other tasks in accordance with the law and other regulations.

Parents' representatives also participate in the Public Kindergarten Council, which is composed of the representatives of the founder, the representatives of the workers of the kindergarten, and of the representatives of the parents. When

the Organisation and Financing of Education Act was adopted for the first time in 1996, the Public Kindergarten Council was composed of three representatives of the founder, five representatives of the kindergarten workers, and three representatives of the parents; the Act was amended in 2006, harmonizing the representation of all the parties involved, providing for three representatives of each party; in 2009, the composition of the Kindergarten Council changed again to the original formula, i.e. three representatives of the founder, five employee representatives, and three representatives of the parents (Article 46). The members of the Council are appointed or elected to the four-year term of office; the mandate of the parents is related to the status of the child. The powers of the Public Kindergarten Council are as follows: to appoint and dismiss the kindergarten's Principal, to adopt the kindergarten development plan, to adopt the annual work plan, to adopt the reports of its realization, to decide on the introduction of the above standard and other programmes, to examine the reports on educational or training issues, to decide on the complaints in connection with the status of children, as the second-level authority to decide on appeals pertaining to the rights, obligations and responsibilities of workers in the employment relationship, to examine the issues submitted to the Council by Teaching Association, School Inspection, Trade Union, the employees, Parents' Council, community of children, and to perform other tasks determined by law and the Establishment Act.

Informal Forms of Collaboration with Parents

The most common form of informal communication between parents and pre-school teachers linked to younger children is communication at the time of the children's arrival in kindergarten and at the time of their departure from kindergarten (Fritzell Hanhan 2008, p. 112). Bahovec and Golobič (2004) also point out that the so-called »conversation at the doorstep« cannot be designed for the report, complaint or resolving conflicts. At the heart of such a conversation is the welcoming and the support for the child in the transition to kindergarten or home. Fritzell Hanhan (2008, p. 112) observes, that this kind of conversation, if it is carried out with respect and with sincere interest for the child, is very important, precisely because it does not take place in a formal environment, such as office hours, where the parents often have the feeling that their feedbacks are formally recorded. Of course, this form of informal communication is problematic, if it is too long, because the pre-school teacher cannot focus on the child and the parents at the same time.

Another very common form of communication is a telephone conversation, which is becoming increasingly relevant in kindergartens; it begins already with the introduction of the child (the exchange of phone numbers, calling parents by

the pre-school teacher in the case when their child misses the parents too much, the calls of worrying parents) and continues with daily communication about the child's from the kindergarten. Conversing with many pre-school teachers has also raised the issue of prevalent and inappropriate communication by phone, since some parents use the opportunity of the pre-school teacher's attention, for other, not pressing matters. Despite certain issues, Fritzell Hanhan (ibid) highlights that the phone call to the parents of each child over the course of the first month in the kindergarten is the key to parental knowledge, that the pre-school teacher is accessible and expresses genuine concern for their child and their opinion.

Communication with parents may also take place via the kindergarten website, which is a case of one-way communication. On the website, there is usually basic information about the kindergarten, in addition to the other information intended for parents. Often websites also contain photo galleries, to which parents have access only with a password (for reasons of the personal data protection). The web pages also publish e-mail addresses of pre-school teachers, so one-way communication changes in two-way communication via e-mail. Electronic mail can be used for regular communication with parents (you can write an e-mail at any time, not only during office hours) (ibid). Rogers and Wright (2012) point out that innovative technology, such as mobile phones, electronic mail and websites, present new tools for reaching and informing all parents. The traditional "live" communication is very effective, but requires (usually specific) time. Websites allow families 24/7 access to information, regardless of where they are. It is important to point out that electronic communication should not completely replace »live« communication, but it can complement or upgrade it.

Pre-school teachers in certain educational programmes, such as Head Start, also visit parents at home for various reasons. Most often, the reason for the visit of the child's home is to inspect the circumstances in which the child lives, so as to better understand the child's life. In addition to the above reasons, however, home visits in the beginning of the kindergarten year may be good for establishing two-way communication with parents. The pre-school teacher's visit can prove the parents, that the pre-school teacher is really interested in their child, and in forming a partnership relationship with them (Fritzel Hanhan 2008). Those visits are not common in Slovenia.

Pre-school teachers should plan informal forms of collaboration and they need to be aware, that they always represent the educational institution.

Pre-School education in Portugal

Formal Frameworks of Collaboration

Pre-school Education (PSE) in Portugal is targeted at children between the age of three and the moment they enter compulsory education, which is the 1st Cycle of Basic Education (Framework Act (Law n. 5/97, of February 10). Therefore, this is the first stage of basic education in individuals' lifelong learning process. In Portugal, there are state Pre-School Education institutions and private Pre-school Education institutions. Parents are free to choose where to enrol their children. Although the instructional component is free in Portugal, high monthly fees are paid in private institutions due to the non-instructional or social components that they offer. Most private institutions are run by religious orders. Pre-school education became universal for four-year-old children in the school year of 2016/2017 (Law n. 65/2015), when changes were made to a previous law which laid down the legal framework for compulsory education and thus established the universality of pre-school education from the year in which children completed five years old. At present, such universality is established for "all children from the year in which they complete four years of age."

According to the primary legislation (Law no. 85/2009), which has been maintained in this regard, universality implies a duty from the State to ensure the existence of a pre-school education network which allows the enrolment of all the children covered by law as well as their free attendance of the instructional component. There is no national compulsory syllabus for pre-school education, but there are Curricular Guidelines for Pre-school Education (CGPSE), which are grounded on the global pedagogical goals defined by the referred Framework Act (Law n. 5/97, of February 10) and are "meant to support the construction and management of the curriculum by each kindergarten's teacher in cooperation with the educational team of the institution/school centre" (Silva, Marques, Mata, & Rosa, 2016, p. 5). The first CGPSEs were published in 1997 and are still defined as "(...) a set of general and organised principles to be used by pre-school teachers to make decisions regarding their practice, i.e., to plan and assess the educational process developed with the children (...)" (Silva, 2001, p. 53 citado por Infante, 2008, p. 29).

Pre-school Education grasped a sense of support and social assistance to families throughout its history, which is why it can be defined as "(...) a set of services which are complementary and/or supplementary to the family educational action and in close articulation with the family" (Homem, 2002, p. 24). We can say that it was seen as a support and continuity of the education given by the family, with an additional goal of providing equal opportunities as regards access to school and

the additional duty to provide children with moments of well-being and safety (Bairrão & Vasconcelos, 1997). When the aim is to offer children the best service and the best conditions, their families' involvement becomes paramount. Therefore, some institutions structure their timetables so that they manage to provide a type of service that most suits the families' needs.

Family Participation

As far as pre-school education is concerned, it is the parents and guardians' duty to: a) Participate in the pre-school education institutions' boards through elected representatives or representative associations; b) Develop a relationship of cooperation with educators within a formative perspective; c) Give an opinion as regards the working hours of the pre-school education institution; d) Participate, on a voluntary basis and under the institution's pedagogical board's guidance, in entertainment and assistance activities. (Ibid.Art. 4)

Therefore, according to the law which regulates Pre-school Education in Portugal, parents' participation is crucial and one of its main goals is to "promote families' participation in the educational process and establish relationships of effective cooperation with the the community" (Silva, 1997, p. 15). Also, families should adopt an active role in this process, providing children with opportunities to learn and cooperate with others, since children also relate and interact directly with other families and other community services and institutions, and since such interactions have an influence on their education.

The recent Curricular Guidelines published in 2016 are clear in stating that the pre-school teachers' professional action is characterised by an educational intention, which implies a reflection on the goals, and aims at their pedagogical practices. In the 21st century, PSE is facing new challenges and the pre-school teacher should not only be an educator of children but also an educator of families, acting in both the children's and parents' educational process. The development of this process involves the participation of several stakeholders including the children, families/parents and professionals other than teachers, and it requires ways of communication and strategies which may promote such involvement and may facilitate the articulation between the child's several life contexts. The work done by pre-school teacher's in the kindergarten during the day cannot be destroyed by parents in the evening. Therefore, parents' participation and involvement in the kindergarten is more and more crucial.

In pre-school education, children develop and learn better in relational environments where caring and educating are intimately connected. There is an increasing demand for parents and pre-school teachers to work jointly and contribute to the improvement of the educational environments. both at home and in the

kindergarten. According to (Silva, et al. 2016): The relationships established by the child with adults and other children as well as the experiences provided by the social and physical contexts surrounding them all represent the learning opportunities which will contribute to their development. Thus, learning both influences and is influenced by the child's physical and psychological development process, especially at a life stage where such evolution is very quick. (Ibid. p. 8)

It is paramount that pre-school teachers collect the most information possible on their pupils' life context and act within the families and the community to provide a diversity of opportunities for them to get involved and take part in the daily activities of the educational institution. It is also of utmost importance that parents participate in meetings and classroom activities as well as in the relationships with community partners. Pre-school teachers should understand the child within his specific context in order to get the maximum possible information about him, and, consequently, to better support their own reflection and grounding when planning and assessing activities which should aim at the child's holistic development. It is the parents' right, but not their obligation, to participate in the kindergarten's activities and in the planning, implementation and assessment of educational opportunities in order to broaden interactions and enrich the educational process. Parents/families are mainly responsible for their children's education, which is why they also have the right to take part in the development of their pedagogical path, not only by being informed about what happens in the kindergarten, but also by being given the chance to contribute to the enrichment of the educational practice planning and assessment. (Ibid. p. 16)

Pre-school teachers are responsible for creating the necessary conditions for such participation to take place, by finding the most appropriate ways of communication and articulation. By informing the parents of their intentions and of their group curricular projects, teachers have the opportunity to involve families in the planning process, and also to hear their proposals. Also, sharing this plan enables them to find a set of possibilities for parents to take part in the kindergarten's educational process. Therefore, it is paramount that parents are given the opportunity to participate in the planning and assessment of children's activities. The evaluation report should be drawn bearing in mind that families will be the recipients of such documents.

In Portugal, the organisation of a pre-school education institution always implies an institution/school centre educational project, an institution/school centre curricular project, and a children's group curricular project. Parents should participate in the drafting of all these projects by contributing their ideas. Within these institutions, there are always different types of relationship between different stakeholders, following a systemic and ecologic perspective. The human development ecologic

theory and Bronfenbrenner's ecologic model are the ones which best "(...) adapt to a new kindergarten philosophy (...)" (Magalhães, 2007, p. 23). This approach is anchored in the assumption that human development represents a dynamic process of "connection to the environment, in which individuals are influenced by, but also influence their surrounding environment" (Silva, et. al. 2016, p. 21). However, parents' participation in the construction of the kindergarten's educational project and of the teacher's pedagogical project for the children's class constitutes a reality, which is not always experienced in Portuguese kindergartens. Such participation is foreseen by the CGPSE: "(...) parents and other community members can also participate in the teacher's educational project (...)" (ME, 1997, p. 44), and this communication should happen through informal contacts and meetings, where parents can be asked to come up with their proposals.

Formal and Informal Collaboration with Parents

Contact between the home, the kindergarten, the community, etc., is fundamental in enabling direct interaction between the various stakeholders including the child, the teacher, the parents/family in the development of interpersonal relations. The result is more complete education of the child and a better relationship between the kindergarten and the parents, since they all know each other better, which improves the quality of the child's education, as well as of the family and the pre-school environment. Obviously, both the kindergarten and the parents/family are different social contexts, contributing to the child's education, which demands a good social relationship and good communication, "The relationships with parents/families may take various shapes and levels, in which we can distinguish the relationship established with each family from the organisational relationship, which involves parents/families collectively" (Silva et. al., p. 28). Such relationship is based on informal contacts (oral or written) or on planned moments, such as meetings with each family. These are indispensable moments for parents to acknowledge their needs and educational expectations, as well as for the pre-school teachers, who should listen to the parents' opinions and suggestions, encourage their participation and also set the ways of participation which best match their availability. According to Silva (2016), the planning of diversified strategies will enable the participation of all stakeholders. Some parents may be able to come to the kindergarten to tell a story, talk about their job or participate in school trips, etc. For those parents who cannot come to the classroom, other ways will be found to obtain their contribution to what is being implemented, thus ensuring that all children see their parents/relatives' contributions represented. (ibid. p. 29)

It often depends on the pre-school teacher to enable a good participation of the parents in pre-school education. By scheduling parents' meetings, they promote

collective participation since they can share their educational intentions as well as the process they will develop with the group during that school year, and, also involve families into participating in the several activities to be held throughout the year. This collective involvement facilitates parents' participation and understanding of the pedagogical work development. Besides this, it is also a formative moment for parents since "as the primary and main responsible for their children's education, parents have the right to know, choose and contribute to the educational response they expect for their children" (Ibid.). This gives rise to the need for parents' associations to be formed and to take part in the implementation of the various projects, as a global way of organisation of the educational institution aiming to provide a better response to the children's education, the parents' needs and the community's specificities. However, the existence of parents or parents' representatives' associations is not common in Portugal. Nonetheless, it is the right that they are entitled to. Such associations result in mutual cooperation between families in order to help each other in their children's several educational situations, thus enabling new relationships to flourish. Parents should feel comfortable to participate in their children's classroom and in the institution's dynamics. The pre-school teacher should apply the best strategies to promote parents' cooperation in situations that are diversified enough for all the parents to be given the opportunity to participate.

Parents' Role in the Development of Several Content Areas

In the Portuguese CGPSE, there are three areas of content which should be covered in pre-school education and which are subdivided into domains and subdomains: Personal and Social Development Area; World Knowledge and Understanding Area, and Communication Area, subdivided into Physical Development domain; Creative and Aesthetic Development domain, subdivided into the visual arts, drama, music and dance subdomains; and Mathematical Awareness domain. In all these areas, domains and subdomains, parents may and should play a very important role in the development of several activities. The content areas should be articulated since knowledge is built in an integrated way, through connections between ideas and contents "(...) within the curricular dynamics, they must be represented in an interconnected, integrated, transversal and contextualised way (in the institution and in the surrounding environment or community), highlighting children's natural curiosity as well as their critical thinking and learning to learn skills (...)" (Marchão, 2012, p. 37).

As far as the personal and social development area is concerned, educating for values is paramount and demands parents' involvement. Bearing in mind that the child is a subject as well as an agent within the educational process, their identity

builds up from respecting others and from knowing what is right and wrong, what they can and cannot do, the rights and duties they have for themselves and towards others, etc. The importance of the parents' role can be seen in the way the child performs in role-plays depicting situations of their family culture, when acknowledging their belonging to various social groups. The pre-school teacher promotes such learning when showing respect for the child's culture of belonging to a community, when facilitating interactions with people and resources as well as with the surrounding context, when involving families in the child's independence and autonomy building, namely, as far as safety and healthcare are concerned. With respect to the remaining areas, domains and sub domains, both parents and pre-school teachers play a crucial role in the way they jointly work in the implementation of pedagogical activities which are distinctive and enhance significant and innovative learning aimed at children's development and learning.

In Portugal, the display of pre-school teachers' office hours in a place that is visible to parents, such as the institution's entrance for example, is compulsory. Teachers should always have some weekly available time to communicate with parents whenever they feel the need to. The general trend is for parents to communicate with pre-school teachers when they drop off their children in the morning or when they pick them up in the afternoon. Another way of communication is through the pupil's register and mark book, where any relevant information can be written both by parents to teachers and vice versa.

Families play several roles in their childrens' lives: they have cultural, social and biological functions, which enrich the child's development. For Magalhães (2007, p. 44), the family represents a "(...) context which provides primary care and affection and promotes a variety of opportunities (...)". The same author quotes James Gabarino (1992), who claims that "(...) a child inappropriately cared for or loved, or a child who grows up within a dysfunctional family may show developmental issues (...)". We can say that families serve purposes which include procreation, feeding, protection and education. This claim is supported by Magalhães (2007, p. 50) when stating that "(...) the remaining family functions are those of reproduction, financial support, socialisation/education, emotional support, childhood support and the performance of social roles (...)". As far as the educational role is concerned, we can say that it is within the family environment that children acquire some concepts and attitudes which will be reflected in the future, since as it was mentioned before "(...) the family constitutes the individual's first educational instance (...)". (Homem, 2002, p. 36).

In the light of this, we can say that although schools/kindergartens complement the educational process, education first arises within the family. Therefore, "(...) as the primary educators of their children, parents are responsible for their

survival as well as for providing an environment that promotes children's cognitive and emotional development (...)" (Berger, 2001, p. 37 cited by Magalhães, 2007, p. 19). Each family corresponds to a system which is part of other wider systems such as the community, the society and the country. This idea is in accordance with Bronfenbrenner's perspective since according to this author, "(...) the individual grows up and adapts through interchanges with their immediate ecosystem (the family) and more distant environments (such as higher education)". Considering this perspective, the family may be contextualised as "(...) an ecosystem which under normal circumstances, will remain in a state of dynamic balance, characterised by the appropriate balance between its resources and the stress levels (...)" (Silva & Ferreira, 2009, p. 107).

Currently, children spend a long time in the kindergarten, often due to the demands of their parents' working conditions. This long stay in the kindergarten's educational environment should be accompanied by a closer relationship between the institution and the parents/family in order to reinforce children's education. Magalhães (2007, p. 123) supports the idea that families' participation is the "(...) complement to a process which starts at the kindergarten (...)" thus requiring the existence of "(...) teaching stability and continuity of the pedagogical relationship with children and families (which currently still constitutes a pedagogical problem to be solved) [and] the integration of the school/kindergarten into a different organisational unit which may allow the interchange of knowledge, the sharing of experiences and teamwork (which happens in many cases) (...)" Magalhães (2007, p. 98). Families' involvement in kindergartens' activities is increasingly seen as an indicator of educational quality. This means that pre-school teachers are aware of the importance of the relationship between the institution and families, which suggests better quality as far as the pedagogical practice implementation is concerned.

In the light of this, a distinction can be made between three types of teaching modalities (Magalhães, 2007): The tutorial modality: This kind of modality is directly connected to the transfer of knowledge, a role assigned to the pre-school teacher. This modality is not based on parents' participation, i.e. there is no parents' involvement with the institution whatsoever. Their only functions consist of enrolling the child in the kindergarten and acknowledging the institution's role in their child's life.

The collaborative modality: the main goal of this modality is to enrich the curriculum through parents/families' active participatory role. Here, the institution is in charge of training and guiding parents in the different ways of their participation. This modality assumes several levels of parents' involvement and participation in the kindergarten's activities. It implies a relevant participation,

however restricted to the institution's goals and to certain moments of the school year such as the child's adaptation period (at the beginning of the school year), the implementation of some activities within the classroom environment, school trips and parties. Nowadays, this is the modality most commonly used by pre-school teachers – "(...) we believe that most pre-school teachers' interventions fall into this collaborative modality (...)" (Magalhães, 2007, p. 124).

The co-participatory modality: this modality requires a stronger involvement of parents and teachers. It is essentially based on the existing communication between parents and the institution as well as on the support and help provided by parents to the teachers as far as the work to be developed in the kindergarten is concerned (Fontão, 1998 referred by Magalhães, 2007).

Parents/families play a crucial role in the lives of pre-school children, providing them with a wide set of values, principles and rules, transmitting them ethical and moral values, such as politeness and preparing them to become responsible individuals in the future. Therefore, the family is considered as the primary educational space. Simultaneously, pre-school teachers should assume an active and strong role throughout the entire educational process. Consequently, they should plan activities for and with the children which provide new learning and they should create the opportunities for the interaction with parents and families in order to promote the involvement of all the stakeholders intervening in children's education.

Research

Purpose of the study and problem definition

In the paper the authors compare the views of Slovenian and Portuguese pre-school teachers on the importance of collaboration with parents. They focused on some personal views of pre-school teachers on different ways of collaboration with parents; on parental influence on the life and work of the pre-school institution, and on their competencies as regards collaboration with parents. Professional and scientific literature (Maleš 1991; Resman 1992a; Rockwell 1995; Vidmar 2001; Patrikakou, Weissberg, Redding in Walberg 2005; Smit, Sluiter, Driessen in Slegersu 2007; Bakker in Denessen 2007; Lim 2008; Šteh 2008; Cankar et al. 2009; Kalin 2009; Downer and Myers 2010; Laroque et. al 2011) uses different scientific terms for collaboration between the pre-school institution and parents, but they all incorporate parental involvement in the pre-school institution and/or at home. The objectives and strategies of collaboration depend on how collaboration is defined at the pre-school institution level. Previous research showed

that collaboration with parents is crucial for effective education, as well as for the sustainable development of effective education. The quality of interpersonal relations is an important element of effective education, as we are increasingly faced with cultural diversity, with individuals of different language backgrounds and different religious affiliations. Today, it is necessary to take into account the interpersonal differences and different social contexts, which on the one hand enable the flow of knowledge and experience, and on the other hand, require better communication and social skills. The partnership between the pre-school institution and parents should encourage a shared commitment to the success of the individual child, formed in an ethos of understanding and openness in the relations between the pre-school institution and parents. In this paper, the reasons for the collaboration between pre-school teachers and parents are discussed, and it is shown that participation has a positive impact on the child, as well as on pre-school teachers and parents. The authors also show how the pre-school institution should plan high-quality collaboration with culturally diverse parents and pinpoint the elements of high-quality collaboration.

Methodology

Research questions

In accordance with the research problem, five research questions were formulated as follows:

- R1: What are the pre-school teachers' views on parental awareness of the forms of collaboration with the pre-school institution?
- R2: What are the pre-school teachers' views on parental influence on the life and work in pre-school institutions?
- R3: What are the pre-school teachers' views on consulting the parents about the decisions, which influence the children's well-being and their success in achieving the curricular goals?
- R4: What are the pre-school teachers' views on including parents in the quality assessment?
- R5: What are the pre-school teachers' views on their competencies as regards collaboration with parents?

Description of used measurement instruments

In the empirical research, based on the quantitative pedagogical research, the descriptive method and the causal-empirical methods were used. In the research,

more than 100 pre-school teachers from the Ljubljana region in Slovenia and the pre-school teachers from Bragança, Portugal participated. The questionnaire used was of partly closed and partly open type, and it was distributed from May to the first half of June 2017. The research was completed in August 2017. The data were processed by the statistical software packages SPSS-X PC and EXCEL.

Sample description

The study conducted included 240 pre-school teachers in Slovenia and in 146 pre-school teachers in Portugal.

Table 1: Gender

Gender	Frequency		Percentage	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
Male	7	4	3%	3%
Female	233	142	97%	97%
Together	240	146	100%	100%

Among the pre-school teachers in Slovenia and in Portugal, there were only 3% male pre-school teachers, which is consistent with the statistical data. In the school year 2015 in Slovenia, there was only 1.55% (65) male pre-school teachers employed in the first age group and 76% (185) in the second age group.

Table 2: Education

Education	Frequency		Percentage	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
Highschool	86	3	36%	2%
High professional education	113	96	47%	67%
University degree	40	45	17%	31%
Together	239	144	100%	100%

The majority of the pre-school teachers included in the study had finished high professional education (47% in Slovenia, 67% in Portugal). There is a difference in the education required to become a pre-school teacher between Slovenia and Portugal. In Slovenia, pre-school teachers should complete higher education according to the educational or study programme for pre-school education or higher education of the appropriate orientation, and a study programme for care and

education designed for pre-school education. Pre-school teachers in Portugal, on the other hand, are required to obtain a specific professional qualification, which is acquired by attending a higher education course leading to a licenciatura degree obtained at colleges of higher education and universities.

Table 3: *Kindergarten Environment*

Environment	Frequency		Percentage	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
Urban	142	119	60%	85%
Suburban	95	21	40%	15%
Together	237	140	100%	100%

The majority of kindergartens were located in the urban areas (60% in Slovenia, 85% in Portugal).

Table 4: *Kindergarten Type*

Answers	Frequency		Percentage	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
Public	227	62	97%	44%
Private	7	80	3%	56%
Together	234	142	100%	100%

The majority of kindergartens in Slovenia were public kindergartens (97%), whereas the majority of kindergartens in Portugal were private institutions (56%).

Results and Discussion

Pre-school teachers' views on parental awareness of forms of collaboration with parents

First, we were interested in the pre-school teachers' views on parental awareness of the forms of collaboration with parents. The first research question was "What are the pre-school teachers' views on parental awareness of the forms of collaboration with the pre-school institution?"(R1).

Table 5: Pre-School Teachers' Views on Forms of Collaboration with Parents

Subq.	NEVER		RARELY		OFTEN		ALWAYS		Sum		Average		Std. dev.	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
1.	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	5 (3%)	44 (18%)	48 (31%)	206 (82%)	103 (66%)	250 (100%)	157 (100%)	3.8	3.6	0.4	0.6
2.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	11 (4%)	6 (4%)	53 (21%)	42 (27%)	185 (74%)	105 (69%)	249 (100%)	153 (100%)	3.7	3.6	0.5	0.6
3.	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (0%)	4 (3%)	8 (3%)	18 (12%)	240 (96%)	128 (85%)	249 (100%)	150 (100%)	4.0	3.8	0.2	0.4
4.	3 (1%)	2 (1%)	13 (5%)	10 (7%)	63 (26%)	44 (30%)	163 (67%)	92 (62%)	242 (100%)	148 (100%)	3.6	3.5	0.7	0.7
5.	1 (0%)	6 (4%)	14 (6%)	37 (25%)	66 (27%)	50 (34%)	166 (67%)	54 (37%)	247 (100%)	147 (100%)	3.6	3.0	0.6	0.9

Legend:

1. Kindergarten informs the parents of everything they need to know about their child's well-being in the kindergarten.
2. Kindergarten informs the parents of the rules and regulations that they should know to be able to exercise their rights or the child's rights.
3. Kindergarten informs the parents of all contacts, meetings, office hours, parent-teacher meetings.
4. Kindergarten informs the parents of what to do if they want to provide information about their child.
5. Kindergarten presents various other forms of collaboration to the parents, such as a school for parents, kindergarten open days ...

The majority of the pre-school teachers in Slovenia (96%) and in Portugal (85%) believe that the kindergarten always informs parents about all contacts, meetings, office hours and parent-teacher meetings (Subquestion 3); the majority of them also believe, that the kindergarten always (SLO 74%, PT 69%) informs parents of the rules and regulations that they should know to be able to exercise their rights or the child's rights (Subquestion 2). A good half of Slovene and Portuguese pre-school teachers believe that the kindergarten always (SLO 67%, PT 62%) or often (SLO 26%, PT 30%) informs the parents of what to do if they want to provide information about their child (Subquestion 4). Some differences in the pre-school teachers' opinions were noticed in the answers to the Subquestion 1, in which the majority (82%) of the Slovene pre-school teachers believe, that the kindergarten always informs the parents of everything they need to know about their child's well-being in kindergarten, but only 66% of the Portuguese pre-school teachers

believe the same. There is even greater difference in the answers to the subquestion 5, in which 67% of the Slovene pre-school teachers believe, that the kindergarten always presents various other forms of collaboration to the parents, such as a school for parents, kindergarten open days, but only a good third of the Portuguese pre-school teachers (37%) believe the same. The differences are probably due to different ways of informal collaboration with parents in Portugal, where the organisation of a pre-school education institution always implies an institution/school centre educational project, an institution/school centre curricular project and a children's group curricular project. Parents should participate in the drafting of all these projects by contributing their ideas, and such participation should be exercised through informal contacts and meetings, where parents can be asked to come up with their proposals. In Portugal, it is the parents and guardians' duty to participate, on a voluntary basis and under the institution's pedagogical board's guidance, in entertainment and assistance activities. (Framework Act – Law n. 5/97, of February 10 Art. 4).

Table 6: Information for Parents

Subquestion	YES		NO		Sum		Average		Std. dev.	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
Information for parents are up-to-date.	243 (98%)	137 (89%)	4 (2%)	17 (11%)	247 (100%)	154 (100%)	1.0	1.1	0.1	0.3
Information for parents are clearly written/orrally presented, and easy to understand.	246 (100%)	138 (93%)	0 (0%)	11 (7%)	246 (100%)	149 (100%)	1.0	1.1	0.0	0.3

The results (Table 6) also showed, that the Slovene as well as the Portuguese pre-school teachers believe the informaton for parents to be up-to-date (SLO 98%, PT 89%), clearly written/orrally presented, and easy to understand (SLO 100%, PT 93%) as it is the goal of the Slovene Kindergarten Curriculum and of the Portuguese Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-School Teachers and Parents to work jointly and contribute to the improvement of the educational environments, both at home and in kindergarten.

Parental influence on the life and work in pre-school institutions

The second research question was "What are the pre-school teachers' views on parental influence on the life and work in pre-school institutions?".

Table 7: Parental Influence on the Life and Work of Kindergarten

Sub-questions	NEVER		RARELY		OFTEN		ALWAYS		Sum		Average		Std. dev.	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
1.	1 (0%)	1 (1%)	58 (24%)	17 (11%)	122 (51%)	68 (46%)	56 (24%)	63 (42%)	237 (100%)	149 (100%)	3.0	3.3	0.7	0,7
2.	3 (1%)	8 (6%)	38 (16%)	42 (29%)	126 (53%)	59 (41%)	71 (30%)	36 (25%)	238 (100%)	145 (100%)	3.1	2.8	0.7	0,9
3.	4 (2%)	5 (3%)	14 (6%)	17 (12%)	43 (18%)	35 (41%)	180 (75%)	88 (61%)	241 (100%)	145 (100%)	3.7	3.4	0.7	0,8
4.	6 (3%)	6 (4%)	15 (6%)	13 (9%)	68 (29%)	49 (35%)	147 (62%)	73 (52%)	236 (100%)	141 (100%)	3.5	3.3	0.7	0,8
5.	0 (0%)	12 (8%)	5 (2%)	24 (17%)	52 (22%)	42 (29%)	182 (76%)	65 (45%)	239 (100%)	143 (100%)	3.7	3.1	0.5	1,0
6.	0 (0%)	25 (17%)	10 (4%)	29 (20%)	74 (31%)	50 (35%)	154 (65%)	40 (28%)	238 (100%)	144 (100%)	3.6	2.7	0.6	1,1
7.	1 (0%)	28 (20%)	13 (5%)	23 (16%)	40 (17%)	48 (34%)	188 (78%)	43 (30%)	242 (100%)	142 (100%)	3.7	2.7	0.6	1,1

Legend:

1. Kindergarten management consults the parents on all the decisions that affect the well-being of their child and his success in various occupations.
2. Kindergarten management takes into account the parents' proposals in the preparation of the programme for the current year.
3. When the kindergarten plans the activities, which require additional payment, the parents are asked for their advice and consent.
4. In paying contributions, the kindergarten takes into account the financial status of the parents.
5. Parents can effectively make their comments and come up with the proposals about the work of the kindergarten through their representative in the Parents' Council, and those recommendations are considered and decided on.
6. The parents' representatives effectively address the comments and recommendations concerning the work of the kindergarten within the Kindergarten Council.
7. Parents are informed and aware of the the conclusions of the Parents' Council.

The research showed, that in the opinion of the majority of the Slovene pre-school teachers parents are always (7) informed and aware of the conclusions of the Parents' Council (78%); (5) parents can always effectively make their comments and come up with the proposals about the work of the kindergarten through their representative in the Parents' Council and those recommendations are considered and decided on (76%); (3) when planning activities, which require

additional payment, the parents are asked for their advice and consent (75%); (6) the parents’ representatives always effectively address the comments and recommendations concerning the work of the kindergarten within the Kindergarten Council (65%), and (4) in paying contributions, the kindergarten always takes into account the financial status of the parents (62%). The subquestions 3,4 and 5 were similarly answered by the Portuguese pre-school teachers, however, there is a difference in the opinion regarding the work of the Parents’ Council. Only a good third of the Portuguese pre-school teachers (35%) believe, that the representatives of the parents often effectively address the comments and proposals concerning the work of the kindergarten within the Kindergarten Council, as well as, that parents are often informed and aware of the conclusions of the Parents’ Council (34%). In our opinion, the explanation is accounted for by the legal framework providing for the collaboration between kindergarten and parents, and as already mentioned in the theoretical part, the existence of parents or parents’ representatives’ associations is not common in Portugal.

The third research question was “*What are the pre-school teachers’ views on consulting the parents about the decisions, which influence the children’s well-being and their success in achieving the curricular goals?*”(R3).

Table 8: *Planning Kindergarten Work*

Subq.	Yes		No		Sum		Average		Std. dev	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
1.	230 (96%)	142 (97%)	10 (4%)	5 (3%)	240 (100%)	147 (100%)	1.0	1.0	0.2	0.2
2.	204 (86%)	106 (73%)	34 (14%)	39 (27%)	238 (100%)	145 (100%)	1.1	1.3	0.4	0.4
3.	193 (83%)	130 (91%)	40 (17%)	13 (9%)	233 (100%)	143 (100%)	1.2	1.1	0.4	0.3

Legend:

1. Do parents have the opportunity to get acquainted with the kindergarten annual work plan?
2. Do parents have the possibility to (co)influence the drafting of the kindergarten annual work plan with their proposals?
3. Are parents aware of the kindergarten’s long-term development plans?

The majority of the Slovene and Portuguese pre-school teachers answered, that the parents have the opportunity to get acquainted with the kindergarten annual work plan (SLO 96%, PT 97%); that the parents have the possibility to (co)

influence the drafting of the kindergarten annual work plan with their proposals (SLO 86%, PT 73%), and that the parents are aware of the kindergarten's long-term development plans (SLO 83%, PT 91%). The results are in accordance with parents' right to take part in the development of their child's pedagogical path, not only by being informed about what is going on in the kindergarten, but also by being given the chance to contribute to the enrichment of the educational practice planning and assessment. In Slovenia, the parents's representative gets acquainted with annual work plan through the Parents' Council, which gives the opinion on the proposal of the kindergarten's development programme and on the annual work plan.

Kindergarten quality assurance

The fourth research question was “*What are the pre-school teachers' views on including parents in the quality assessment?*” (R4).

Table 9: Including Parents in the Quality Assessment

Subq.	NEVER		RARELY		OFTEN		ALWAYS		Sum		Average		Std. dev.	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
1.	2 (1%)	9 (6%)	70 (30%)	56 (38%)	147 (62%)	62 (42%)	18 (8%)	22 (15%)	237 (100%)	149 (100%)	2.8	2.7	0.6	0.8
2.	0 (0%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%)	5 (3%)	33 (14%)	26 (18%)	206 (86%)	113 (78%)	239 (100%)	145 (100%)	3.9	3.7	0.3	0.6
3.	2 (1%)	7 (5%)	38 (16%)	37 (26%)	103 (43%)	56 (39%)	96 (40%)	45 (31%)	239 (100%)	145 (100%)	3.2	3.0	0.7	0.9

Legend:

1. How often does kindergarten ask the parents about the quality of its services (eg. Through a questionnaire, a round table discussion)?
2. Pre-school teachers are available when parents want to learn about or discuss the child's habits and problems (phone, other)?
3. How often does the kindergarten ask parents about the appropriateness of its working time?

Parents play an important role in kindergarten quality assurance. The research showed, that the majority of the Slovene (86%) and of the Portuguese (78%) pre-school teachers believe, that the pre-school teachers are always available when parents want to learn about or discuss the child's habits and problems (phone, other), but only a good half of the Slovene pre-school teachers (62%) and 42% of the Portuguese pre-school teacher believe, that parents are often asked about the quality

of kindergarten services (In Slovenia they can use a questionnaire drafted in advance). A slight difference was also shown in the answer to the question *How often does the kindergarten ask the parents about the appropriateness of its working time?* A quarter of the Portuguese pre-school teachers (26%) answered that they are rarely asked. It is important to include parents in all elements of the quality assurance, because they are an integral part of quality pre-school education. The partnership between parents and pre-school teachers should encourage a shared commitment to the success of the individual child, formed in an ethos of understanding and openness in the relations between the pre-school institution and parents.

Table 10: Satisfaction with Parental Collaboration

Number		Average		Std. dev.		Min		Max	
SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
251	133	7.7	7.4	1.71	1.96	1	3	10	10

On the scale from 1–10, the Slovene and the Portuguese pre-school teachers responded that they were satisfied with parental collaboration.

Competencies for working with parents

The last research question was “*What are the pre-school teachers’ views on their competencies as regards collaboration with parents?*”(R5)

Table 11: Satisfaction with Competencies as regards Collaboration with Parents

Number of units		Average		Std. dev.		Min		Max	
SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
251	158	8.2	8.0	1.32	1.68	3	3	10	10

The majority of the Slovene and the Portuguese pre-school teachers also answered, that they were satisfied with their competencies as regards working with parents. However, previous research (Berčnik, 2014) showed that parents and pre-school teachers have different expectations regarding collaboration, which means that we would have to question pre-school teachers in more detail, which competencies they think they have and which they lack. Mostly, the problem is addressing or establishing cooperative communication with the so-called “difficult parents”.

Table 12: Professional Development

Subq.	Yes		No		Sum		Average		Std. dev.	
	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT	SLO	PT
1.	72 (31%)	69 (48%)	163 (69%)	76 (52%)	235 (100%)	145 (100%)	1.7	1.5	0.5	0.5
2.	230 (98%)	133 (94%)	5 (2%)	8 (6%)	235 (100%)	141 (100%)	1.0	1.1	0.1	0.2
3.	205 (87%)	131 (92%)	30 (13%)	11 (8%)	235 (100%)	142 (100%)	1.1	1.1	0.3	0.3
4.	24 (75%)	10 (59%)	8 (25%)	7 (41%)	32 (100%)	17 (100%)	1.3	1.4	0.4	0.5

Legend:

1. In the scope of the studies, we gained sufficient knowledge of the collaboration with parents.
2. Knowledge of the collaboration with parents is an important part of the pre-school teacher's professional development.
3. I would like to broaden my education in the field of collaboration with parents.
4. Please, justify your answer.

The majority of the pre-school teachers believe, that knowledge of the collaboration with parents is an important part of the pre-school teachers' professional development (SLO 98%, PT 94%), but only a good two thirds of the Slovene pre-school teachers (69%) and a little more than a half of the Portuguese pre-school teachers (52%) answered, that they had not acquired enough knowledge of the collaboration with parents in the scope of their studies. The majority of them would also like to broaden their education in the field of collaboration with parents (SLO 87%, PT 92%). The pre-school teachers stated that collaboration with parents was an important part of pre-school education and that it was important to gain new knowledge and professional insights into the topic. Henderson and Berla (1994) report the summary key findings of the studies: 1) Family contributes significantly to the child's achievements from early childhood to secondary school; all efforts to enhance the child's success are more effective if they include his/her parents; 2) When parents are involved not only at home but also in school, their child's school achievements are better; 3) When parents are involved, the school that their child attends is better (parental involvement also affects the functioning of schools); 4) Child excels at school when his/her parents take on one of the four key roles: co-teacher, assistant, consultant or representative of the school management; 5) The more the model of collaboration between parents and schools resembles that of the partnership, the higher the child's academic achievement; 6) Parents, the

school and the community contribute to the child's achievement, with the results being optimal when all three actors work together (*ibid.*, p. 14–16).

Conclusion

Kindergartens should help parents adopt a positive and active role in complementing and supporting the life and work of kindergartens in educating their children. According to the research results, the majority of the Slovene and the Portuguese pre-school teachers believe that parents are aware of different forms of collaboration with parents since the kindergarten always or often informs them about the rules and regulations and about what to do if they want to provide the information about their child. There is a difference in the opinions of the Slovene and the Portuguese pre-school teachers about enabling parents to collaborate via various other forms of cooperation, such as a school for parents, kindergarten open days, but we believe that this difference is due to different ways of parental collaboration in Slovenia and Portugal. The majority of the Slovene and Portuguese pre-school teachers also believe that information for parents are up-to-date, clearly written and easy to understand as it is the goal of the Slovene Kindergarten Curriculum and of the Portuguese Curriculum Guidelines for Pre-school Teachers and Parents to work jointly and contribute to the improvement of the educational environments both at home and in kindergarten. In the opinion of pre-school teachers, parents influence the life and work of kindergarten but, as parents' representatives' associations are not common in Portugal, only a third of the Portuguese pre-school teachers believe, that the parents can effectively address the comments and recommendations concerning the work of the kindergarten within the Kindergarten Council. The majority of the Slovene and the Portuguese pre-school teachers also believe that the parents have the opportunity to be acquainted with the kindergarten annual work plan, that the parents can influence the annual work plan and they are aware of the kindergarten's long-term development plans. These results are in accordance with the parents' right to take part in the development of their child's pedagogical path, not only by being informed about what is going on in the kindergarten, but also by being given the chance to contribute to the enrichment of the educational practice planning and assessment. In the pre-school teachers' opinions, parents also adopt an important role in the kindergarten quality assurance as they are often asked about the quality of kindergarten services. In general, the Slovene and Portuguese pre-school teachers are satisfied with parental collaboration and with their competencies as regards working with parents, however the majority of them would like to broaden their education in the field of the collaboration with parents as they realize, that

knowledge of the collaboration with parents is an important part of pre-school teachers' professional development. In establishing collaboration, it is important to define parental purposes and desires, to explore forms of the collaboration with parents that are already in place in the educational institutions, to evaluate them on a regular basis, to update and change them, with the assistance of everyone involved: children, professionals and parents.

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