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Cha(lle)nging Childhoods:
Reimagine Childhood in Uncertainty and Inequality

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ABSTRACT BOOK

Edited by
Mehmet Toran & Mine Göl-Güven

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Cha(lle)nging Childhoods: Reimagine Childhood in Uncertainty and Inequality

Abstract Book

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Preface

Cha(lle)nging Childhoods: Reimagine Childhood in Uncertainty and Inequality

It is time to celebrate finalizing a successful conference "Conference of Childhood, Education & Society (ConferenceCES)" themed "Challenging and Changing Childhoods: Reimagine Childhood in Uncertainty and Inequality." The childhood researchers from 31 countries attended the conference presenting 90 researches. We all shared an environment of scholarly enthusiasm in which vibrant scientific discussions have been flourished. Together we felt empowered to advance the study of child development, education, and well-being.

The conference strands, politics of childhood, early childhood teachers' professional development, technology use in early childhood education, development, learning, play, and curricula in childhood, science and mathematics in early childhood education, community services for children and their families, sustainable development in early childhood education, inclusiveness and democracy in childhood, diversity in early childhood, children's resilience and empowerment, children's rights, reconceptualization of childhoods for equal societies, have been addressed by the research studies with promising findings. We ensured together that a promise to contribute to the field of childhood studies will be kept by monitoring the results of upcoming policies to make children's development, learning, and wellbeing especially for the ones who need the most and urgent support.

On behalf of the organizing committee of the ConferenceCES, we would like to give our sincere appreciation to all participating researchers for their insights and for their endless effort to expand their expertise and wisdom. We have a heartfelt wish to come together in the next ConferenceCES to expand our community of Journal of Childhood, Education & Society.

Sincerely,

Dr Mehmet Toran & Dr Mine Göl-Güven (Co-Chairs)

On behalf of the ConferenceCES Organizing Committee

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Re-biologizing 'children's lives': Towards a new politics of childhood during the Anthropocene

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Abstract

Children's lives are situated in the material residues of geopolitics - economic growth, technological and pharmaceutical developments, and war. These residues, such as waste, anti-biotics, processed food, sugar, microplastics, radiation are constitutive processes and entities of the common worlds and their political life we share. These very residues cross through children's bodies. 'Children's lives' or 'life' is a central concept of childhood studies and early childhood education. However, the concept is mostly used in its symbolic meaning without any empirical reference to biological life. Within the environmental destruction of the Anthropocene, there is therefore a need first, to reintegrate the biological into the study of childhood, and second, to reorientate politics. In this talk, I think with philosopher Catherine Malabou to reorientate politics of childhood to life with a hope vested in the return to life, resistance of life and plasticity.

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Changing early childhood in polycrisis times: Insights from Africa

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Abstract

Globally, early childhood care and education (ECCE) is at the crossroads of a polycrisis. The latter has resulted in multiple shocks and stresses in an already vulnerable sector competing for investment and high recognition as public service. Drastic climate change, wars, poverty, pandemics, and debt burdens in the majority world are some of the major challenges calling for the re-envisioning of ECCE in current times. Africa presents an ideal case for such an exploration. The World Economic Forum (2020:2) refers to Africa as the "children's continent" and it is projected that "By 2050 two in every five children will be born in Africa". The needs of a growing child population, among other things, make it imperative to foreground ECCE as a complex and multi-faceted force field. This presentation engages with three themes that lay bare the issues for change. Specifically, the themes of child development, community support, and advocacy are presented as leverage points. The thematic explorations show volatilities and promising practices from the local context. The presentation ends with a call for building and strengthening networks of solidarity at multiple levels for new possibilities and meaningful change for young children and their families.

A new 'sum total'? Reconceptualising the right to education for liminal times

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Abstract

In his 1925 book Sisyphus or the limits of education Austrian psychoanalyst Siegfried Bernfeld defined education as the 'sum total of societal reaction to the fact of ontogenetic development'. His wide-ranging and radical definition has profound implications as we endeavour to reconceptualise and reimagine more just and equitable early childhood education for ALL in our world characterised by complexities, contradictions, and a general sense of the beginning of a new era. It suggests education begins at birth ('ontogenetic development'), education is more than schooling ('the sum-total'), and education is political ('societal reaction'). One century on, as we approach the second quarter of the 21st century, we must urgently interrogate what 'society' and 'development' might mean in our world, and how we can recalculate Bernfeld's 'sum total' on a global scale. This requires, I argue in my presentation, a radical revaluation of the 20th century certainties and dichotomies that continue to dominate early childhood education and care practices, policies, and theories. Drawing on recent and ongoing research I explore how 'epistemological allyship', systematically and intentionally built across local and global sites of knowledge and practice, enables us to reimagine and re-conceptualise the purpose of early childhood education for our times from a position of concrete hope and capability.

Gender as a precursor of the knowledge and types of prevalence of sexual harassment in selected primary schools in Nigeria

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Abstract

Globally, 1 billion children aged 2-17 years have experienced one form of violence (physical, emotional, and psychological) violence or neglect (WHO, 2012) which have significantly impacted their lives negatively. Africa recorded 37% regional prevalence, with over 150 million girls and 73 million boys experiencing GBV. Efforts have been made to gather data especially in at the higher education and secondary schools but sparingly on primary schools where traits, habits and interests are formed. This paper therefore assessed the knowledge and types of prevalence of sexual harassment as expressed by girls and boys in selected primary schools in Nigeria. GBV has been underreported in primary schools in Nigeria. So, the study sets out to;

- What is the knowledge of boys and girls on sexual harassment in primary schools?

- What type of sexual harassment occurs in the school?

- What is the contribution of demographics on boys and girls awareness on GBV?

The study adopted a mixed method research design that systematically documented girls' and boys' concerns on sexual harassment using questionnaires and focus group discussions (FGD).

- Six state capitals were involved

- 30 schools were sampled

Two instruments were developed, and three research questions were raised, and data collected were analysed using descriptive statistics and multiple regression.

The result showed that gender-based violence (sexual harassment) do occur in primary schools with girls reporting higher than the boys. Also, demographic factors such as home background, types of school and class had a composite effect on the knowledge and types of violence that children are exposed to. The result shows that respondents from all the target schools identified that sex education has been taught in their school and they possess a little knowledge of their rights as children Bullying, sexual abuse and watching of pornography were the types of violence that majorly occur. The study concluded that sex education and parental supports are necessary to curb sexual harrassments in schools

Keywords: Gender, Sexual Harassment, Prevalence

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Exploring sharenting: A study on parents' attitudes, risk awareness, and content sharing practices on social media

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Abstract

Many parents, in the context of sharing information on the internet, transition from posting their personal information to sharing details about their child (Steinberg, 2017). Children's presence on social media is becoming increasingly prevalent each year, facilitated by parents' daily and active sharing of their photos, videos, and information (Choi and Lewallen, 2017). This creates digital footprints for children, in many cases, even before they start walking (Steinberg, 2017). According to research from 2010, a child's digital identity begins to form as early as their sixth month of life (Brosch, 2016). Such activities are termed "sharenting," signifying a relatively new trend of parents sharing their children's personal information on social media. This growing trend has attracted the attention of many researchers due to its ethical, legal, and psychological implications (Brosch, 2016). The term "oversharenting" is also associated with sharenting, indicating the excessive sharing of information about one's children (Choi and Lewallen, 2017).

In this study, we aim to explore parents' attitudes and their awareness of the risks linked to sharing children's information, photos, and videos on social media. Additionally, we seek to understand their grasp of the term "sharenting." The research also investigates the relationship between familiarity with this term and the volume of children's content published, with a particular focus on participants' self-assessment regarding the content of photos and/or videos.

A total of 309 parents of preschool and primary school children participated in the study. For research purposes, an online survey instrument with five sections was developed. The initial section concentrated on collecting sociodemographic data, while the second section involved participants responding to questions about their social media usage habits. The third section explored participants' activities on social media related to their parenthood. The fourth section of the questionnaire evaluated statements about the digital traces parents leave about their children, while the fifth section addressed participants' familiarity with the concept of sharenting. Greater agreement with statements among younger participants can be explained by their increased activity on social media as newer parents. Younger mothers, in particular, share their children's content as part of their perception of "good parenting" (Moser et al., 2017).

The results suggest the need for increased awareness among parents, prospective parents, and all individuals working with children, including teachers, regarding children's privacy and its potential infringement.

Keywords: Digital Footprints, Parenting, Photographs, Privacy, Social Media

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Inclusive education for students with neuro-developmental disabilities: Experiences of Cambodian teachers

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Abstract

As the educational system recovers from destabilization following the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia gradually progresses toward sustainable and equitable education. Yet, inclusive educational access remains challenging for many rural Cambodian students with disabilities, especially those with neuro-developmental disabilities (e.g., autism spectrum disorder, Down syndrome) due to lack of resources, teacher attainment and retainment, insufficient professional development in disability and inclusive education, teacher efficacy, and shortage of professionals specializing in inclusive and disability education.

This paper explores how 19 general education (GE) and special education/disability (SE/D) teachers support learning and sense of belonging among students with neurodevelopmental disabilities (NDD) across 5 rural primary schools in Kampot, Cambodia. Employing a qualitative phenomenological approach with in-depth focus group interviews, participants shared understandings and experiences of working with young people with NDD, shedding light onto the essence of school belonging within the phenomenon of inclusive education.

The province of Kampot, primary schools, and participants were conveniently selected by the supporting organization of this study, as the researcher was unable to recruit participants prior to arrival in Cambodia. A purposive sample was also used to recruit participants by the organization. The sample consisted of 10 GE and 9 SE/D teachers across five rural primary schools in Kampot, Cambodia.

During a 1-week data collection period the researcher facilitated semi-structured open-ended focus-group teacher interviews of 90-120 minutes. All interviews were professionally transcribed and data coded for rich descriptions of participants' meaning making of inclusive education. More specifically, examining how these two particular groups of educators (i.e., GE and SE/D teachers) experience inclusive education, and seeking commonalities and differences between these experiences to shed light on the essence of belonging within the phenomenon of inclusive education (Patton, 1990).

The researcher attempted to place aside (i.e., bracket) personal presumptions surrounding inclusive education. The researcher developed initial and focused codes, followed by statement extraction and grouping/categorizing these based on similar meanings. After grouping participants' statements, the researcher began interpreting these texturally (i.e., what happened?) and structurally (i.e., how is school inclusion [the phenomenon] experienced?) to develop "overall" descriptions of participants' understandings of inclusive education and the essence of school belonging (Creswell, 2013, p.150).

Emerging thematic findings highlighted (1) cultivating a climate of inclusion within schools; (2) ways of enhancing inclusive education; (3) navigating dilemmas of inclusion. Participants perceived peer socialization and building disability awareness as mainstay ingredients for enhancing sense of belonging

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and connection within the school community, and as a means to destabilizing stigma and taboo surrounding disability. However, participants expressed challenges in this particular Southeast Asian context. More specifically, limited training, education, and experience with disability, as well as ineffective collaboration between GE and SE/D teachers. Currently, segregated classrooms provide care and educational opportunities for children with NDD, and simultaneously both GE and SE/D teachers are fostering some level of sense of belonging, as best possible given their circumstances.

Inclusive education is complexly webbed within the Cambodian government and international donors (Kalynapur, 2011, 2014; Siska & Suchanek, 2015). Cambodia heavily relies on financial support from international donors; this government-donor relationship often leads to implementing initiatives misaligning with the country's priorities (Kalyanpur, 2011). Resulting from the inefficient relationship between donors, government, and NGO's, the current system struggles to effectively support teacher preparation for inclusive education. To better link stakeholders they may consider seeking balance among donor policies and priorities and the local contexts, adjusting for the incongruence between Western/European inclusive ideals within post-Khmer Rouge Cambodia, and provide support and education at the community grassroots level (Kalyanpur, 2011, 2014).

Keywords: Autism Spectrum Disorder, Down Syndrome, Inclusive Education, Neuro-Developmental Disability, Primary School Teachers, Cambodia

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Technology-enhanced toys in early childhood education: Opportunities and challenges for learning and play

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Abstract

Play is an essential aspect of Early Childhood Education and Care. However, the relationship between play and learning is often taken for granted, especially when technology is involved. Studies in the late years explore how children use digital technology in play situations and what role technology plays in different play conditions in home, early childhood, and care settings (Arnott et al., 2020; Kewalramani et al., 2023; Undheim, 2022). To better understand how young children engage with types of play and learn, there is also an imperative need to explore and map modern technological toys. These new toys often embrace both traditional (physical, tangible, tactile) attributes and digital ones (abstract, non-materialistic) in one medium (the toy).

This study focused on a new type of toy, the 'Technology-Enhanced Toys' (TETs), and aimed at trialing a new evaluation instrument for these toys for children from birth to eight years old. This paper explores how TETs support children's thinking and learning and challenge play opportunities as stated in their manufacturers' descriptions. The focus is especially on the associations between the play and the pedagogical characteristics that TETs claim to present.

The present study adopted a pragmatic paradigm, following a mixed methodology. A systematic review of TETs based on the international marketplace of Amazon was conducted following the PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021). Selection criteria included specifying the search into the category 'toys and games', the age group (birth to eight years old), and a query that would result in a comprehensive list of toys. We used terms that would appear on the toys' descriptions used by their vendors to be attractive to parents, such as 'electronic, technology, and interactive toys' OR 'technology and interactive toys'. Exclusion criteria describe any toy in a language other than English, accessories, tactile toys without technological characteristics, and audio/story books with pegs. The search yielded around 280 results but ended with 200 after applying exclusion criteria. As there is no previous literature review in the field, studying these toys aimed to identify the structural elements, such as definitions and categories, based on their technological and pedagogical aspects. The research team worked in four pairs, following the 'screener-reviewer' model for evaluating toys. Two pilot realisations underwent a parallel evaluation in

pairs to finalise variables. The first data analysis provided quantitative results and descriptive statistics of the evaluation instrument, which included five sections (General information, Play characteristics, Other characteristics, Technological characteristics, and Pedagogical characteristics) and twenty-seven categories. We conducted a thematic content analysis of the toys' product information and description to better understand learning and play and their correlations. Thus, we applied the multivariate analysis method of Multiple Correspondence Analysis (MCA) (Blasius & Greenacre, 2006; Gordon & Benzecri, 1993) to investigate relationships between several variables of play and pedagogical characteristics.

Descriptive statistical methods cannot reveal the fine structure of the relationships between these TETs. However, we derived the results from the MCA on how a prominent category of variables such as 'play' correlates across the learning areas for subject knowledge development and 21st-century skills. Furthermore, we mapped the classification of TETs as easily presentable based on their affordances in the learning and developing skills imposed by play and its agencies. Highly matched correlations can provide insightful information for opportunities offered and challenges addressed in learning by conducting research with children using TETs in formal and informal settings.

Keywords: Technology, Toys, Play, Learning, Early Childhood Education

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Reinvent access to nursery school in Chile: Continuities and changes in policies

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Abstract

With the restoration of democracy in Chile in 1990, the different governments began to search for more social justice, with education being the main way to achieve this goal (Alexander, 2009; Pérez et al., 2017; Solimano, 2012). Within this framework, Early Childhood Education (ECE) becomes, according to Galdames (2011), a "superhero" that fights to interrupt the reproduction of inequalities, associating greater access to quality ECE with the healthy and comprehensive development of children, an increase in the female labor rate, especially in families living in contexts of greater poverty, and a high return on social investment (Devercelli & Beaton-Day, 2020; OECD, 2001; UNESCO, 2022).

In 2006, Chile began an emphasis on expanding the capacity of the nursery school level - children between 3 months and 1 year and 11 months of age - with public and state-funded private providers, focusing on disadvantaged families with lower incomes and on student, job-seeking or working mothers (MINEDUC, 2015). This increase has been recognized as the largest in Latin America, although still below the average of OECD countries (Cárcamo, 2018; OECD, 2017; Staab, 2017).

Using a systemic (Kagan, Araujo, Jaimovich, & Aguayo, 2016; Kagan, Araujo, Jaimovich, & Cruz-Aguayo, 2016; Kagan & Roth, 2017) and intersectoral (Cunill-Grau et al., 2018) institutional framework, we seek to understand continuities and changes in policies on access to nursery school from 2006 to 2023 in Chile. To do so, we used a qualitative methodology with documentary analysis of policies on access to nursery school related to education, health, and work, in conjunction with 20 in-depth interviews with policymakers and leaders of professional associations.

Preliminary results show that the main continuity is the sectoral fragmentation of policies associated with access to nursery school, their focus on disadvantaged families, female students and workers, and to substitute parental care. On the other hand, the main change is the shift from increased capacity to quality in nursery school. In this sense, policies emerge for the regulation of structural variables (infrastructure or child-to-staff ratios) and recently process variables that recover the pedagogical focus (curriculum, strengthening of pedagogical practices, teaching careers).

The coexistence between continuities and changes in policies on access to nursery school challenges Chile to reinvent new political, systemic and intersectoral path. A triad is proposed that allows for a transition from fragmented policies to a policy that articulates the nursery school as a node of the right to education, labor and social protection for children, parents and families, respectively.

Keywords: Policies Education, Nursery School, Access, Chile

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The 'unsuccessful' method: Reimagining rural-urban migrant children's childhood and friendship in China

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Abstract

The research was based on the rural-urban migration trend in China. In the last decades, the deep-rooted economic rural-urban dichotomy in China has driven large-scale rural residents to migrate to urban areas in seek of better job opportunities, therefore, most of their children have to migrate to the cities with their parents. In recent years, with the increasingly disproportionately distributed educational resources between rural and urban schools, compared with being the 'by-products', children are becoming the main driving force for millions of migrant families. However, migrant children are normally the targets of bullying (Cui & To, 2019; Tan, 2010). The research seeks to explore rural-urban migrant children's friendships and experiences of inclusion in cities.

Based on a 5-month ethnography in a primary school containing both migrant and non-migrant children in China, this qualitative research employed observation, interviews with parents, teachers, and children, and an art-based method (children's drawing).

Combined with the data generated from the research, from the lens of the 'unsuccessful' method in the research, this presentation will focus on how the 'unsuccessful' method helped the research reimagine migrant children's childhood in China.

Initially, the research was designed to use the social map as a participatory method with children which children draw themselves at the center of the paper and their friends around them (Vincent et al., 2018). However, the research method was not 'successful' whereas children normally believe that only their one best friend deserves to be drawn and they have to draw the context of playing with friends as well. For example, drew 'neighborhood best friend' with neighborhood surroundings and 'hometown best friend' with the surroundings of their hometown. The 'unsuccessful' of the methods reflect and help in reimagining childhood in ways that, firstly, migrant children's experiences of inclusion in cities still largely depend on their socioeconomic conditions after migration, for example, children draw neighborhood best friends as they are enabled to live in a gated neighborhood with safety and segregation from other communities. Also, the implication of 'hometown' best friends shows that migrant children do not normally get access to urban facilities on holidays and are not involved well in cities, therefore they remain emotionally attached to friends in their hometown. Secondly, children differed friends from 'besties' and 'buddies' which were at 'higher levels' has sociological and educational implications in terms of children's emotional needs. Thirdly, the 'unsuccessful' method reflected the 'tension' between adult researchers' experiences and knowledge and children's agency, which echoed the key argument of the 'New' Sociology of Childhoods that encourages researchers to explore children's experiences and opinions through children's eyes (James & Prout, 2003).

The presentation aimed to contribute to methodological reflections and reimagining migrant children's childhoods in China.

Keywords: Migrant Children, Childhood in China, Methodological Reflection

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Maltreatment experiences and adolescents' self-representations: A systematic literature review

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Abstract

Self-concept is an essential cognitive structure that contributes to individuals' adaptative psychosocial functioning, and its development is highly affected by early socialization experiences. Therefore, child development contexts marked by maltreatment experiences have a significant detrimental impact on its formation (Cicchetti, 2016; Harter, 2015). Research into this phenomenon is particularly relevant in adolescence, when the definition of oneself is one of the main developmental tasks, strongly enhanced by the cognitive-developmental acquisitions that emerge at this stage.

Additionally, the existing empirical evidence points to a complex pattern of associations between child maltreatment and self-concept, indicating variations according to different types of mistreatment and dimensions of self-concept (e.g., Silva & Calheiros, 2020). However, to date, there are no reviews that make it possible to synthesize the research on this subject, especially with a focus on adolescence. The existing evidence thus remains scattered and fragmented, making it difficult to identify patterns of effects depending on the subtype of abuse and the different self-concept dimensions.

In order to fill this gap in the literature, a systematic review of empirical articles regarding the effects of maltreatment on adolescents' self-concept was conducted, based on the PRISMA guidelines (2021).

Using a combination of keywords related to the constructs of maltreatment and self-concept, a search was carried out in eight databases (Academic Search Complete; Academic Search Ultimate; APA PsycArticles; APA PsycINFO; MEDLINE; Psychology and Behavioral Sciences Collection; Scopus and Web of Science) in February 2023, resulting in the identification of 394 references. Another 35 were manually identified during the screening phase, yielding a total of 429 articles retrieved. Of these, 351 were excluded based on the title and abstract screening, performed with the Rayyan web app (Ouzzani et al., 2016). One researcher screened all records and two additional independent coders screened 30% of the records, resulting in a 93.4% interrater agreement. Disagreements (i.e., 6.6%) were reviewed and solved in committee. Following the full-text analyses of 78 articles, 61 that did not meet the inclusion criteria were excluded, resulting in a final set of 17 articles for data extraction and qualitative synthesis.

In general, and as expected, adolescents with a history of maltreatment tend to have more negative self-concepts (e.g., Gewirtz-Meydan, 2020). In addition, the social domain of self-concept appears to be most frequently affected in association with child maltreatment (e.g., Calheiros et al., 2020; Cederbaum et al. 2020; Silva & Calheiros, 2020; Simmons & Weinman, 1991). Nevertheless, maltreatment experiences also seem to impact other self-concept domains, namely physical appearance, academic competence, emotional and behavioral.

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Taken together, the results of these studies suggest that, regardless of the type of maltreatment, the self-concept domains particularly affected by maltreatment experiences seem to be related to the challenges and difficulties that characterize adolescence (e.g., social; physical appearance). Adolescents' social self-representations seem to be especially vulnerable to such experiences. This may be related to the inherently interpersonal nature of maltreatment experiences. Such experiences, especially the earlier they occur, will characterize these young people's primary relationships, thus increasing the likelihood that they will see themselves as not being relationally competent (e.g., Bretherton & Munholland, 2008; Harter, 2015; Stronach et al., 2011).

Altogether, results of this systematic review supported the notion that maltreatment experiences of maltreatment are associated with more negative self-concepts in adolescence, thus suggesting that the normative challenges of this development phase are exacerbated by these experiences, leading to more negative self-representations in different domains. This review allowed the systematization and disentangling of the empirical evidence about these associations, by showing which domains are more vulnerable to those experiences.

Keywords: Child Maltreatment, Child Abuse, Child Neglect, Self-Concept, Adolescence

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What we can learn from children's choices to support wellbeing, agency and citizenship

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Abstract

Childhood Studies and Early Childhood Education (ECE) share the understanding children have the right to have their perspectives included. Children develop an understanding of having impact on matters concerning their lives when part of decision-making processes. This can protect their wellbeing and build resilience as they are feeling valued and their voices heard, while also developing a sense as local and global community members and active agents for change. In Australia, the national approved learning framework for the early years guides educators to embed education for sustainability, democratic practices and meaningful experiences to teach intentionally children concepts, including social justice and citizenship. Best practices include educators and children collaborating, co-designing play and learning experiences and reviewing their ECE setting's philosophies and educational programs. However, a crisis in the ECE sector with staff shortages and other pressures can leave educators overwhelmed.

Despite growing interest in ethical research involving children, limited understandings particularly about how children choose to participate have continued. This objective drove the doctoral study that this paper draws on. The study aimed to explore children's perspectives of play and to identify what characterises ethical spaces when researching with children. Revisiting the study's outcomes can support educators and other professionals in embedding empowering and democratic practices that emphasise children's rights to play and to participation and respond to UN Sustainable Development Goals 3, 4 and 16.

Key epistemological understandings of Childhood Studies – children's agency, competences and rights, and childhood as a social construction underpinned the study. A social constructivist approach challenged a universal and biological concept of childhood but considered childhood and children within their societal, cultural and historical context. Constructivist Grounded Theory guided the qualitative research methodology's flexible, though systematic, data generation and analysis.

Seventeen children at one ECE setting participated over a period of six months. Prior and during data generation, children had formal and informal opportunities to give their informed consent and ethical considerations drove the methodology. Data generation encompassed video-recording children's play (play-videos) that were used as stimuli for conversations with the children. In these group conversations, children had the opportunity to talk about their play-videos. The conversations were also video-recorded and produced the data set for analysis. The children's expressions beyond verbal accounts and their ways of participation were analysed.

From children's diverse views of play, their wish to have control often contrasted with their experience of adult regulation. Play offered a space to exercise agency through creating themes and rules. Agency was a shared understanding, but the children felt their agency challenged when confronted with educator rules and consequent play restrictions. Despite such challenges, the children developed strategies to deal with

regulations and to regain control. Children also demonstrated agency in their choices how and if to participate in the study. They were gatekeepers of their participation and the data they wished to share, using a range of dissent strategies and participation processes.

The outcomes of the study informed the development of a framework that conceptualised agency, privacy and relationships within three ethical research spaces, incorporating physical, creative and social-emotional spaces. This framework offers educators, researchers or ethical research review committees a reflective tool to promote children's empowerment and to challenge those research or educational practices that overlook children's choices and decision-making processes. In a continuously changing world, children experience uncertainties and inequalities depending on their socio-economic, cultural or geographical life circumstances. ECE, acknowledging that this is not universally accessible or affordable, can play a significant role in providing children with experiences where they are resilient, feel valued, learn about their rights and responsibilities and practice their agency as engaged responsible citizens.

Keywords: Participation, Rights, Agency, Wellbeing

The emergent curriculum in 21st-century early years contexts: A systematic literature review

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Abstract

In alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the prioritisation of children in critical decisions, particularly in curriculum development, has become a cornerstone of global initiatives (United Nations Human Rights, Office of the High Commissioner, 2020). This paper delves into the realm of early childhood education, focusing on the Emergent Curriculum (Jones & Nimmo, 1994) as a means to actively engage both educators and children in shaping their educational experiences. The emergent curriculum approach shares many characteristics with the foundational principles and practices of the Reggio Emilia philosophy (Malaguzzi, 1994; Sampson & McLean, 2021). Internationally, the emergent curriculum is acknowledged as a stimulating and engaging method for children's learning, providing early childhood educators with a valuable and sustainable framework to incorporate into their pedagogical practices. This adaptable and responsive approach, centred on the child, entails the development and implementation of a curriculum that embraces the distinct interests, inquiries, ideas, and perspectives of children rather than being predetermined (Edwards et al., 2012; Stacey, 2018). Children experiencing the Emergent Curriculum are encouraged to actively collaborate with their peers, educators, parents and other stakeholders within the wider community (Ciezczyk, 2021; Nxumalo et al., 2018; Stacey, 2009). This paper presents how the Emergent Curriculum features in English-medium global scientific literature over two decades (2003–2023), scrutinising its adaptation in diverse early years settings (0–8 years). It specifically seeks to answer the question: *What insights does the international literature provide regarding the utilisation and effectiveness of the Emergent Curriculum Approach in early childhood education, particularly in the context of shaping child-centred and sustainable Early Childhood Curriculum policies and practices?*

Employing the rigorous Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) methodology, we investigated how educators, children, and communities collaboratively construct and adapt the emergent curriculum within their unique social and cultural contexts. A total of 54 papers were identified as fitting the search criteria from three major databases—Web of Science, Psychinfo, and SCOPUS—and thematic analysis was employed to answer the research question. Ethical approval was obtained from the University of Malta ethics committee. This paper presents our preliminary analysis of key themes identified in the systematic literature review, encompassing (i) enabling children's agency, voice, and fascinations, (ii) adults and children as co-leaders in learning, (iii) pedagogical documentation for a stronger sense of identity and (iv) emergent curriculum in virtual mode. This systematic exploration of the Emergent Curriculum holds implications for shaping child-centred and sustainable Early Childhood Curriculum policies, practices, and future research initiatives. By synthesising insights from diverse sources, this study contributes to the ongoing discourse on creating educational frameworks that resonate

with the dynamic needs of 21st-century early years contexts, fostering a holistic and inclusive approach to curriculum development.

Keywords: Emergent Curriculum; Early Years Education; Systematic Literature Review; Child-Centred Education; Sustainable Curriculum

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Dialogic reading practices with emergent multilinguals in early childhood education

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Abstract

Programmes of multilingual education in Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) are promising because they contribute to the development of young children's language and literacy, their multilingual identities as well as openness. In practice, many educators are unsure of how to engage children in multilingual literacy activities and policy often falls short of providing adequate guidance (Kirsch & Bergeron, 2023). While the positive effects of dialogic reading on children's language and early literacy skills are undisputed (Whitehurst et al., 1988), there is, however, little research on how to engage young emergent multilinguals in shared reading. By contrast, studies have shown that translanguaging, the deployment of a person's semiotic repertoire for communication and meaning-making, can enhance children's engagement and language and literacy skills (García & Otheguy, 2020; Seltzer et al., 2020).

The present paper investigates the case of Luxembourg where a multilingual programme has been implemented in ECEC that requires educators to familiarize children with Luxembourgish and French and value their home languages, for instance in literacy activities. Drawing on interviews and videos recorded over the period of ten months in two ECEC centers, I examine the ways in which twelve educators read dialogically with multilingual children aged two to four as well as the observable effects on children.

The findings based on content and conversation analysis, show that the reading practices in the centers differed in length, frequency, and intensity, with the educators in one centre initiating more talk in more languages, giving more feedback, and modelling language more than those in the second centre which appeared to be monolingual despite the high number of emergent multilinguals. The educators who translanguaged to promote participation in an inclusive learning environment, managed to engage children in longer and deeper conversations. These children were frequently observed sharing books with peers and telling each other stories, thereby imitating the adults and sometimes repeating their phrases. Over the course of the year, we observed more reading of the children and adults. By contrast, in the centre that appeared monolingual, children and their educators read less over the course of the year. The practices were influenced by the educators' beliefs about children's language learning and understanding of the purpose of reading. I argue that ECEC practitioners need to be responsive to children's interests, needs and languages to help them engage both in literacy activities and with literacy, which, in turn, contributes to their developing language and literacy skills (Wasik et al., 2016). The findings call for professional development on the strategic use of languages, the purposes of literacy in ECEC as well as effective and inclusive teaching approaches.

Keywords: Dialogic Reading; Multilingualism; Translanguaging; Literacy Skills; Inclusive Environment

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Enactments of ethics of care in South African early childhood education: Towards inclusion and transformation

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Abstract

There is a dearth of knowledge that considers how early childhood teachers working with young children interpret and enact an early childhood framework that does not explicitly make care practices visible. Following phenomenological interpretations of care, we argue that an understanding of care requires a focus on interactions and posit that an interaction becomes an instance where care relations are actualised and enacted. These care relations are situated within a framework of transformative pedagogy as they create conditions that support teachers and children develop their capacity as beings in relation with one another. This qualitative study formed part of a larger national project on transformative pedagogy in the early years. Using data derived from semi-structured interviews, early childhood teachers provided accounts of how they interpreted and enacted care practices through being and doing in ethical encounters with children. Data reveals that teachers are shaped by their own lived experiences of care as well as their own understanding of children and learning. Importantly, the contextual realities of their daily work produced teachers' complex understandings of the agentic nature of the child. Findings have the potential to shift focus of care as embedded exclusively in pastoral care to an understanding of care practices as a relational activity that includes a combination of academic and care practices. This understanding offers viable alternative to providing children with opportunities to meet their contextual needs. Equally, it locates the ontology of care as ethical acts that take place in interactions between teachers and children in early childhood settings.

Keywords: Ethics of Care, Early Childhood Education, Ethical Interactions, Transformative Pedagogy

Between home and back home: Intergenerational temporalities of refugee resettlement and belonging in the southern United States

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Abstract

Refugee resettlement is the United States is conceptualized in policy and in practice as a linear progression from arrival to individual economic self-sufficiency achieved within 4-6 months leading toward full-fledged national citizenship within 5 years. The reality is much messier, with neither labor market integration nor legal citizenship status being synonymous or coterminous with lived experiences of everyday citizenship and belonging. Moreover, the focus on individual economic and political participation is at odds with the resettlement process itself, which is often family-based within the context of existing refugee communities.

Drawing on the work of Yuval Davis (2006) and Antonsich (2010), this study examines the politics of belonging and exclusion among refugee families resettled in the US. It investigates how families and youth construct a sense of belonging in the face of displacement, adversity, and exclusion. Specifically, this research asks: where and how do refugee families and youth navigate and cultivate belonging in a new social and political context in the southeastern US, characterized by an ethnically diverse refugee and migrant population, histories of racial exclusion, and xenophobic political discourse? The objective of this research is to explore the multifaceted and multiscalar dynamics of belonging experienced by refugee families and youth post-resettlement in the US. By examining their experiences, this study aims to shed light on the complexities of belonging, exclusion, and empowerment within intimate family settings, community networks, and transnational affiliations.

Participants in this study include refugee families residing in Greensboro, North Carolina Data collection took place between 2018 and 2019, and included interviews, focus groups, and participant observation in refugee community centers. These qualitative approaches were utilized to capture the lived experiences and nuanced perspectives of refugee families and youth. Data analysis involved thematic coding to identify patterns and themes related to belonging and exclusion.

The findings of this study reveal the diverse and sometimes conflicting strategies employed by refugee families and youth to foster a sense of belonging in their new environment. These include negotiating transnational identities, envisioning future aspirations, and maintaining connections to their cultural heritage. These findings underscore the importance of understanding the temporalities of belonging among family members. In exploring the multiple spatial scales of belonging, the divergent temporalities of belonging among family members comes into view, with some parents envisioning American citizenship as a stepping stone towards a future return to their country of origin, and youth often expressing their belonging in the present through aspirations for success in the US. For many youth, success in the US is nevertheless still imagined as enabling maintenance of transnational ties of support for communities "back

home". Apart from its theoretical contributions to the understanding of refugee and migrant belonging, this paper offers practical insights for practitioners working with refugees, shedding light on the obstacles and nuances in the process of creating a sense of family empowerment, inclusion, and belonging after resettlement in the US.

Keywords: Youth, Family, Belonging, Transnationalism, Temporality, Africa, Iraq

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Collective voices of local and refugee preschool peers elicited through co-reading and co-creation of a picture book

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Abstract

The public-school system in Türkiye has rapidly become very diverse with over half a million Syrian children under temporary protection. Many of these children were born in exile in Türkiye and are navigating complex identities and states of belonging. Similarly, in some classrooms, Turkish children are outnumbered by refugee peers who experience challenges in communications with them and their teachers, because of their emerging Turkish language skills. This creates challenges for learning as well as social cohesion.

This study aimed to draw out the experiences of both local and refugee children attending a public preschool in Türkiye, as well as the experiences of their families and teachers. The study was conceived as a pragmatic action research in which the children's co-participation was central to its design. In this talk, we will focus specifically on our research design and our methods of data collection that allowed us to work with and hear the voices of both local and refugee children. The last few decades have seen an increasing use of a child-centered perspective, which is called 'new social studies of childhood' (James et al., 1998). Erdiller-Yatmaz et al. (2023) underscore the importance of acknowledging and nurturing children's agency in research and also augmenting their influence and facilitating access to an audience. Similarly, we took an approach whereby children were assumed to interact with a socially constructed environment, which they themselves contribute to shaping, and in which they experience realities formed by their own experience (Freeman & Mathison, 2009). As such, we highlight the experiences of refugee children, together with their local peers, in their own voices, which are rarely heard in the literature (Kilinc & Karsli-Calamak, 2023).

Using entry points in the national curriculum, we conducted this research in a highly diverse preschool in Ankara. We used circle time to collectively read a book written by the first author which is about the friendship between a Turkish child and a Syrian child. We then co-created a second book which continued the narrative of cross-group friendship. The nature of the activity and the provision of Arabic translation enabled all children and their parents. We used drawing and photo elicitation to collect data from children, and we also used their story entries as data. While thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used as the main approach, multiple techniques had to be used to analyze the children's interviews.

The response from children was encouraging, with many indicating that they experienced a sense of joy, inclusion and empowerment. The role of language in mediating relationships emerged as a key finding, along with the challenges that may possibly delay Turkish language acquisition among refugee children. The aspirations of all children for greater cross-group engagement also emerged as a key finding. Implications for promoting social cohesion through the national education system are discussed.

Keywords: Refugee Children, Research with Children, Action Research, Adapted Bibliotherapy

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The major changes in Romanian early childhood educational policy after the communism

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Abstract

The quality of education, innovation and the variety of alternative methods play a particularly important role in today's kindergartens in Romania. This attitude completely contradicts the socialist conception. In order to reconstruct the socialist early childhood approaches I turned my attention to the strongly centralized Romanian education system before 1989. I got an overview about the social and political background, and the way they affected the operation of kindergartens, the methods, contents used by teachers, and the preservation of the institutions.

My aim is to get an overview on the way several characteristics from Romanian socialist education system and methodological practices changed with time into the alternative de-centralised one. The aim of my research is to identify and present the major changes that have occurred in early childhood education after 1989, and examine how alternative pedagogies have gained ground in Romanian education. Alternative pedagogical programmes such as Waldorf, Step-by-step, and Montessori have found their way from Western Europe into the Romanian educational system and have brought about innovative methods and elements. In the first years, alternative institutions worked without a legal basis. I have provided information on the teaching methods and tools used in that period, which were passed on and are still used in today's preschool education. The endeavours of the pedagogical reforms after the Revolution and their effects on pre-schooling also play an important role in the better understanding of the development of kindergartens.

Source identification, unstructured interview, historical source examination and comparison played a central role during my research. I compared important research results from the point of view of the Romanian socialist history of education with the current situation of today's kindergartens in Romania, using the sources and methods of education history, as well as the aspects of the comparative education science. I did an interview with senior kindergarten teachers who worked before and after the revolution. They experienced the changes in everyday work. In this way, I have formed a rich and detailed picture about the major changes. I analysed in details the educational laws and regulations that appeared after the Revolution.

Using the comparison method, I identified those common elements that – transcending time– can still be found in today's early childhood education in Romania.

Keywords: Early Childhood Curriculum, Education Reforms, Decentralization, Education Pluralism

Initial steps toward a new rapid test for cognitive abilities of 6-8-year-old children

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Abstract

This presentation summarizes the initial psychometric experience of a new rapid test for the cognitive abilities of 6- to 8-year-old children. In the case of this topic, the interconnections are the next between theory, politics, and practice. According to the Hungarian education law (CXC. act of the year 2011), children have the right to adapt their education to their abilities. Its theoretical background is that this adaptive education can best serve children's optimal development. Although psychological and pedagogical theories, and the education law, suggest the above type of adaptive education, the realization of this right of children is often violated because Hungarian teachers have no right to apply psychological-kind cognitive tests for mapping their students' abilities. This is a particularly big problem during the transition from kindergarten to school. A possible solution can be to create a new cognitive test whose characteristics are: a) it can give information about the cognitive abilities (thinking, work memory, attention, perception/sensualization) of 6-7-year-old students; b) the test should not assume the children's ability to read and write; c) Kindergarten teachers and primary school teachers should have the opportunity to use it; d) be a rapid test from the aspects of data collecting and evaluating too; e) be an inexpensive tool. The first station of the development of this test is the collecting and psychometric testing of the possible tasks. The purpose of this research is to summarize the initial psychometric experiences.

The common characteristic of developed tasks for mapping thinking (analysis, synthesis), working memory, attention, and perception is that its instructions are audio-verbal type and the answers are given by drawing (so data collection is also possible in groups and the solution does not require reading and writing). The duration of data collection is approx. fifteen minutes per group of 20 students and the evaluation is about five minutes per group (so the rapidity is guaranteed). After working out tasks of thinking (synthesis, analysis), work memory, attention, and perception, data collecting and evaluating were realized in the cases of first-grade students (n = 207) on two occasions. The time interval between the two data collecting was two weeks. Reliability examination was done on the base of results of the test-retest results. To examine of face validity of tasks, teachers (n=40) gave their opinions about the tasks. These teachers also evaluated the students' solutions, so the examination of inter-rater reliability was possible too. The data collection was primer-kind, so the test developer team collected data directly from children (about the task solutions and opinions from tasks) and teachers (about the evaluations of students' solutions and the characteristics of tasks). For data analysis, descriptive and mathematical statistical analysis (Wilcoxon signed rank test, Sign test, Marginal homogeneity test, Mann-Whitney's U-test, Kendall's tau-b, and Spearman's rank correlation calculation.) were done. The face validity is strong (the teachers recognized one hundred percent of what cognitive abilities were examined by the tasks). The inter-rater reliability is

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similarly strong. The test-retest reliability is intermediately (rs = approx. 0,5). No gender differences could be observed. The tasks correspond to their planned characteristics indicated above, but their psychometric characteristics should be further investigated. In the future, the examination of concurrent validity and predictive validity is necessary too. The developed tasks can mean the basis of a new rapid test for mapping the cognitive abilities of 6-8-year-old students. This developed test can give an effective solution to the above paradox of theory, policy, and practice, and it can support the teachers to know their students' cognitive abilities for the sake of their adaptive education.

Keywords: Ability, Test, Development

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2011 CXC. Act on Hungarian National Public Education

Perceptions of child neglect among Muslim Arab youths

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Abstract

This study examines child neglect and explores the perspectives of Muslim Palestinian-Arab youths through qualitative analysis of eight focus group discussions. These youths primarily discussed parental neglect, suggesting its link to complex structural factors. Four key themes emerged: emotional needs, responsibility and supervision, guidance and companionship, and material needs. The findings highlight the complexity of neglect in the youth context and the need for a culturally sensitive definition to inform policy and practice, contributing to a deeper understanding of child neglect. Child neglect is considered the most common form of child maltreatment, and, similar to child abuse, it has severe implications for children's development. Nonetheless, there is a shortage of scholarly literature examining child neglect and intervention and prevention strategies. The absence of a clear definition is a noted reason for the lack of academic studies of the phenomenon. One challenge to defining neglect is that it is an elusive and ongoing phenomenon, and its identification relies on highly variable subjective judgments. Although the perspectives of children and youth on neglect are critical and may resolve the complexity of child neglect definitions, they are rarely asked about their experiences and perceptions.

The study employed a qualitative paradigm focusing on the meanings and interpretation of social phenomena and social processes in context. Data were gathered via eight focus group discussions from 38 youth through purposive sampling according to age (13 and 14) and ethnic affiliation (Muslim Arabs in northern Israel). Data were analyzed thematically. The texts were coded according to recurrent themes, which were mapped according to methodically identified interconnections and emerging patterns.

Four themes arose; *Emotional needs:* The youths emphasized their expectations of parental love, warmth, and affection as critical characteristics of parent-child relationships. *Responsibility and supervision:* The youths expect parents to be involved in their children's social lives and get to know their friends, "My parents should know where I am going to and coming from. They need to know who our friends are and with whom we spend time" (girl, age 14). *Guidance and companionship:* The youth highlighted the need for parental guidance, companionship, and direction and to explain the difference between right and wrong through sharing their knowledge and experience. *Material needs:* The material needs were not particularly emphasized during the discussions. Only a few youths voiced requests and expectations to receive material things, such as money, gifts, treats, and vacations: "Neglectful parents do not prepare food and do not take care of their children. Sometimes, the mother does not have the strength to prepare food, so their children come home from school hungry and find nothing to eat" (boy, age 13).

The findings highlight the need to include voices representing diverse groups in the population as part of context-informed perception in discourses of parenting and child neglect. The participants' voices provided a platform for examining the complexity inherent in negotiating neglect as a multifaceted social problem and the importance of recognizing the youth's unique perceptions. The findings underscore the importance of positive interactions and dynamics between parents and their children and of attention to protective

factors (e.g., parental love, support, and involvement) that can help youth in neglect situations. In addition, they point to the importance of developing a contextually sensitive definition of child neglect to enhance the formation of policy and practice.

Keywords: Child Neglect, Context-Informed Perception, Muslim Palestinian-Arab Youths, Emotional Needs, Material Needs

Context-informed research and the use of visual methods to understand perceptions of risk and protection among Bedouin children from the Naqab

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Abstract

In recent years, the sociology of childhood (Mayall, 2015) and the UNCRC - Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) have focused on the importance of including children's perceptions in the academic, practical, and policy discourse, thus bringing about a perceptual change in how researchers understand the world of children (Marey-Sarwan, 2019; Ponizovsky-Bergelson et al., 2020). The UNCRC acknowledges the significance of early childhood experiences and exposure to risk or resilience in shaping lifelong development (Moore et al.,, 2008). Consequently, researchers now actively involve children in projects that explore their experiences and viewpoints, entering their world, in contrast to the previous approach that studied children without their direct input. The marginalized Bedouin community in Israel's unrecognized villages faces severe challenges. With 80% of households living in poverty, these villages lack essential services that puts Bedouin children at risk, facing threats to their well-being and safety.

Research questions:

1. What are the risk and protected perceptions of 4-5-year-old Bedouin children in the unrecognized villages in the Negev?

2. What do the children suggest for prevention, coping, and handling the risks they raise?

To examine the perspective of view of young Bedouin children on risk and protection in their daily lives and living space, thereby contributing to the research literature and context-aware practice. This study is a qualitative study with elements of participatory action research. Participants were 30 Bedouin children were selected in a purposive sampling according to two main criteria: age (4-5 years) and place of residence (unrecognized village in the Naqab). The study combined two visual tools - photography and drawing, in addition to verbal explanations provided by the children for the photographs and drawings. I started by teaching small groups of children about the study and how to use a digital camera. They then took photos of things that felt safe or risky in their daily lives. They chose one picture for each category and discussed their choices. A week later, each child drew what made them feel safe or at risk, explaining their drawings. Lastly, they suggested ways to deal with the identified risk factors. The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis and cross-referencing data from different methods.

The study identified seven themes concerning how children perceive and deal with risk and protection. Most factors mentioned by the children were both risk factors and sources of protection, except for "demons and monsters," which were seen as risks only. The findings highlight the significance of the home, grandmother, and mother as crucial protective factors that help children navigate their challenging surroundings. Additionally, the results emphasize that children are knowledgeable and have agency,

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meaning they believe they can influence and control risk situations in their environment and the outcomes that result from them. The study referred to various contexts such as the cultural, social, historical, geographic, political contexts and more and emphasized that these contexts shape the perceptions of Bedouin children. The photos, drawings, and interviews with the children were able to describe their daily struggles in their living environment. They may be used to raise awareness of the situation in the villages and support the residents' struggle. The research findings indicate that children are a rich source of knowledge when engaging with danger and proposing protection strategies (Wahle et al., 2017).

Keywords: Bedouin Children in Israel, Context-Informed Perspective, Protection, Risk, Visual Methods

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Cultural variations in understanding teacher's role in children's play

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Abstract

Teacher-child interaction during play is one of the most important elements of a high-quality early childhood program (McNally & Slutsky, 2019). Thus, it is important to explore pre-service teachers' perceptions of their roles in children's play. Cross-cultural studies provide valuable insights into how cultural backgrounds and contexts influence teachers' beliefs, practices, and attitudes towards facilitating play in early childhood education (Chen & Rao, 2016; van der Aalsvoort et al., 2015; Suzuki & Johnson, 2018; Wang & Kim, 2020). In cultures that emphasize teacher-led instruction and academic achievement, pre-service teachers may feel pressure to incorporate explicit teaching strategies and academic content into play-based activities (Suzuki & Johnson, 2018). On the other hand, in cultures that prioritize child-led, unstructured play, pre-service teachers may emphasize the importance of providing children with autonomy and freedom during play activities (Wang & Kim, 2020). Cultural variations in perceptions of teachers' roles in play must be explored to inform the development of culturally responsive practices and policies that promote effective play-based pedagogy in early childhood education.

This paper is part of a broader mixed-methods cross-cultural comparative study on perspectives from Greek, Turkish, Estonian, Spanish, and American preservice early childhood education teachers. Overall, 365 students (96% female) participated in the study with an average age of 23. The main hypothesis of this research is that, given the focus on academization, preservice teachers are not adequately prepared to use play as a tool to maximize the development of children's cognition.

Quantitative data was collected using a five-point Likert scale instrument consisting of nine questions related to the teacher's role in children's play (e.g., "monitoring children's safety", "supporting social interaction among children", "playing in parallel with children"). Participants were asked to evaluate their level of agreement or disagreement regarding the question, "What roles do you believe educators should have or adopt while children are playing?" Data analysis utilized SPSS 29.0.1.0. Descriptive statistics, such as mean, standard deviation, and percentages, were calculated. To compare results across countries, ANOVA tests were conducted, followed by either Bonferroni post hoc tests (for equal variances) or Games-Howell post hoc tests (for unequal variances). Levene's test was employed to assess the homogeneity of variances.

Study results indicated that students considered all teachers' roles in the questionnaire to be significant, with the overall average rating above four on a five-point scale. Participants agreed that it is essential for teachers to be "observing children's play to ensure safety", "understand children's progress", "providing a stimulating environment to ensure a balanced range of activities", and "support social interaction".

Interestingly, roles such as "playing alongside children in parallel" and "assisting them in utilizing play areas" and "following game rules" were perceived as less pivotal. Students from Spain, Estonia, Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, and Türkiye rated these three as the least important roles (though still quite significant), in Greece among the four least rated, and in the USA among the five least-rated roles. Greek students rated "providing a stimulating environment" less important than Spanish students and rated "providing materials for children" and "helping children in using the area designated for a specific type of play" less important than students from the USA.

Differences between countries may be attributed to variations in teacher education curriculum requirements, pedagogical approaches, and assessment methods (Suzuki & Johnson, 2018). This highlights the need to examine teacher training curricula concerning the incorporation of play as a teaching and learning tool in early childhood classrooms.

Keywords: Play, Teacher's Role, Preservice Teachers, Teacher Education, Culture

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Provision of arts education activities and impact of teachers' demographics: A large-scale survey study in Hong Kong

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Abstract

Arts and Creativity is one of the learning areas of Hong Kong's official kindergarten curriculum framework (Curriculum Development Council, 2017). Kindergarten teachers are expected to foster children's creativity via four art forms: music, visual arts, dance, and drama. Prior studies (Geršak, 2015; Novakovic, 2015; Rajan, 2017; Wee, 2009) have investigated the provision of activities for each of the art forms in isolation and have not explored the demographic variables that predict teachers' provision of arts education activities. To fill these gaps, this study had two research goals: (1) to investigate the frequency with which Hong Kong kindergarten teachers conduct specific types of art education activities, specifically related to music, visual arts, dance, and drama; (2) to identify subgroups of teachers who differ in terms of the provision of arts education activities and analyze how key demographic variables predict their memberships to these subgroups. We surveyed 477 qualified kindergarten teachers. Descriptive statistics, latent profile analysis, and multinomial logistic regression analysis were performed. Regarding Goal 1, we found that the presence of the four art forms was unbalanced. Participants reported to conduct music and visual arts activities frequently, although the frequency of specific activity types varied. In contrast, dance and drama activities were occasionally or rarely conducted. Regarding Goal 2, we identified three subgroups of teachers who provided arts education activities with different frequencies (highest, medium, lowest). Participants who possessed a master's degree and those who worked in government-funded schools were more likely to be included in the highest arts provision frequency group. While arts education is important to children's development (Moravcik et al., 2013), our findings suggest that the curriculum objectives pertaining to Arts and Creativity are not being implemented accurately in kindergartens, as teachers favored certain art forms in their teaching, instead of equally exposing children to the four art forms. We interpret these findings as a reflection of teachers' uneven preparation in the various art forms. There are two implications for educational policy regarding professional development, which will be useful for professional development providers, curriculum designers, and administrators in the field of ECE, both in Hong Kong and globally. First, there is an urgent need to increase the quantity and strengthen the quality of both pre-service teacher preparation courses and in-service professional development programs in arts education (Collins, 2016; Leung et al., 2023). These courses and programs should equip teachers with sufficient content knowledge and skills in the four art forms, with a special emphasis on dance and drama education. We recommend the exchange of arts education teaching and learning resources using online platforms. Second, government and/or education ministries must take on a leading role to ensure the successful establishment and implementation of such online platforms. They should identify the specific training needs of teachers, allocating the necessary resources, guidance, and support for the sustainability and robustness of the platforms. We believe that the policy implications of this study can serve as initial steps to enhancing the quality of children's arts education and arts-related training for teachers.

Keywords: Arts Education, Music, Visual Arts, Dance, Drama, Provision, Kindergartens, Teachers, Hong Kong

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Navigating educational inequalities beyond the pandemic: Parents' perspectives on ensuring a more equitable education for children

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Abstract

Consistent with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (United Nations, 2015), schools and educators should ensure that every child has an equal opportunity to receive quality education, to learn, and to reach their full potential (OECD, 2017). Disparities in the quality of educational institutions persist and are evident in the unequal distribution of resources, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to technology, and in teacher training and experience. These inequalities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the challenges faced by some schools to provide consistent synchronous online teaching alongside technological limitations and digital literacy gaps among educators, students and parents (Borg, 2022; Darmody et al., 2021).

This study, as part of a broader project (Deguara et al., 2022), investigates parental perspectives on educational inequalities during the pandemic and proposes strategies for fostering equitable education. Some parents, especially those from low socio-economic backgrounds, have voiced concerns about their children and families experiencing academic disadvantage due to inadequate access and support. Consequently, this study aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are the parents' perspectives about the educational inequalities experienced by their children during the COVID-19 pandemic?

2. What recommendations do parents offer for school-level changes to ensure a more equitable education?

Drawing on connectivism theory (Siemens, 2004), which proposes that learning takes place in a virtual learning environment and Gillborn and Youdell's (2000) theory that centres on principles of equitable distribution of resources and educational opportunities, this study examines the perspectives of parents with children aged 0 – 11 years in Malta and their notions about inequalities in schools as experienced by them and their children during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Employing a quantitative approach, two online questionnaires were disseminated via social media in September 2020 and September 2021, garnering 815 and 411 responses from parents respectively. Data was extracted and imported into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for analysis.

The findings highlighted disparities in educational provision during school closures, leading to disengagement and learning setbacks, particularly among children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Unequal access to technological resources and varying levels of parent support amplified these challenges. Moreover, not all schools and teachers were adequately prepared, ready, skillful, or

motivated to meet the challenges of shifting to online modes of teaching and learning. While the pandemic heightened existent inequalities, it created new injustices that impacted children and their learning, which are still persistent today.

To address these challenges and provide equal education to all, necessitates equitable resource allocation to schools, continuous training in digital skills for educators, and additional support for schools in disadvantaged communities including an increase in teacher capacity, and extra support and more adequate resources that help meet children's needs effectively. Furthermore, educators should be sensitised to family dynamics and socio-economic and cultural backgrounds and trained to understand better and support their students. Parents should receive training in literacy and digital literacy skills to actively participate in their children's education.

In conclusion, policy interventions should prioritise the provision of necessary technology and internet connectivity to children from deprived homes. This study underscores the significance of equipping schools with modern resources, training educators and fostering authentic collaboration between schools and parents to promote equitable education for all children.

Keywords: Equitable Education, Parental Perspectives, Pandemic Impact, Educational Disparities, Digital Literacy

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Exploring educators' perceptions and position of children in their understanding of an emergent curriculum: Children's agency in pedagogical decision-making

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Abstract

Acknowledging children's participation rights (UNCRC, 1989) as the foundation for their entitlement to quality education (SDG 4) (United Nations, 2015), this study builds on the view that children are capable and competent learners with personal interests that deserve to be recognized by educators who provide conducive pedagogical practice that supports and nurtures their ability to communicate their ideas and wishes (Hedges, 2022). Embracing a socio-cultural perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), this study explores the pivotal role of educators who are knowledgeable in curriculum and pedagogy and responsive to children's interests to create meaningful pedagogical experiences, based on their funds of knowledge (Chesworth, 2016), fostering meaningful and empowering pedagogical experiences. This study aims to answer two research questions:

1. How do educators conceptualise their image of children and how do they position children in their understanding of an emergent curriculum?

2. What effect do their understandings of children's agency have on their pedagogical decision-making in responding to children's interests?

This study aims to explore how nine Maltese early childhood educators perceive curriculum and learning. Specifically, it seeks to understand how these educators position children within a framework of the emergent curriculum philosophy and perceive children's entitlement to quality education. This research seeks to contribute to the development and importance of informed pedagogical practices that recognise and respond to children's interests, fostering meaningful educational experiences and enhancing children's resilience. The research highlights the complexity of curriculum decision-making in the rapidly changing social-cultural and policy context for early childhood education in Malta.

Adopting a qualitative and interpretivist stance, this study involves the participation of nine kindergarten educators from church, state, and private kindergarten settings. Semi-structured interviews, recorded via the Zoom platform served as the primary data collection method. Ethical clearance was obtained to ensure that the research adhered to ethical standards and protected the rights and well-being of the participants throughout the study. Thematic analysis was chosen as the method to organise the interview data, allowing for the systematic identification and exploration of recurring themes and patterns within the responses provided by the kindergarten educators.

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Within these contexts, our findings draw attention to the competing discourses about children, families and learning that inform young children's play and learning. Of particular significance to this conference are the four themes that evolved from the data: the extent to which educators view children as capable in relation to a deficit view; their understandings of children's agency and capability to be active participants, decision-makers and co-constructors of learning how they respond or ignore children's interests in curriculum planning.

In conclusion, our research underscores the critical need for a nuanced understanding of early childhood educators' perspectives regarding children and families, while advocating the pivotal role of their understandings of children's agency, capacities, and voices in shaping curriculum planning. These findings highlight the necessity for ongoing training and support for educators to effectively implement a rights-based relational pedagogy, while resonating with wider debates about what constitutes curriculum in a global context, particularly in recognizing children's interests and their diverse socio-cultural norms and practices.

Keywords: Agency, Pedagogical Decision-Making, Educators' Perceptions, Emergent Curriculum, Participation Rights.

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Analysing the introduction of cultural capital into early years work in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

In 2019 'cultural capital' was introduced for the first time into early years inspection criteria in the UK. It is defined by Ofsted (2022) as, '[...] the essential knowledge that children need to be educated citizens.' Early years workers are therefore now judged on their ability to develop cultural capital in young children however, the policy definition of cultural capital is narrowed and elitist. Cultural capital as defined originally by Bourdieu (1984), offers a sociological tool for understanding social stratification, but its inclusion in policy documentation belies a focus on developing only valued forms of cultural capital in young children. Arguably, this is problematic in terms of developing a more equal society, but even more so when the demographic of early years workers is taken into account. Early years workers are predominantly working-class women in the UK (Bonetti, 2019), and the cultural capital they often embody is not valued cultural capital.

The aim of this research is to investigate the potential implications of the introduction of cultural capital in the Ofsted inspection framework, for both early years workers, and practice. It is focussed on the interpretation of cultural capital by early years workers, and an analysis of what this means.

A critical feminist theoretical framework is applied to this research as it primarily concerns gender inequality in policy and practice. An initial analysis of sectoral responses via documentary analysis of online sources was undertaken, followed by a focus group with early years workers. The data for this paper comes from one focus group involving 20 women early years workers, from one nursery in an inner-city area of a large UK city. Participants were engaged in a discussion of what cultural capital means, and how they interpret it in their practice.

The key findings of the study so far are that some workers are attempting to ignore the changes by subsuming it into practice that they already know around diversity, but that many are impacted by what is viewed as a discriminatory imposition on their practice.

A critical feminist analysis of the data indicates that this is a policy directive which further attempts to exert control and domination over early years workers. The inclusion of cultural capital represents a move away from valuing the nurturing of diversity in early years practice, and towards incultrating young children into the ways of valued cultural capital. Whilst cultural capital is presented by policy makers as 'essential knowledge' it is a flawed means to develop greater equality because it focusses on directing early years workers to develop young children to fit in to valued social spheres rather than disrupting the inequitable structure which values some people less simple for the culture they embody rather than their contribution to society.

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If the inclusion of cultural capital is an attempt to address social inequality, then it is flawed because it not only further exploits early years workers in devaluing their embodied cultural capital, but also fails to recognise the capitalist social stratification which does not make room at the top for all; a 'flawed social mobility agenda' (Ingram & Gamsu, 2022).

Keywords: Cultural Capital, Early Years Profession, Inequality, Feminist

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How is an Islamically integrated psychotherapy utilised when working with young children?

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Abstract

This study seeks to contribute to knowledge about how Islamic psychology can be applied in clinical settings when working with young children. The aim of the study is to provide a theory of how Islamic psychology is applied within the UK context when working with young Muslim children.

All participants met following criteria inclusion criteria firstly, they are as a Muslim who is qualified psychotherapist/ psychologist/counsellor. Secondly, they were trained in a Western psychotherapy approach in addition to having applied knowledge in relation to Islamic counselling/psychotherapy or completed their primary training in Islamic counselling/psychotherapy. Thirdly, they had experience working with a Muslim child or children under the age of 12. Eight semi-structured interviews were conducted through purposive sampling. The interview schedule explored their ways of working and how they understood their role as Muslim practitioners.

This study took a constructivist perspective while adhering to the holism of an Islamic epistemology through incorporating an Islamic ontological lens outlined by Sheikh (2023). A constructivist grounded theory analysis was undertaken on the transcribed interviews.

Current preliminary findings suggest a core category of Staying on the fitrah (An Islamic concept of a pure primordial state), along with the following sub-categories: Holding in mind disruptive forces, Creating a safe space, Laying the foundation, Being an advocate and Strengthening familial ties.

The preliminary findings suggest that Muslim therapists understand their role within the Islamic life span using the understanding of a primordial fitrah to ground their work. The findings also propose a theory of how therapists use the therapeutic space to allow for children to connect to their spirituality in an organic way. However, results also found that there is also a lot of variation in how practitioners apply these principles with some therapists taking a more non-directive approach and other taking a much more directive approach due to perhaps their different training backgrounds and working environment. In addition, for most of the participants working in secular environments within the UK places the Muslim practitioner in a unique position where they also use their power to represent Muslim child and their families.

Keywords: Religion, Spirituality, Counselling, Psychotherapy, Islamic Psychology

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Impact study of vehicle free street and parks on children in Ahmedabad

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Abstract

aProCh is a community-based initiative of Riverside Education Foundation, Ahmedabad to promote the concept of child friendly cities. It was started in 2007 and promoted in another cities like Aurangabad, Maharashtra, India and Dhaka, Bangladesh. This study is focused on assessing the impact of two of its programs, 'Street Smart' and 'Parents of the Park' on its stakeholders and city environment in general.

A four-step study approach was adopted to assess the impact of aProCh Programs which Includes sample surveys, in-depth interviews, focus group discussions and exhaustive secondary research. Quantitative and qualitative, both data-sets were used in study to determine the impact of aProCh programs on its stakeholders. Based on the guidelines set by UNICEF and Impact Assessment Framework of UN, an impact assessment matrix was created focusing on Sustainability of the programs and their impact on the target demographic.

The study identified that the aProCh programs succeed in their wider objective of mainstreaming the concept of child friendly urban spaces across the city. Taking lead from success of aProCh programs several other organizations have initiated similar programs in their neighborhood. Recently Ahmedabad City developed a pedestrian and child friendly street in heart of city business area and named it 'Happy Street'.

Program 1 - Impact of Street Smart: The program has helped children in developing essential social skills as its activities are focused on outdoor activities and opportunity for children to interact with shop owners, street vendors, their kids, performers and diverse group of people. This leads to a more child friendly city street by the virtue of the children being accustomed to the infrastructure and the people of the city. Children also showed significant improvement in their cognitive development and their physical prowess improved with games and sports. Around 58% of surveyed children have showed a very high frequency of participation in outdoor activities; 30% showed an improvement in tolerance and 23.33% showed improved attention span.

Program 2 - Impact of Parents of the Park: Parents of the Park Program of "aProCh" accustomed the children with the urban ecosystem and in turn helped them in better processing of emotions in the healthy, peaceful and stimulating environment of the parks.

Keywords: Child Rights, Childhood, Children, Child Friendly City

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Empowering through resilience: Addressing childhood substance use trends in South Africa

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Abstract

This submission investigating childhood psychoactive substance use, abuse, and addiction stems from a concerning escalation in the demand for childhood addiction treatment in South Africa. The statistics reveal a notable 28% rise in the need for treatment among children aged four to 13 and a 50% increase for those aged 14 to 17 with a decreased age of onset resulting in children as young as four requiring addiction treatment (Department of Social Development, 2023). As a global concern, childhood substance use is a complex problem that encompasses a dynamic interplay of genetic, neurobiological, environmental, and social factors, increasing the risks of adverse outcomes across biological, neurological, psychological, and behavioural domains (Andrews et al., 2021; Chiappini et al., 2021). Against this backdrop, this presentation utilises the Risks-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model to present findings from a mixed-methods community-engagement collaborative study conducted in partnership with the South African National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SANCA). A self-administered questionnaire was used to collect data from 472 adolescents aged 10 to 18 years, participating nationally in prevention and intervention programmes offered by SANCA between May and September 2023. The study aimed to explore multifaceted risk and protective factors associated with the initiation, motivations, and behavioural context of adolescent drug use. The purpose was to identify effective strategies that support children's resilience and empower them to navigate ever-evolving societal changes, such as the decriminalisation of cannabis in some countries, like South Africa, which heightens the risk of early-onset childhood substance use.

The study's findings revealed that the initiation of psychoactive substance use typically occurred around the age of seven, reaching its peak in mid-adolescence before gradually declining in late adolescence. Concerning prevalence, 43% of respondents reported abstaining from any substance use, while alcohol (57%), cannabis (37%), nicotine (31%), and codeine (16%) emerged as the most frequently used substances. Hardcore drugs, including cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, ecstasy, methcathinone, nyaope, and LSD, collectively constituted less than five per cent of usage. Alcohol, although most frequently used, was characterised by sporadic and experimental consumption, while cannabis and nicotine, though used by fewer respondents, exhibited higher rates of regular and habitual usage.

Concerningly, a significant proportion of respondents reported engaging in polysubstance use, a behaviour associated with an increased risk of dependence and subsequent adverse outcomes, including health issues, mental health problems, and antisocial behaviour (Connor et al., 2021; Gorey et al., 2019; Maluleke, 2020; Pocuca et al., 2023). Moreover, findings indicated that psychoactive substances were predominantly used in social settings, particularly with friends and at parties. Notably, school environments were also identified as prevalent locations for drug use. Sociodemographic factors, including the impact of social peer interactions, social acceptance, popularity, and societal normalisation of certain psychosocial substances like alcohol and cannabis, were identified as significant facilitators of childhood substance use.

Additionally, self-medication for psychiatric disorders and emotional challenges was found to add another layer of risk. This aligns with a neurobiological dual systems perspective, explaining the interplay between a heightened propensity for risk-taking, sensation-seeking behaviour, and increased susceptibility to peer influence, which drive adolescents' experimentation with and use of psychoactive substances (Andrews et al., 2021; Crone & van Duijvenvoorde, 2021).

The findings underscore the need to adopt a progressive approach that recognises the interplay between neurobiological foundations and social contextual factors influencing adolescents' risk and pleasure-seeking behaviours. The presentation will conclude by proposing guidelines for the formulation of prevention, intervention, and harm reduction strategies within governmental and civil society sectors in the best interests of children who are either at risk of or already using psychoactive substances.

Keywords: Psycho active substances, substance abuse, risk-need-responsivity model, adolescents, prevention, intervention, harm-reduction, socio-environmental determinants

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Research with children: Reflecting on ethical dilemmas and opportunities

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Abstract

At the end of the twentieth century, a vision of childhood began to emerge with a greater and more explicit focus on children's rights and well-being, aimed at improving their lives in the present and creating more equitable social relations between children and adults (Mason & Watson, 2014; Mayall, 2015; Duhn, 2018). In line with this view, important efforts have been made from scholars to reassess the focus of childhood research and to change the way it is conducted (Kellett, 2010). In addition to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), approaches such as the new sociology of childhood and socio-cultural theory provide the conceptual lens through which research with children is conducted. As active members of their socio-cultural environment, children participate in everyday activities and construct meanings with others through the mediation of cultural tools (Rogoff, 2008). Seen as competent actors with their own social agency, they constitute an autonomous but not inferior social group (Woodhead, 2006). In this sense, they are co-creators of social reality and their lives. Considered as capable to communicate their views on issues that concern them through a variety of means, they have the right to be listened to (Kellett, 2005; Broström, 2012). In this context, participatory research approaches with young children have been growing in recent years and methods such as photovoice, storytelling, drawing-telling, small group interviews, and guided tours have been increasingly used to empower and engage young children in research in meaningful ways (Clark & Moss, 2011; Urbina-Garcia et al., 2022). Researchers around the world recognize the ethical obligation not only to investigate but also to understand and take into account children's authentic perspectives, the complexity of their lives and the multiple factors that influence their well-being, learning and development (Kellett, 2010; Dockett, Einarsdóttir & Perry, 2012). In this presentation, we critically review ethical dilemmas relating to obtaining informed consent from young children and constantly renegotiating it through long research projects, elaborating and making efforts to decreasing power relations between researchers and children-participants, and managing tensions and conflicts that arise when parents and children disagree about participation in research, or when the class teacher is also the researcher. To attain this aim we reexamine evidence from our previous research projects with children. We draw on artefacts, filed notes and observations from these projects where we employed alternative practices to communicate the meaning of research to children, constantly negotiate their informed consent, and to respond to emerging tensions and dilemmas. Recognising that the ongoing research with and for children provoke new ethical dilemmas, we conclude by discussing the opportunities offered by the process of evidence-based reflection of researchers.

Keywords: Participatory research; Children's rights; Power relations; Informed consent; Ethics

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Bridging gaps: Collaborative efforts to advance sustainable development in early childhood education in South Africa

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Abstract

In South Africa, the intersection of research and practice in Early Childhood Education for Sustainable Development (ECEfS) faces a unique challenge amid the context of unequal communities. Despite notable progress within the 2030 Agenda framework, scepticism persists regarding the practical manifestation of sustainable development as a "day-to-day reality" on the ground (United Nations [UN], 2012, p.4). Business Tech South Africa (2021) estimates that around 30.4 million people in the RSA live below the poverty line, complicating the implementation of effective ECEfS initiatives. This pervasive socioeconomic disparity necessitates an exploration of specific needs and contextual factors influencing early childhood development in marginalised communities. Undertaking such an endeavour requires a collaborative synergy that can only be achieved by creating developmental opportunities within early years teachers, parents, caregivers, communities, and governments.

The purpose of this research project is to explore the collaborative efforts between early years teachers, parents and communities within three districts to foster ECEfS. All set against the backdrop of socio-economic disparities in South Africa. Secondary questions included investigating the understanding of the specific challenges that hinder sustainable development in the contexts of these young children, and examining guidelines that early years teachers, parents, caregivers, or communities could follow to overcome these obstacles and enhance sustainable development. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory guided this research as it provides a comprehensive understanding of the various systems and contexts that influence a child's development.

Adopting a qualitative approach, this study employed the participatory action-learning and action-research (PALAR) design, allowing participants to construct knowledge collaboratively and assign meaning to experiences. PALAR going beyond traditional interviews, empowered participants as equal partners with an Action Learning Set (ALS) to advocate for change. Data from the ALS in three rural South African districts, namely Motheo in the Free State, Ikageng in the North-West, and Sedibeng-East in Gauteng, were analysed to advocate for change. The data from recorded ALS discussions, photovoice, collage, and reflective diary entries were analysed through three cycles. Six to eight purposively selected participants in each ALS provided a nuanced understanding of the research phenomenon. Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase, thematic analysis approach was used to analyse the data. This method comprises the following aspects: familiarising oneself with the data; coding, segmenting, and searching for themes; reviewing, defining, and organising participants' views according to the themes; and then substantiating the findings with participants' verbatim quotations. Integrity was ensured by following the five quality indicators as set out by Herr and Anderson (2015), namely outcome, process, democratic, catalytic, and dialogue validity. The Ethics Committee of the North-West University (Potchefstroom, RSA) and the Departments of Education/Social Development in three districts, namely Motheo, Education and Sport

Development of the North-West Province, and Sedibeng-East, granted ethical clearance and permission to conduct the low-risk level research project.

The findings suggested that scholars need to explore innovative and culturally sensitive approaches that address the diverse challenges faced by children in unequal settings. Simultaneously early years teachers need to integrate the research findings into their classrooms to promote an inclusive and responsive educational environment. Bridging the gap between research and practice requires a collaborative effort, involving policymakers, educators, and community stakeholders to develop targeted interventions that cater to the distinct needs of children in disadvantaged areas, ultimately working towards a more equitable and sustainable future for South Africa's youngest learners.

Keywords: Collaboration, Early Childhood Education for Sustainable Development (ECEfS), Inequality, PALAR,

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Promoting social sustainable education (SSE) in an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) institution in a refugee camp through affordances in nature and co-existence

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Abstract

In a report by UNESCO about the contribution of early childhood education to a sustainable society, Pramling Samuelsson and Kaga (2008) along with Elliott (2015) emphasize the value of creating spaces for all children to engage with nature through play. Over the past decade, we have witnessed significant upheavals and challenges related to climate change, migration, pandemics and violent conflicts. These changes have resulted in less predictability, increased socio-economic disparities and increased migration. Since 2015, the Greek island of Lesvos has emerged as a hot spot for refugees. Through media, we are familiar with images of families, including young children, undertaking perilous journeys across the Mediterranean Sea in overcrowded boats from Türkiye to Lesvos, risking their lives. Many children spend significant parts of their childhood on the move, often residing in several refugee camps and frequently experiencing multiple traumatic events. With increased immigration to Europe, there is a pressing need to address aspects of sustainable education for all children, aligning with UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4.2. (UN, 2015). Cultivating a nurturing environment in children's formative education is crucial for both child well-being and social sustainability (Heldal et al., 2021).

This study attempts to meet the request for practice-oriented research by presenting new ideas of ECEC pedagogical practice, in which one of the key ideas is to bring refugee and local children together and acknowledge affordances in nature as an important pedagogical environment. The overall theoretical perspectives in this study is social sustainability (Davies, 2015) explored in the light of affordances (Gibson, 1979), with further development and interpretations of the theory towards interactional affordances (Kyttä, 2004, Waters 2017).

The main objective of this study is to explore how an Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) institution in a refugee camp can promote social sustainable education through play and learning in nature and further how co-existence between refugee children and local children can contribute to democratic understanding.

The study's empirical material comprises 1 group interview and 14 field observations of educators interacting with children playing in a nature environment. Thematic analysis through open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), followed by a cross-cases display (Miles & Huberman, 1994), was conducted to interpret the data. Axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 96) was utilized to merge different categories, resulting in three categories that depict children's play, the educator's role in participation, and how the nature environment influences play and relations.

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The empirical material underscores the importance of pedagogical practices characterized by sensitive and conscious educators who acknowledge children's play as important for making new experiences, and the pedagogical possibilities of a nature environment. By allowing children time to create their own space in nature, initiate collaborative construction activities outdoors, and promote caregiving activities, educators enable children to feel part of a community and develop trust.

These factors will be discussed as important for children to initiate all-consuming play themselves, and crucial in dealing with traumas. Contributing to a more normalized everyday life with favorable conditions for both local children and children living in a refugee camp.

Keywords: social sustainability, play, nature environment, refugee children, affordances, democracy, co-existence

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(Historical) Development of children's rights after the second world war until today: The example of Croatia

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Abstract

Adoption of the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1924 represented the beginning of the regulation of children's rights, as well as the foundation of further international regulation of their rights (Vandenhole, Erdem Türkelli and Lembrechts, 2019; Kosher, Ben-Arieh and Hendelsman, 2016; Cantwell, 2016). After the Second World War, some European countries became part of the socialist bloc. In this sense, the question of the position of the family, that is, the rights of children in public and private spaces, was also raised. At the same time, socialist countries began to abandon the patriarchal approach to the family, emphasizing equality in every segment (Alinčić and Bakarić-Mihanović, 1980).

Croatia is an example of a European country that became part of the socialist bloc after the Second World War, as the republic of the federally organized former Yugoslavia. Socialist Yugoslavia was a signatory to the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child from 1959, as well as the UN Convention on the Political Rights of Women from 1953. Following the obligations from international documents, children enjoyed special social protection in socialist Croatia. Thus, the equalization of married and illegitimate children since 1972 stands out (Mitić, 1980; Alinčić and Bakarić-Mihanović, 1980; Prokop, 1972), which appeared much later in certain Western European countries (Antokolskaia, 2006). In addition, children were guaranteed numerous other rights, which indicates the priority of protecting children as a vulnerable social group. In the 1990s, Croatia became an independent country, and a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as the basis for the regulation of children's rights in contemporary society. In addition, Croatia is a signatory to numerous other international documents guaranteeing the protection of children's rights and a member of international organizations. Therefore, contemporary Croatian family legislation guarantees children a high level of protection of their rights (Hrabar, 2009; Rešetar, 2022).

This paper aims to present the development of children's rights after the Second World War up to today's contemporary approach to the protection of their rights on the example of Croatia. In addition to personal and family rights, procedural rights of children are also analyzed. The stated goals will be achieved by analyzing Croatian family legislation from 1945 to 1990 and family legislation from the period of democratic changes until today. In addition, relevant national and international family law literature will be analyzed, which will compare the position of children's rights in other, selected legal systems. It is also important to point out that the results of the analysis of children's rights through these two periods will enable monitoring of the progress of the development of their rights up to the contemporary Croatian family legislation. The research carried out so far points to a progressive approach to the protection of children's rights in Croatian socialist family legislation, where certain aspects are comparable to contemporary family legislation. Following international obligations, children in Croatia today enjoy a high level of rights protection. Therefore, it is concluded that both observed periods, with a certain time lag, highlight the importance of social protection of children's rights. In this research, the descriptive method is

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primarily used, with an emphasis on the historical method in the first part of the research. In addition, a comparative method is used, which compares the rights of children in family legislation in Croatia after the Second World War in relation to today's, contemporary family legislation. The research also uses the axiological method, which critically approaches the regulation of the protection of children's rights.

Keywords: children's rights, historical development of children's rights, family legislation, international documents, Croatia

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Refugee children's occupational perceptions

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Abstract

Millions of refugees are forced to flee their home countries in search of a better life abroad due to a variety of issues, including financial difficulties, natural disasters, civil unrest, war, regime change, and poverty (Deniz, 2009). Children are among the most vulnerable refugee groups. Children who are refugees must deal with issues like trauma, displacement, and learning a new language and environment all at once (Anderson et al., 2003). Since attending school is a requirement for a normal life, it is crucial that refugee children do so in order to forge a lasting relationship with the institution for their future (Duman & Snoubar, 2017). Schools play a crucial role in assisting refugee children in mitigating the effects of traumatic experiences both prior to and during migration, addressing their social adaptation challenges in the host country, and supporting them in achieving cultural adaptation (Angel et al., 2001). Providing children with information about professions is essential to assessing their knowledge about various careers and the influencing factors in this regard. The knowledge gained through this process significantly impacts the career choices children will make in their later years (Liben et al., 2002). Thus, the purpose of this research is to investigate how refugee children perceive their careers. The sample of the study includes 55 refugee children between the ages of 60-72 months. In this study, document analysis was used as a component of qualitative research methods. This approach involves a systematic examination and interpretation of textual, visual, or audio-visual documents to extract meaningful insights pertaining to a specific topic or phenomenon (Bowen, 2009; Denscombe, 2010).

Examining children's artwork has consistently served as a systematic approach to assessing children's views and sentiments regarding relevant subjects (Farokhi & Hashemi, 2011). For this aim, 55 children participated in this research in order to collect data in line with ethical considerations and approval from the Adıyaman University Ethics Committee. The participating children were asked some semi-structured interview questions as well as asked to draw their dream job. During the data collection, the translators' help was sought in some cases. The content analysis was used to analyse the data, and three main categories emerged, which are: gender and occupational thoughts, occupational details, and supporting reflections of occupations. Within these categories, gender distributions, occupations, work descriptions, the country they would like to work in, working places, dress codes, materials, natural materials, and so on were represented and discussed through the research. As a result, the reflections of desired occupations are related to their experiences, as well as being impacted by various factors such as family members, the place where they lived, and the experiences they faced.

Keywords: refugee children, preschool, occupations, perception, children's drawings

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Right to inclusive and quality education of Muslim children: A *Quagmire* of identity, security and exclusion

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Abstract

The Constitution of India proclaims that there should be free and compulsory "education for all," which includes universal access, universal enrolment, and universal retention within its ambit. However, these terms obscure the term "all," which, in principle, should encompass all the deprived sections of society suffering from distinctive socio-economic deprivation. The minorities in various nations usually suffers from this distinctive kind of deprivation due to economic, socio-cultural, and gender-based factors. Educational backwardness is the leading cause of actual or perceived "alienation" of the marginalized community, and inclusive education at the same time is seen as the panacea, given its role as an instrument of socialization, empowerment, social mobilization, and national integration. Nevertheless, the form of education should be such that it is diversified and reinforces the individual's identity and, at the same time, does not become another factor for the exclusion. However, individuals from marginalized communities are at a double disadvantage with low levels of education combined with low quality of education. This paper analyses the whole concourse of identity, security, and equity, which affect the participation of Muslim children in elementary education in India.

Keywords: Education, Identity, Security, Exclusion, Deprivation, Participation

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Associations between participation practices, teacher-child interactions, and children's socio-emotional development

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Abstract

Participation, besides a fundamental right of all children, is described as an indicator of early childhood education (ECE) settings' quality (Sheridan, 2007, United Nations, 1989). The promotion of child participation is recommended since the earliest years, and it is recognized that teacher practices and the interactions taking place within ECE shape participatory processes (Sinclair, 2004). Importantly, participation is considered an investment in children's development and well-being (Council of Europe, 2017; Sandseter & Seland, 2016). However, little is known on how, and under which mechanisms, teacher practices and teacher-child interactions are associated with children's socio-emotional development (Correia et al., 2023). Aiming to fill in these gaps, two studies were conducted. The first study aimed to investigate associations between self-reported (*Teacher Perceived Participation Practices Scale*, 16 items; Correia et al., 2020) and observed ECE teachers' participation practices (*Observed Teachers Participation Practices Scale*, 13 items; Correia et al., 2020), observed teacher-child interactions (*CLASS Pre-K*, 10 items; Pianta et al., 2008), and children's reported self-concept (*Pictorial Scale of Perceived Competence and Social Acceptance for Young Children*, 24 items; Harter & Pike, 1984; Mata et al., 2008) and children's social skills, reported by teachers (*Social Skills Rating System*, 30 items; Gresham & Elliott, 1990; 2007), mediated by children's perceptions of their own participation (*Choosing classrooms: A structured interview on children's right to participate*, 2 items; Correia & Aguiar, 2017). The second study aimed to investigate associations between ECE teachers' observed participation practices (*Observed Teachers Participation Practices Scale*, 13 items; Correia et al., 2020), observed teacher-child interactions (*CLASS Pre-K*, 10 items; Pianta et al., 2008), and children's self-reported friendships (*Sociometric Proceedings*, nomination and evaluation tasks; e.g., Peceguina et al., 2022; Santos et al., 2015), and the quality of friendships, reported by teachers (*Friendships Quality Scale*, 8 items; adapted from T-SNQ, Guralnick et al., 2011, and DFQ, Simpkins & Parke, 2001), moderated by dosage (i.e., time spent with the ECE teacher, reported by teachers). In these studies, which received approval from the National Data Protection Commission and the Institutional Review Board, participants were 336 children (163 boys), aged between 42 and 76 months ($M = 60.14$, $SD = 7.86$), from 58 ECE classrooms in the Lisbon area, Portugal, and their lead teachers. Data was collected during two school years (half of the sample in each year), and multilevel mediation and moderation analysis were performed (in the first and second study, respectively). Taken together, these studies main findings suggest (i) positive associations between observed participation practices and children's self-concept, mediated by children's perceptions of participation, and (ii) positive associations between the instructional support domain of teacher-child interactions and the quality of children's friendships, moderated by dosage. These studies, accounting for different informants and levels of analysis, represent initial attempts to investigate the associations between participation practices and teacher-child interactions, and children's developmental

outcomes. Important implications will be discussed, for research (e.g., investigating other development outcomes, in other geographical areas and contexts), practice (e.g., promoting professional development initiatives) and policymaking (e.g., ensuring initiatives and programs that include children as informants).

Keywords: Children's Rights, Child Participation Right, Participation Practices, Teacher-Child Interactions, Early Childhood Education, Socio-Emotional Development

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A comparison of homeschooling and formal early childhood education: An ethnographical study in Iran

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Abstract

Nowadays, education has become a participatory social action. In other words, families assume themselves to be entitled, interested, and responsible for their children's education. Additionally, they become aware of different educational approaches and every time compare their children's education with these approaches. Consequently, they can diagnose the pathologic actions of the formal educational system and be concerned about them (Gamuzza & Leonora, 2023). This concern can lead to thinking about home-schooling and detaching from the formal educational system. On the other hand, detaching from the formal educational system and decreasing the role of the state in childhood education can result in a kind of breaking solidarity. These years, in Iran we have encountered the new phenomenon we can call homeschooling which has embodied families' independence, pluralistic childhoods, and even civil disobedience. Regarding one of these homeschools, which has been for children 4-7, in this paper, I attempted to discover the key components of the worldviews of these homeschools. In the second step, I compared these components with formal documents of the national curriculum. The study has been framed by an ethnographic approach including interviews, observations, focus group discussions, and photos. I gathered these data during 84 person/hours. Moreover, I interviewed five teachers/managers of this kindergarten. Simultaneously, I analyzed formal documents of the national curriculum of early childhood education in Iran, and finally, I compared them. The first component of the educational worldview of this kindergarten was the participation of all stakeholders in the educational process. This participation has assumed all families and teachers as cultural mirrors can have their roles in education independently. Considering the national curriculum of preschools, we can find some contradictions between the perspectives of these kindergartens and formal documents of early childhood education. Unlike this participation, plurality, and variety, the national curriculum emphasized unity. This unity can cost the ignoring of parents and other stakeholders who engage in education. In addition, whereas this kindergarten followed a child-centered approach, the national curriculum oscillated between child-centered and teacher-centered approaches. The third concept that was important in this kindergarten was dialogue. While dialogue with all stakeholders engaging in education was one of the bases of this approach, the dialogue in the national curriculum has been limited between teachers and children, and we did not find other kinds of dialogue in this document. It seems that these differences can be the first phases of social division, and we should concentrate on them as the agenda of our national discussions. If we don't pay attention to these differences, we will encounter a fragmental society where citizens live in different worlds without any fusion horizons. This dichotomy provokes us to start an inclusive dialogue in childhood education policy in the country with all stakeholders who engage in childhood education.

Keywords: Childhood Education, Homeschooling, Formal Documents, Dialogue, Participation, Educational Policy

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Reading beyond words: A multimodal social semiotics approach to children's digital reading and agency in early years settings

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Abstract

This study aims to unveil children's agency and reading practices while interacting with a narrative app on an iPad. It challenges conventional perceptions of reading, advocating for a broader interpretation. The study draws on several research on children's engagement with iPad apps (Daniels et al., 2020; Kucirkova, 2018; Walsh, 2017) as well as young children's agency and their interaction with digital devices in early-years settings (Neumann & Merchant, 2022). Most of such research explore the potential of iPads as a teaching, learning and assessment instrument (Stratigos & Fenech, 2021). However, a considerable research gap is still waiting to be explored regarding the use of the apps on iPads as a tool for supporting children's reading practices and agency. The study is based on multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) and social semiotics (Halliday, 1978; Kress 2009) approaches and supports Kress' understanding of reading-as-design (Kress, 2003: 151) where he asserts that reading is idiosyncratic, and readers design the text while reading it.

The primary objective of this small-scale study is to unveil the role of children's agency in their reading practices while engaging with digital narrative apps on iPads. It aims to bridge the research gap by exploring how these apps serve not only as educational tools but also as platforms that support and enrich children's reading practices and agency.

Participants included a child (aged 4.5), a teacher working at an early years setting in the UK and a narrative app on iPad. Employing a qualitative interpretive research design, the study gathered data through a video recording of a child-teacher shared reading event, based on a narrative app on an iPad, and semi-structured and video-stimulated interview with the teacher following the reading event. Ethical rigour was ensured through obtaining consents from all participating parties and verifying the assent before and during the data collection. The recorded data was analysed using multimodal discourse analysis on ELAN Software focusing on the nuances of the child's and teacher's engagement with the app and themselves. In an attempt to understand the meaning arises from the trifold interactions of the child, teacher, and the narrative app, it was also necessary to analyse the narrative app itself as well as the child-teacher interaction. The purpose here was to understand how the app's structure influenced the construction of the multimodal narrative and was interpreted by the readers (child and teacher). To do this, I conducted textual analysis for the app, again by using ELAN software.

Findings revealed that the child acted as active, *internal* participant (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006: 47), deeply immersing himself in the story-world of the narrative app on the iPad. This immersion fostered an interactive and dialogic environment, highlighting the child's substantial involvement in the narrative itself. The study underscores the importance of narrative apps as powerful tools in fostering children's agency and providing them with rich, multimodal reading experiences. The results also advocate for a

recognition of the diverse ways in which digital technologies can augment literacy development in early years settings. This study contributes to the evolving discourse on digital literacy in early childhood education by demonstrating a significant potential of narrative apps in supporting children's reading practices and agency. By offering insights into the interactive and multimodal dimensions of reading in digital environments, the findings also highlight the need for educators and apps developers to consider the agency of young readers in the design and implementation of these technologies.

Keywords: early childhood education, digital reading, multimodal social semiotics, children's apps, iPads

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Educating emerging educators within collisions of child development and post developmental pedagogies

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Abstract

This presentation shares research-informed practices developed by three postsecondary educators in Canada, which activate leading-edge research assertions that contesting normative child development is a necessary undertaking for preparing emerging educators to respond to changing childhoods (Nxumalo et al., 2022; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Vintimilla, 2020). We address the conference theme by mobilizing theoretically-grounded teaching practices to discuss how post-secondary research-practice initiatives can reimagine global childhoods in unequal communities as educators navigate a messy curricular space where child development and post developmental pedagogies collide. We situate reckoning with collisions of child development and post developmental pedagogies as necessary for rethinking emerging educators' learning toward reconceptualizing childhoods for equal societies. Our central research question asks: How might postsecondary educators advance pedagogical commitments and conditions that contend with lived contradictions, ethics, politics, and possibilities while envisioning post developmental childhoods among the lingering legacies of child development?

This presentation acts on well-established critiques of the universalising and minoritizing functions of Euro-Western child developmental science (Burman, 2016). We define post developmental pedagogies as relations, subjectivities, and practices that subtract early childhood from child development (Land et al., 2022). Learning within complex collisions of developmental science and post developmentalism is, we argue, a necessary condition of living well with children in a global context in uncertain times. Locating our postsecondary teaching at the research-practice-theory nexus, our goal is to deepen collective understanding of teaching against the interpretative power of developmental knowledge in a contemporary context where emerging educators constantly encounter the developmental child.

As three postsecondary educators, we draw upon our experience teaching emerging early childhood studies students at a university in Canada. This includes curriculum development, research integration, field experience, and classroom facilitation. We use a pedagogical documentation methodology (Giamminuti et al., 2022) that considers the ethical and political consequences of our classroom practices and situates our teaching within contemporary concerns (ex: ongoing settler colonialism, increasing globalization).

We share three pedagogical propositions that inform our teaching within collisions of developmentalism and post developmentalism: (1) experimenting with assessment practices that refuse to reproduce underlying logics of developmentalism (universalism, truth, discrete criteria) as methods for quantifying students' learning; (2) resisting teleological formulations of student learning trajectories that echo the stage-based logics of deferral used in child development and instead foregrounding process, responsiveness, and accountability as touchstones for student learning; and (3) emphasizing how emerging educators are

implicated in knowledge production, therefore rejecting a research-practice divide that reproduces the status-quo narrative of educators as practitioners who apply objective pre-existing theory. Implications include a discussion of how our situated pedagogical reflection contributes to the collective pursuit of rethinking childhoods in changing societal contexts. We suggest that postsecondary educators need to craft risky, unfamiliar practices for responding to the everyday contradictions and possibilities that animate a common project toward nurturing post developmental childhoods amongst the ever-tangible inheritances of developmental science.

Keywords: early childhood education; educator professional learning; postdevelopmental pedagogies; teacher training; postsecondary education; childhood studies

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Emancipatory paradigms reimagine childhoods and society for more convivial futures

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Abstract

New ways of knowing and being can solve the multifaceted crisis of climate, energy, poverty, inequality and food (Escobar, 2020). By re-examining methodological assumptions researchers can reimagine more democratic, just and sustainable futures (UNESCO, 2021). This paper discusses new paradigms that can support resilience and empowerment of children, their families and communities in uncertain times. I contextualise the discussion with data from my study about the potential of early childhood policy in post-apartheid South Africa, guided by these research questions:

- How does the selection and promotion of certain kinds of knowledges produce different kinds of change?
- How can emancipatory paradigms, theories and methodologies reimagine childhoods and society for liberatory social change and more convivial futures?

This study seeks to understand the lack of progress in bringing about liberatory change for children, their families and communities nearly three decades after the end of apartheid in South Africa. Emancipatory knowledge (including indigenous and tacit knowledges) is about the capacity to act transformatively to restore, create and imagine new socio-ecological systems to sustain life (Satgar 2018). This presentation investigates emancipatory knowledges and methodologies for more convivial (Freire, 1985) and just futures.

Given the sorry state of affairs, I looked for emancipatory methodologies to bring new possibilities into view. I combined a decolonial project with a poststructuralist policy analysis and reflexivity as genealogy with autoethnography. Ubuntu philosophy challenges universalism with other ways of knowing and being that do not separate thinking from feeling, reason from emotion, knowledge from caring. It emphasizes the spiritual dimension of love, healing and respect for the planet. This understanding extends beyond the connectedness of all humans, to include the living-dead, or ancestors, the yet to be born. Many believe that children are ancestors called back to earth and are born with wisdom and experience of previous lives on earth. Understanding children as ancestors immediately troubles dominant views and opens many possibilities for doing early childhood otherwise.

Autoethnography connected my experience and large archive of policy documents and notes. Carol Bacchi's (2016) approach to policy analysis showed how any human condition, need, ideal, tension or disagreement can be called into policy and named as a 'problem'. I untangled those issues that are presented as 'problems' to reveal the ways in which power operates, and language and action is used, to legitimize the chosen direction of change, which becomes accepted as the obvious choice and way to proceed.

Working in this way I developed a series of arguments to make visible: how South African policy constructs early childhood services narrowly as preparing young children for school and work in a capitalist society on the assumption that this can change their economic circumstances; how policy intentions are thwarted by the uncritical acceptance of global discourses, such as narrow notions of evidence, western child development, understanding the child as return on investment, and referencing urban middle-class contexts and values; and how colonial thinking in policies, continues to silence debate and to erase local understandings of childhood and how to live well together. Colonial thinking forecloses the radically different futures these notions could open up.

The problem in early childhood policy in South Africa since the end of apartheid, could have been conceptualised differently, by acknowledging diversity in South Africa, and drawing on a wide range of socio-economic theories and paradigms. A genuinely integrated approach that accommodates multiple visions of childhood and society could generate complexity and open possibilities for stories other than colonial capitalist progress based on an extractive economy. Emancipatory research can reveal social and political problems of injustice or inequity and energise action for change.

Keywords: Emancipatory knowledges, convivial futures, autoethnography, policy analysis, knowledge and power hierarchies, decoloniality

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Co-creating inclusive and socially just museum spaces with young people: Insights from a five-year heritage project at Manchester museum

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Abstract

This paper reflects on a five-year endeavour aimed at co-producing knowledge about heritage, belonging, and culture with young people at Manchester Museum, University of Manchester. Aligned with the University's commitment to social responsibility, the study examines the successes and challenges encountered in establishing youth-led projects on cultural heritage.

Focusing on the evolving significance of young people's anti-racist activism in the UK museum learning and education landscape, this paper delves into its implications for educators within heritage spaces. Drawing from participatory work with young people from 2019 to 2023, it explores the complexities of 'youth-led' museum educational practices, balancing celebration of 'shared cultural heritage' with critical examination of identities and belongings.

The OSCH project engaged young people aged 11 to 25, representing diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, primarily in Manchester, with additional participants from across the UK due to the project's online nature during the Covid-19 pandemic. Employing a participatory action research framework, various data collection methods, including arts-based data, focus groups, interviews, observation, and questionnaires, were utilised. Data analysis was conducted collaboratively with participants.

The project revealed that when young people feel empowered within cultural institutions, they may challenge established norms by actively inhabiting public cultural spaces, particularly amidst heightened anti-racism discourse. Findings demonstrate how young activists disrupt existing habits and contours of cultural spaces, generating new knowledge about activism, education, and culture.

Conversations initiated by the project underscored young people's desire to celebrate shared cultural heritage while critically interrogating museum representations. Initiatives such as the Our Shared Cultural Heritage programme facilitated positive transformations within museums, enhancing engagement with South Asian heritage and offering new opportunities for young individuals.

The paper advocates for amplifying young people's voices and participation and acting upon their insights (Gallagher et al., 2008) within cultural settings, challenging deficit discourses surrounding their cultural activism (Gaztambide-Fernández & Matute, 2020). Emphasising genuine participation, collaborative action, and democratic research approaches (Cuevas-Parra, 2020), participatory action research emerges as a transformative tool for fostering authenticity and inclusivity within museum spaces.

In conclusion, the research conducted during the five-year heritage project highlights the potential for museums to engage young people effectively if museum educators actively seek to learn from them through participatory action research. The insights gleaned from 'youth-led' work within the heritage sector offer valuable lessons for educators in museums, galleries, and other cultural organizations,

showcasing the importance of integrating young people's activism into institutional practices and policies for a more inclusive and socially just cultural landscape.

Keywords: Young people, Social responsibility, Anti-racist activism, Education, Participatory work

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An examination of (a lack of) diversity in early childhood education literacy

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Abstract

Representation in children's literature is a topic of utmost importance, as the stories we share daily with young minds play a significant role in shaping their ability to recognize themselves, their families, and cultures as well as understand of the world. The need for diverse and accurate racial representation in children's books has gained increasing recognition as society, especially cities like New York City in the United States where approximately 85% of the student population in the education system is children of color, strives for greater equity and understanding. Especially after George Floyd, a Black man, was murdered by a white police officer in 2020, followed by a worldwide racial equity and social justice movement, Black Lives Matter, the recognition for diversifying children's literature has been heightened as a way to combat the implicit biases that were possibly forged early in our lives.

For all children to grow and develop healthy self-confidence and self-respect, it is crucial that we change this unintentional (or intentional) systemic perpetuation of systemic racism and reimagine what comprises healthy development for all young children with a diverse and accurate racial, cultural, and gender representation in literature during their childhood. In order to break the cycle that may start early on in our lives, the current study, therefore, examines how diversity is represented in early childhood literacy education in New York City.

To investigate the effect of a heightened notion for more diverse racial representation in education, the current study compares the pre- and post-Black Lives Matter curricula in 2018 and 2023. The book recommendations provided in Units of Study, the centralized curriculum and lesson plans provided by the New York City Department of Education for their universal preschool programs, Pre-K for All, were analyzed. As the data source, the following information on book authors and main characters were checked and verified: book jacket bios; text and illustrations in the books; publisher websites; book authors and illustrators'websites as well as social media; journal articles and interviews with the authors; and book reviews.

The preliminary findings from 2019 data show that 80% of the authors were white, 1% Asian, 1% Black, 1% Hispanic, 0.02% Indigenous, and 15% unknown. It is evident that children's books in the centralized curriculum were predominantly written by white authors. As for the main characters in the books, 88% were white, 0% Asian, 0.2% Black, 0.2% Hispanic, 0% indigenous, and 10% other. The same as the authors, the books were about predominantly white people and cultures.

For the authors in 2023, 68% were white, 11% Black, 4.5% Asian, 2% Hispanic, and 0% Indigenous. In addition, 31% of the main characters were Black, 15% white, 0.4% Asian, 0.4% Hispanic, 0.2% Indigenous, and 53% other. Compared to the 2019 curriculum, the number of Black children as main characters changed

from 0.2% to 31%, which was a significant increase within four years. Approximately 70% of the authors, however, were still white despite the decrease from 80% in 2019.

It is quite alarming to grasp the fact that children may be, in fact, exposed to racially and culturally irrelevant literature starting at such early ages every day. This is to say that in a universal Pre-K classroom, where decisions have been made to provide equitable educational opportunities for all children in the city, white superiority may be perpetuated through literacy education. Diverse and inclusive representations in children's literature not only enrich their learning experiences but also foster empathy, respect, and a broader appreciation for cultural diversity, which helps empower young readers in their identity and cultural history.

Keywords: early childhood literacy curriculum, diversity in early childhood literature, equity, diversity and includion,

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Professional identity of early childhood educators during universal pre-k policy implementation: Case studies on New York City and Tokyo

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Abstract

A growing body of research has been conducted on early childhood teachers' professional identity, teaching practice, and professionalism in the field (e.g., Dalli et al., 2012; Harwood & Tukonic, 2017). Dalli et. al. (2012) argues that "professionalism" in early childhood practice has multiple layers of influence that include teachers' social contexts within the systems of early childhood education (ECE) professions and cannot be merely defined through lists of professional qualifications and individual attributes (Dalli, 2008; Tucker, 2004).

New York City (NYC) and Tokyo underwent a universal ECE policy in 2014 and 2019, respectively. In both cities the new policies were implemented through a rather top-down style (Akaba et al. 2022; Akaba 2023), in which teachers and other practitioners' voices were reflected neither in the policy itself or the way it was implemented at the school or local community level. The new policies may have influenced teachers' professional identity, yet little is known about teachers' daily experiences during the policy implementation as ECE professionals.

The current study, therefore, explores daily experiences of teachers and examines their professional identity through the implementation of new universal ECE policies in NYC and Tokyo as two case studies.

For NYC's case, I utilized the findings from Akaba et al. (2022) and Liang et al. (2022). For Tokyo's case, I conducted interviews with 14 teachers at eight kindergarten sites. Thematic Analysis was used for data analysis (Braun and Clarke, 2006). For the analytical framework, I employed the ecological systems for early childhood professions suggested by Dalli, Millar, and Urban (2012).

In NYC, teachers stated they were not aware beforehand that working with the Department of Education through the universal Pre-K programs was substantially more complicated and multifaceted (Akaba et al., 2022). Since the policy implementation, they needed to divide their time between being a teacher, parent educator, event planner, evaluator, data manager, program manager, and more. Most teachers needed to spend time for work during the weekends due to an increased amount of paperwork for the Pre-K programs.

In Tokyo, teachers shared that families treat them as if they were babysitters rather than educators, now that the education is technically "free." They felt compelled to convince families that their ECE site is, in fact, a place for education, suggesting that the perception towards ECE among families seems to have changed since the policy enactment. As the concerns regarding tuition have been lessened, families are now seeking more and better "perks and benefits" in kindergarten, such as free school lunch, bussing, extended school hours, and extracurricular activities (e.g., music, dance, gymnastics, and yoga). Most teachers in the Tokyo sample felt that the "education" part of ECE had been neglected and they were forced to become

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"daycare centers that also provide some academic activities" to young children. Yet the dilemma teachers encounter is that, with the shrinking population in the country and the "free" ECE, there are needs to consider what else they can offer as perks and benefits rather than high quality education.

Both NYC and Tokyo underwent significant changes at the classroom, school, and local community levels since the universal ECE policies were enacted, which substantially influenced teachers' professional identity. Implications of these changes suggest the need for clearer communication to educators and caregivers to ensure that all stakeholders in the universal ECE policy share the ultimate purpose of the policy: providing equitable access to high quality early childhood education to all children. This also helps the development of teachers' professionalism and healthy professional identity.

Keywords: Teacher professional identity, early childhood education and care, universal early childhood education, New York City, Tokyo

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Exploring the role of parental factors as determinants of early numeracy in Indonesian preschool children

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Abstract

Research on parental roles in early numeracy development among Indonesian children is relatively limited, leaving the understanding of this specific topic inconclusive. While reports on early numeracy are abundant in Western contexts (Litkowski et al., 2020; Anders, 2012; Anders, 2013), the literature suggests variations in early numeracy trajectories across different cultures and family incomes (Jordan, Kaplan, Ramineni, & Locuniak, 2009; Anders, 2013). To provide specific recommendations for parents and teachers in supporting early numeracy development, gaining insights into the context of early numeracy development in Indonesia is imperative.

This study aims to untangle the relationship between early numeracy increase and parental factors, including the home numeracy activities employed to support their children's learning, as well as the expectations and judgments they hold regarding their children's early numeracy skills. Three hypotheses were proposed: 1) home numeracy activities make a significant contribution to explaining the variance of early numeracy in Indonesian preschool children, after controlling for age, gender, and socioeconomic status; 2) there is a significant relationship between parent expectations and early numeracy; 3) parent judgment can explain a substantial portion of the variance of early numeracy.

A total of 84 Indonesian preschool children (aged between 48-67 months, 47% girls) and their parents (94% mothers) participated in two measurement points. The children underwent early numeracy tests at two measurement points with an interval of 5.5 months. In the first measurement, Version A of the Early Numeracy Test-Revised (ENT-R) developed by van Luit and van de Rijt (2009) was used (i.e., early numeracy T1), while Version B of the same instrument was administered in the second measurement point (i.e., early numeracy T2). Parents completed questionnaires regarding home numeracy activities and their expectations of their children's early numeracy skills at the end of preschool (both developed by Kleemeans et al., 2012) in the first measurement. Parents also provided judgments about their children's early numeracy skills (developed by the research team) in the second measurement point. The first measure of early numeracy was utilized as a control variable for the second early numeracy, treated as a dependent variable. To examine the three hypotheses, a stepwise regression was performed in RStudio version 2023.09.0=463 (Rstudio Team, 2020) using the lm function from the lavaan package version 0.6-16 (Rosseel, 2012). Missing data were treated using the FIML approach. In the first step, early numeracy T2 was regressed against covariates: early numeracy T1, age, and sex of children and parent income. In the second step, home numeracy activities were included in the model. In the third step, parent expectations were additionally examined in the analysis. Finally, parent judgment was added in the fourth step.

The results showed that home numeracy activities and parental expectations are not significantly related to early numeracy. This insignificant finding may be related to the fact that the majority of children come from families with low socio-economic status. A study conducted with Mexican children reported that a significant relationship between the home numeracy environment and early numeracy achievement only exists for children from high socioeconomic status (Susperreguy et al., 2021). In contrast, parent judgments exhibit significant correlations with early numeracy. One possible explanation for these results can be derived from the self-fulfilling prophecy that proposes children will be as competent as their parents think they are. This may be because parental judgment influences the way parents treat their children (Novita et al., 2023). Further explanations and study limitations were discussed in the paper.

Keywords: Early Numeracy, Home Numeracy Activities, Parent Expectation, Parent Judgment

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Legal literacy and empowerment: Unravelling the nexus

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Abstract

Legal education is an essential component for the holistic development of children in the developing societies. Imparting legal education at an elementary level contributes to their awareness of rights, responsibilities, and the functioning of the legal system. In an era of rapid societal change, technological advancements, and growing awareness of human rights, providing children with access to legal education is not just beneficial but imperative. It has been observed in various instances that legal education serves as a protective shield for children, especially against various forms of exploitation, abuse, and discrimination. It enables them to recognize and report instances of maltreatment, bullying, or violations of their rights, contributing to their safety and well-being. In addition to this, it instils a respect for the rule of law and the principles of justice. Furthermore, it helps children to comprehend the significance of a fair and just society, promoting values such as equality, fairness, and respect for the rights of others. Whereas, by inculcating an understanding of the consequences of one's actions and the legal implications of criminal behaviour, legal education plays a pivotal role in preventing juvenile delinquency. Instead, it redirects children towards law-abiding paths and rehabilitation instead of punitive measures. Accordingly, this research paper intends to explore the realm of legal education which can be designed specifically for children while duly recognizing its element in nurturing informed, rights-conscious, and empowered young citizens. This study, which is based on the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), examines the wide range of initiatives for legal education aimed at children, with a particular emphasis on curriculum development, teaching strategies, and the effects on child's perceptions of their rights and obligations. The paper further emphasize on framing the context and importance of legal education for children while focusing on the critical role it plays in enabling them to comprehend complex legal systems, recognize their rights & duties, and nurture being a responsible citizenship. Through a meticulous examination of existing literature, empirical evidence, and illustrative case studies, this research scrutinizes the diverse approaches to legal education designed for children. It assesses the effectiveness of age-appropriate teaching materials, interactive pedagogical methods, and inclusive curricula in enhancing children's legal literacy, critical thinking skills, and active participation in their communities. Finally, this research paper highlights legal education for children as an essential cornerstone in fostering informed and empowered young citizens who are aware of their rights and responsibilities.

Keywords: Legal Literacy; Elementary Education; Rights, Duties; Informed Citizens; Empowerment.

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Digital educational games for teaching measurement of length in early childhood education: A case study

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Abstract

Mathematics in early childhood education (ECE) are considered a subject of major significance as it is linked with the enhancement of many skills, like reasoning, critical thinking and attitudes towards learning for children's future development (Hwa, 2018; Wu & Lin, 2016). Despite their significance, mathematics is perceived as a difficult subject for children, a fact that leads to their inability to follow the curriculum in later years. Therefore, new methods need to be introduced apart from conventional teaching, one of which is the utilization of digital educational games (DEGs). This approach has been tested in all mathematics areas, however there are limited studies focusing on measurement.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of using DEGs for teaching the measurement of length with children in ECE. More particularly, the aspects of measurement that were investigated were direct and indirect measurement with a greater emphasis being given to the indirect one with conventional and non-conventional tools. The research questions that were addressed related to children's ideas of objects they can use to measure the length, the point to which children could use non-conventional tools as repeating units to measure an object and lastly, their ability to measure an object using a ruler.

The sample of the study consisted of 20 children attending preschool in two schools of Achaia. There were 13 girls and 7 boys with an average age of 5 years. For the data collection a knowledge transfer test was used before and after the teaching intervention to detect potential performance differences (Barr, 2010). More specifically, 2 pictures were given to children which depicted a shoe and a pen each, asking them to measure each one with conventional and non-conventional tools. As regards the shoe, children were asked to suggest objects they can use to measure it and then to choose between clips and sticks the most suitable in order to use them as repeating units for the measurement of the shoe's length. Regarding the pen, children were asked to measure it with a ruler by placing it lengthwise. The teaching intervention itself included four DEGs about direct and indirect measurement using conventional and non-conventional tools. The children's responses in both pre/post tests and the teaching intervention, were recorded in the researcher's diary and then were coded under three tags. Insufficient for the totally wrong responses, semi-sufficient for the half-correct answers and sufficient for the correct ones.

The results showed an improvement significant, only in children's first ideas about objects suitable for measuring the length of another object and in their interaction with the indirect measurement with non-conventional tools.

Regarding the use of the conventional tool, the results were not as expected, therefore more research is needed to ascertain the point at which DEGs can help children in ECE as regards the length measurement.

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Moreover, a longer-term intervention would be beneficial to confirm the results and even better. Findings will be useful for consideration by educators, policymakers and stakeholders for the better development and utilization of DEGs in learning of mathematics in ECE.

Keywords: Mathematics, measurement of length, preschool, kindergarten, Information and Education Technology

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Ambivalent (dis)affections: Black Somali boys' perspectives on schooling

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Abstract

While there is a shortage of literature addressing the educational experiences of Somali-speaking students at present, the research that does exist reveals that students of Somali descent show low educational attainment and some of the highest drop-out rates of any minority group within the Toronto District School Board (TDSB). My research aims to explore this exact phenomenon by looking to the educational and emotional experiences of boy students who are of Somali descent, and who have at some point during their education been suspended, expelled, and/or labeled as at-risk for academic, emotional, and/or behavioral issues. My goal is to examine how male Somali students represent, understand, and navigate their understandings of education in the context of their experiences of expulsion, segregation, and/or exclusion at school. My study uses in-depth, semi-structured interviews that will draw on both visual and narrative methodologies. Drawing from critical childhood studies, I propose to incorporate visual representation (i.e., drawing) as a way to accompany and deepen my understanding of participants' experiences that are sometimes not easily captured in language alone (Luttrell, 2020). All told, my aims are to gain insight into the ways that Black boys understand and conceptualize a school structure that has historically marginalized them and continues to, and the ways that they remain actively and imaginatively engaged in their own world-making. Overall, this study aims to contribute to existing literature on institutionalized racism within the education system, and it particularly aims to pose relevant implications for topics emerging from the field of postcolonial psychoanalysis. This study is also the first of its kind in that it foregrounds the emotional lives of Somali youth as they lived within social structures of racism.

Keywords: Black Childhoods; Narrative and Visual Methodologies; Postcolonial

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Preschool dual language bilingual educators' language ideologies and use for emergent bilingual children labeled as disabled

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Abstract

This research examines preschool educators' language ideologies and use in dual language bilingual education (DLBE) classrooms for young emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled[1] (EBLADs) in the US. EBLADs require services supporting both their linguistic and disability needs; however, current policies address either their linguistic or disability needs. One equity-oriented approach for preparing EBLADs is through inclusive DLBE. The social-cultural, economic, and cognitive benefits of bi/multilingualism through DLBE are well-established in previous research. However, several barriers, such as misconceptions regarding the bilingualism of EBLADs, restrict their access to DLBE. Therefore, there is limited research conducted in preschool DLBE settings concerning EBLADs. This study aims to fill this literature gap by focusing on educators' language ideologies and use for EBLADs in preschool DLBE classrooms, using theories of language ideologies (Kroskrity, 2005) and language policy (Spolsky, 2004).

This ethnographic study was conducted in Arizona, a state known for its restrictive English-only policies. The two developmental preschool[2] DLBE classrooms, which served EBLADs, were located in an urban public, elementary school district. There were morning and afternoon classrooms serving different students but taught by the same teacher and paraprofessionals. The classrooms followed a 50/50 Spanish-English DLBE model by alternating the language of the day. One English-Spanish bilingual lead teacher and two paraprofessionals and their ten culturally-, linguistically- and ability-diverse children aged three to five, eligible for special education services, participated in this study. The data was collected via participant observations, interviews, and recording of classroom interactions. The interview data were analyzed using a constant-comparative method, and the video data was analyzed following Erickson's (2006) five-step inductive approach.

The findings revealed educators' three primary language ideologies: pro-multilingual language ideologies, heteroglossic language ideologies, and ideologies that reinforced English dominance. The educators exhibited ideological multiplicity, which means that they simultaneously held multiple language ideologies as well as articulated and enacted differing language ideologies. For instance, while educators expressed pro-multilingual beliefs for all children and warned against the negative consequences of language loss due to English-only policies, they also acknowledged the importance of English, considering it more crucial than Spanish for the future success of EBLADs future success. This ideological multiplicity reflected the sociocultural realities of English hegemony in the US society and was shaped by educators' past histories.

Educators' language use revealed English as the dominant language. English was used exclusively on English days in both classrooms, with only a few exceptions of Spanish use towards Spanish-dominant

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EBLADs, a pattern consistent in fall and spring. Spanish was used periodically during Spanish days. Its use increased from fall to spring; although, it was not consistently integrated throughout the day. The educators also used translanguaging practices, primarily through translation, code-switching, and tandem talk to scaffold children's understanding and learning of languages and content, to manage and re/direct children's behavior, to increase children's attention, participation, and engagement, to provide feedback (e.g., good job and gracias) and explain activity instructions.

In summary, the study findings offer valuable insights into promoting an inclusive DLBE that benefits all students, especially EBLADs. The language ideologies and practices of the educators in this study have the potential to eliminate ideological, structural, and institutional obstacles for EBLADs. This, in turn, facilitates their access to an inclusive DLBE setting that addresses their language- and disability-related needs in a culturally sustaining manner.

Keywords: Dual Language Bilingual Education, Bilingual Education, Preschool Students with Disabilities, Bilingualism, Language Ideologies, Language Use, Language Policy

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Notes

[1] We use the term "emergent bilinguals labeled as disabled" to (1) emphasize the cultural and linguistic knowledge the students possess and (2) highlight the socially constructed nature of disability and the imposing nature of categorizing and labeling children in schools.

[2] Developmental preschool serves children who are eligible for early intervention or special education services.

Protective and risk factors of immigrant children's school achievement: A comparative study

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Abstract

The United States, a nation profoundly shaped by immigration, faces educational challenges and opportunities presented by the influx of immigrant children. This study explores the factors influencing school achievement among these children, with a concentrated focus on kindergartners of Korean and Mexican descent, two of the most populous immigrant groups. Recognizing the pivotal role of education in integrating immigrant children into the fabric of American society, the study draws attention to the existing academic gaps between different immigrant communities. Specifically, it contrasts the traditionally higher academic achievements of Asian American students with the lower outcomes often observed among Hispanic students, framing this disparity as a critical issue to address. This context sets the stage for a deeper investigation into the variables that predict school success, informing interventions that could level the educational playing field. The current study aims to investigate the following research questions: 1) Which of the possible seven predictor variables (i.e., parent education, parent English fluency, family income, length of stay in the United States, acculturation, parenting school involvement, and parenting style) are included in an equation for predicting immigrant children's school achievement? 2) Does the obtained regression equation resulting from a subset of the seven predictor variables allow us to predict immigrant children's school achievement reliably? 3) Are there different predictors between the Korean and Mexican samples?

The research employs a rigorous linear regression analysis framework to dissect the influence of seven critical factors on the academic achievements of 203 young learners in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. These factors include parent education levels, parent English proficiency, family income, the duration of residence in the U.S., acculturation levels, parental involvement in schooling, and the parenting style adopted at home. By focusing on kindergartners of Korean and Mexican descent, the study aims to uncover the intricate dance between cultural, socio-economic, and educational dynamics that shapes the learning journey of immigrant children.

The analysis reveals that acculturation, parenting style, parent education, and length of stay in the U.S. significantly predict school achievement. However, it also uncovers essential differences in how these factors operate within the Korean and Mexican samples, suggesting that cultural context significantly shapes the educational trajectories of immigrant children. Such findings underscore the complexity of educational attainment among immigrant populations, challenging one-size-fits-all approaches and highlighting the need for tailored educational strategies.

The exploration into how various factors contribute to the school achievement of immigrant children opens up a vital conversation on educational equity and crafting inclusive and effective policy. It underscores the

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importance of a comprehensive approach to education that transcends academic instruction, embedding emotional and social support into learning. The study advocates for a collaborative stance among educators, policymakers, and communities, pushing for culturally informed initiatives and being sensitive to the diverse tapestry of students' backgrounds. Such efforts are crucial for paving the way toward an educational system that not only appreciates but actively leverages the richness of diversity to prepare all children for a successful future in a competitive global workforce.

Keywords: Immigrant, School Achievement, Risk Factors, Acculturation, Parenting Style

Gender differences in language delay and disorders in the early years

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Abstract

The research presented here connects perspectives from the health system and the educational system to understand better how problems in language development are detected, diagnosed, and treated, and what role gender plays in these processes. Previous research shows systematic advantages of girls in comparison to boys in reading at school in many countries worldwide (Mullis et al. 2023). Studies also consistently report a higher proportion of boys with language delay and disorders. Both factors contribute to the problem of underachievement of boys in the educational system. Such differences emerge already in early childhood (Autorengruppe 2022). However, the role of gender differences in early language acquisition remains controversial, with limited research available from ECEC contexts.

A mixed-method design was developed to integrate the different perspectives. In a first step, existing quantative data from school entry assessments and treatment statistics from the health systems were analysed on national, federal state and regional level. In a second step, expert interviews with various regional stakeholders were used to evaluate the quantitative results. Sex/gender was discussed in the research as a binary category in the available statistics, but as well from a socio-cultural perspective used as a lens for analysing attribution processes among ECEC practitioners and health professionals.

The results are in line with evidence that in average, boys show more language delay and disorders. However, gender aspects are not taken into consideration in strategies and concepts for language development support in ECEC. Moreover, the project revealed missing links between the education system and the health system. Mismatches between pedagogical strategies and educational assessment on one hand, medical diagnostic and treatment on the other hand lead to ineffective systems. This is especially relevant for systematic gender disparaties, which can remain hidden in individualized approaches to education and health in early childhood. The results support the need for tackling gender inequalities already in the early years (Nugroho et al. 2022) as a basis for later school success, life-long learning, and societal well-being.

Keywords: Gender, Language, ECEC, Language Support, Language Disorders

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Teaching early mathematics through a 'genuine' game-based approach: Between fun, meaning and academic learning

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Abstract

In recent years, the field of early childhood education has been the subject of growing interest among researchers. Some of these studies (Little & Cohen-Vogel, 2016) have examined the purposes of preschool education (children aged 3 to 6) and shown that there is significant divergence of views between those who favour a '*developmental logic* which frames the purposes of kindergarten as supporting the individual child's social, emotional, and cognitive development', and others who uphold *the academic logic* which emphasizes acquisition of academic skills and content (Russell, 2011). This latter logic has led some scholars (Daobler & Fien, 2013) to claim that formal direct instruction is the most effective approach to promote mathematical skills, especially for children with difficulties. However, many researchers argue that play must be at the core of preschool education (Weisberg et al., 2016). According to van Oers and Duijkers (2013), play represents the main and most productive context for learning in children aged 4 to 7 years as, from a developmental viewpoint, it is particularly appropriate for young children.

In this context, the concept of guided play, developed by Weisberg et al. (2013), seems to reconcile the demands of academic learning and child development. However, while guided play is attracting growing interest from researchers, some grey areas persist. Can any play activity with attractive material be regarded as a game? What type of games are most effective for the pursuit of both children's learning and development goals? In addition, while the importance of the teacher's role has been emphasized (Bjorklund et al., 2018), the way in wich the teacher plays her or his supportive role would merit further investigation. These are the questions that we propose to discuss in the context of this communication with regard to card and board games.

The objective of this communication will therefore consist of investigating the importance of the choice of games, which has so far been little studied, in relation to the teacher's role. Regarding games, we will define several characteristics of 'genuine' mathematical games based on meaningfulness, fun and control of the game by the children. We will then examine the teacher's role in managing the games, which has attracted more discussion, but the difficulty of which has not yet been properly considered. Teachers have to navigate between intervening but not too much, asking the right questions and support mathematising.

We will finally draw on the results of a pre-/post-test study (Vlassis et al., 2023) to show that an approach based on 'genuine' games and involving appropriate support for the teacher, can be effective for preschoolers' mathematical learning. This study concerned children aged 5 to 6, playing card and board games involving arithmetical skills relating to addition and (de)composing numbers (1 game/week for 4 weeks). These are complex skills extending far beyond the mastery of counting procedures. Individual pre- and post-tests were administered to 194 children (experimental group n = 104 / control group n = 90).

Our analyses showed not only that the pupils in the experimental group made significantly more progress than those in the control group, but also that this progress was made by all pupils regardless of their initial level. Even children regarded as 'at risk' made more progress than those of the same level in the control group. These results highlight that an approach based on genuine games and in accordance with the principles of guided play, also benefits the weakest preschoolers. Finally, they demonstrate the possibility of developing complex mathematical skills effectively in preschool, even in at-risk pupils, in a manner consistent with the needs and interests of young children.

Keywords: game-based approach, genuine games, arithmetical skills, at-risk pupils, teacher's role

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The relationship between communicative technology and parental involvement with children of color's behavioral and academic outcomes

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Abstract

There is little question that there are inequalities between students of color (as well as low-SES students), and those of white students, (as well as high-SES students) in their access to technology and parental involvement. The question arises as to whether schools can via communicative technology cause parents to have higher levels of involvement and in so doing raise student academic achievement. The purpose of this study is to see if by enabling parents and students to have a greater access to technology and using it more, this can cause higher levels of parental involvement and raise pupil academic achievement, as well.

In this project, 60 major data bases were searched (Psych Info, ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, Wilson Periodicals, and so forth) to find studies examining the effects of the use of communication technology on parental involvement and the academic and behavioral outcomes of children of color from grades K-8. Forty-four studies were found that quantitatively addressed the relationship under study and 31 studies of those that had a sufficient degree of quantitative data on students of color to include in this meta-analysis. The sample included over 20,000 students.

This paper shares the results of a meta-analysis on the association between parent-teacher interaction using technologically-based communication and parental-involvement, and its association with the academic and behavioral outcomes of students of color. This meta-analysis' first research question addressed whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the use of communication technology and the extent of parental involvement overall. This meta-analysis' second research question addressed whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the use of communication technology and K-8 students of color's academic achievement. This meta-analysis' third research question addressed whether there is a statistically significant relationship between the use of communication technology and K-8 student of color behavior. Fourth, are the effects of the use of communication technology greater for certain ages of urban students of color? The fifth question addressed whether studies identified as being "high quality" demonstrated the same overall results as the entire study.

Effect sizes were computed from data in such forms as t tests, F tests, p levels, frequencies, and R-values via conversion formulas provided by Glass and his colleagues (Glass et al., 1981). When results were not significant, studies sometimes reported only a significance level. In the unusual case that the direction of these not significant results was not available, the effect sizes were calculated to be zero.

The results indicated that statistically significant effects did not emerge, except to some degree at the elementary school level. The significance of these results is discussed. Overall, there is little evidence to suggest that there is a statistically significant relationship between the use the technological communication helps such as texting, digital platform, internet interaction and the level of parental involvement. The

results from study to study varied, but if there was any relationship, it certainly was not robust. The temptation is certainly there to immediately dismiss the value of using technological devises or platforms to invite high levels of parental involvement. However, such a definite conclusion may be premature.

As much as reaching such a conclusion might have some degree of logic, it may also just a bit premature without viewing the family engagement-technology connection within a broader context. There is a real possibility that using technologically-based communication for elementary school students might be helpful. Further studies should investigate this possibility.

Keywords: Technology, Texting, Parental Involvement, Opportunity Gap, Behavior, Academic Achievement, Childhood

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Can family stability and parental involvement help low-SES children's behavioral and academic outcomes

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Abstract

There is little question that there are sometimes inequalities between high-SES students and low-SES students, while in school. Parental involvement is strongly related to SES. Those parents whose own fathers and mothers were strong participants in their own education, and benefitted from this fact, in general, are quick to become involved themselves. They realized that they themselves benefitted from highly engaged mothers and fathers. They wanted their offspring to experience the same advantages that come with parental engagement. However, low-SES parents may not have the same perspective, if they have not personally benefitted from their parents involvement and family stability. Might parental involvement and family stability be of potentially greater help than people realize? Perhaps these factors can help bridge opportunity gaps that exist in society today.

The purpose of this study is to do a meta-analysis examining the effects of different types of parental involvement, as well as family stability, to see how they relate to the behavioral and academic outcomes of low-SES children. A meta-analysis statistically combines all the relevant existing studies on a given subject, in order to determine the aggregated results of said research. A meta-analysis is among the most popular type of academic article, as measured by citations, because it enables people to grasp what the overall body of research on a given topic indicates (Cooper et al., 2019).

In this project, 60 major data bases were searched (Psych Info, ERIC, Sociological Abstracts, Wilson Periodicals, and so forth) to find studies examining the relationship between parental involvement and family stability with the academic and behavioral outcomes of low-SES children from grades K-12. Two hundred and forty studies were found that quantitatively addressed the relationship under study and 188 studies of those that had a sufficient degree of quantitative data on students to include in this meta-analysis. The sample included over 1.1 million students.

This paper shares the results of a meta-analysis on the association parental-involvement and family stability and their relationship with the academic and behavioral outcomes of low-SES students. This meta-analysis' first research question addressed whether there is a statistically significant relationship between parental involvement overall and K-8 behavioral and academic outcomes overall. This meta-analysis' second research question examined whether there is a statistically significant relationship between family stability overall and K-8 behavioral and academic outcomes overall. The third research question addressed whether there is a statistically significant relationship between specific components of parental involvement and K-8 behavioral and academic outcomes. Fourth, this study examined the relationship of specific components of family stability and K-8 behavioral and academic outcomes. The fifth question addressed whether studies identified as being "high quality" demonstrated the same overall results as the entire study? The sixth question addressed whether there were different patterns by the age

of the pupils in the studies? Effect sizes were computed from data in such forms as t tests, F tests, p levels, frequencies, and R-values via conversion formulas provided by Glass and his colleagues.

The results indicated that statistically significant effects emerged for all six of the research questions. The effects for each measure were generally moderate to robust in size.

Overall, the results are encouraging. The reality is that the government, schools, and other large macro level institutions can do quite a bit in reducing opportunity gaps. However, it is also clear that parental involvement and family stability can make a major contribution, as well.

Keywords: Parental Involvement, Family Stability, SES, Behavior, Academic Achievement, Opportunity Gap, Divorce

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Educational approaches with AI in primary school settings: A systematic review of the literature available in Scopus

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Abstract

With the impact of Artificial Intelligence (AI) increasing and permeating more and more sections of our daily lives, the scientific field of Education could not remain unaffected. The implementation of AI in educational approaches constitutes an area with growing interest, as the issues it introduces are complex, not only for its impact on teaching processes and learning outcomes but also as the emerging need for an ethical approach that respects personal data and the particularities of each student, becomes apparent.

The purpose of our study is to systematically record empirical studies related to the educational applications of AI in primary school settings, including children that attend the first year of kindergarten, up to those that attend the last class of elementary school, with age range of 4-12 years old. In this paper, we are focusing on aspects of AI related to the learning activities, the learning outcomes, the learning contents, the tools used, and the research goals of the studies.

For our systematic literature review (n=35), we used the SCOPUS index to retrieve all the relevant empirical studies, filtered them following the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) statement (Page et al., 2021), and then we analyzed and categorized them thematically.

Regarding the learning activities, it was revealed that children in many instances act as the tutor for various systems (Villegas-Ch et al., 2022) or get involved in role-play games (Kajiwara et al., 2023), video watching, singing, and story-telling (Gupta et al., 2023), and also, they exercise their vocabulary to learn a second foreign language (Wang et al., 2022). The research community has also demonstrated a positive impact of AI on learning outcomes concerning subject knowledge and skills with systems that use machine learning, providing a more personalized learner experience (Weiwei, 2022). Furthermore, the use of specialized adaptive learning and gamification techniques, affects the socio-emotional status and perception of students and helps them develop their motor skills (Villegas-Ch et al., 2022). Various activities that involve collaborative learning engage children to interact with their group and use critical thinking for team problem-solving, whereas the development of humanoid robots influences their enjoyment and motivation (Salas-Pilco, 2020). The learning contents include subjects from language learning, maths, arts, and physics and the AI tools and technologies that are frequently used are Virtual or Augmented Reality, voice assistants, teachable agents, application programming platforms, smart toys and robots, language processing technologies, and optical image recognition. Research objectives include amongst others, the exploration of the impact and difficulties of AI in education (Mehdipour et al., 2018), the design of

experimental systems and their effectiveness (Shi & Rao, 2022), and the management of AI ethics in an implemented AI curriculum (Lin et al., 2023).

Teachers have a supportive role and act as facilitators for the students helping them become more creative, by guiding and evaluating their interactions with the AI. For this reason, teacher training and their professional development could be the focus of future research as the educators' role is crucial for ethical AI implementation in primary school education curriculum.

The use of technology and AI tools in general, provides an aid to the teaching procedure and at the same time it supports educators to enrich their work, while there is evidence for positive outcomes considering students' knowledge and skills.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI education, AI applications, primary school, preschool, kindergarten, systematic review

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Developing entrepreneurial competences in Initial Teacher Education

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Abstract

Fostering a design thinking culture to come up with innovative ideas is essential in Early Childhood Education and beyond. Design thinking not only enables students to develop creative solutions to new problems, but it also supports them in developing inquiry skills and learning techniques (Yalçın, 2022) as they are more actively involved in the learning process. This study aims to investigate the usability of the "Spaghetti Marshmallow Design Challenge" (see Tom Wujec, 2023) for establishing a culture of collaboration, creativity and innovation in initial teacher education training as part of an Erasmus+ Teacher Academy experience. This research was conducted as a case study of 12 student teachers ($Mage$ = 22.83 years) from Alexandru Ioan Cuza University in Iaşi (Romania) in January 2024. Research data were collected through an online questionnaire, originally designed by MTa Learning, after student teachers voluntarily attended a seminar related to entrepreneurship in which the "Spaghetti Marshmallow Design Challenge" was implemented in small groups of 3-4 participants by a team of researchers from Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (Spain). The challenges consist in constructing the tallest tower possible by using 20 sticks of spaghetti, one marshmallow (needs to be at its peak), 1 yard of string and 1 yard of tape in 18 minutes. The results showed that most student teachers believe that they learned from their mistakes, contributed equally, explicitly agreed their priorities and were listened to while doing the activity. Findings also suggest that students perceived they planned effectively, understood their roles, summarized the ideas of others, asked their peers to elaborate so they could clarify their objective, and facilitated discussion although to a lesser extent. However, it appeared that student teachers often didn't take the lead or built on others' ideas. In addition, participants tended to be linear in their thinking since they did neither prototype nor tested along the way. They were not willing to "fail fast" so it is essential to teach not only early childhood students not to be linear in their thinking but teach their future educators as well since they are the ones who will have to instill in students the power of yet, being creative and innovative in their thinking. Taken together, the results suggest that implementing problem-solving through design thinking challenges during Initial Teacher Education can boost student teachers' beliefs about the importance of teaching young children different ways of thinking and working in a rapidly changing world, generating ideas, developing prototypes and test solutions in order to empower students.

Keywords: design thinking, entrepreneurship, initial teacher education, early childhood education, Erasmus+ teacher academies

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Digital competence in Early Childhood Education degrees at Spanish universities: analysis and perspectives

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Abstract

Today's society is immersed in a process of digital transformation that impacts on all areas of life, including education. The Royal Decree establishing the organisation and minimum teaching requirements for Early Childhood Education establishes that, during this stage, students will begin their digital literacy process. This implies, among other aspects, the ability to access information, communicate and create content through digital media. In addition, the healthy and responsible use of digital tools for learning will be promoted, including the development of computational thinking as a skill to logically approach tasks or problems, whether digital or non-digital. Thus, digital competence has become an essential skill for future Early Childhood Education teachers, as it enables them to take advantage of digital technologies for teaching, learning and classroom management. In Spain, more and more universities are including training in digital competence in their Early Childhood Education degrees. The objectives of this study were the following: to analyse the current situation of digital competence training in Early Childhood Education degrees in Spanish universities; to identify good practices and challenges in this area; and to propose recommendations to improve the way in which digital competence is taught in Early Childhood Education. For this purpose, an exhaustive analysis of the study programs of Spanish universities was carried out, looking for specific subjects, modules or mentions related to digital competence, as well as the integration of this competence in other areas of the curriculum. It has been observed an increase in the number of universities that offer training in digital competence in their Early Childhood Education degrees, as well as the fact that some universities have developed specific itineraries or mentions in digital competence and that there has been progress in the integration of digital competence in the curriculum, although there is still some way to go. One of the challenges we face is that training in digital competence is not always specific and contextualised for Early Childhood Education. Another one is that there is great heterogeneity in the quality and depth of training, and that greater investment in resources and teacher training is needed. Digital competence training in Early Childhood Education degrees in Spain is an emerging field with great potential. It is necessary to continue working to ensure that this training in this area is specific, contextualised, integrated into the curriculum and of high quality.

Keywords: digital competence, bachelor's degree in early childhood education, initial teacher education, curriculum

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The foster parents' tasks in early childhood and among disabled Children

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Abstract

The alternative forms of care in Western European child protection models are noninstitutionalized. The Hungarian deinstitutionalisation process intensified in 2014. This year saw several significant changes in child protection which helped to achieve deinstitutionalisation. One such change is the strengthening of foster care as an alternative form of care. The choice of topic is justified by the fact that all research in the international area draws attention to the fact that institutional care is particularly harmful to 0-3-year-olds (Browne et al., 2006; Zeanah et al., 2017)

This research aims to explore the motivations and difficulties of foster parents concerning the placement and upbringing of children with special needs in foster care, aged 0-3 years with disabilities.

The research is exploratory due to the scarcity of research on the topic. The method involves semi-structured interviews with foster parents in the target group. The participants are 28 foster parents who are caring for children between the ages of 0-3 years or with disabilities. The responses to the interview questions were coded and analyzed using the content analysis method, utilizing the ATLAS.ti software.

Younger children, including those aged 0-3, were primarily placed with foster parents. Regarding the motivation of the foster parents surveyed, the majority (15 individuals) gained experience from relatives, acquaintances, or neighbours who were foster parents. Taking on the task was greatly influenced by the fact that their children had grown up. The second most frequently mentioned factor in motivation (9 individuals) was love for the children. Practical reasons also influenced foster parents (7 individuals), such as the opportunity to work from home or spend more time with their child during foster parenting. Foster parents believe that children should be placed with foster parents as early as possible because they receive more attention there than in a group home. Regarding children aged 0-3, they emphasized that it is more advantageous to raise younger children because their personalities can be shaped and corrected more effectively. The most common difficulty mentioned by foster parents (11 individuals) was dealing with the behaviour and psychological problems of the children they raised, as well as processing the traumas they experienced. This is followed by maintaining contact with the biological parents (10 individuals), which is often conflict-ridden as the biological parents often turn the children against the foster parents. Collaboration with professionals is generally balanced, but working with child protection guardians has been difficult on multiple occasions. Providing care for children with disabilities poses significant challenges for foster parents, as they believe it requires more resources, development opportunities, and financial support. Foster parents have very little free time.

Based on the research conducted so far, it is clear what the intervention directions are where foster parents need support: facilitating cooperation with biological families, managing children's behavioural problems, collaborating with professionals, reducing the increased burden on foster parents, providing rest, and

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providing adequate leisure time through recreational services. By implementing these measures, the quality of life of foster parents can be improved, and through them, the care of children can be realized at a higher quality, which is the most important goal in child protection.

Keywords: foster parents, early childhood, disabled children

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Parental involvement models of working with families in kindergartens

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Abstract

Taking the families' needs into consideration has become stronger lately. The families' inclusion into kindergarten education has happened more lately (Murray et al. 2018). A family-friendly approach is becoming more dominant in the practice. There is research conducted with parents about the required competencies of early childhood educators and what parents expect from the kindergarten pedagogue and the institution (Jaskóné and Stóka 2014.) It is highlighted that human factors matter more to parents (Török, 2005).

The research adopted a mixed-method approach using both qualitative (focus group interviews with 10 leaders of ECEC provisions), questionnaires of 50 parents, literature reviews focusing on the Government Decree of the National Core Programme for Kindergarten Education and quantitative (observations) methods of data collection (Burke Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The research focused on ethical considerations; an ethical framework was established; setting out the rights and responsibilities of participants. Written parental informed consent was gained before data collection. A consent form and information sheet were provided to all participants.

The research aim was to find a family-friendly approach that could be efficient in working with families. The aim was to highlight those key elements that stimulate the parents to take part in the life of the kindergarten and the aim was to understand each partner's (kindergarten educators, parents, children) points of view.

Models are demonstrated of several ways to work with families in kindergarten settings in Hungary. Whichever ways kindergartens choose to engage with families, their aim to convey the values to those families who show willingness and openness to cooperate. These models aim to capture the various ways early childhood institutions work with families.

There are five distinct models of parental involvement: Parents as Spectators, Parents as Organisers of Events, Parents as Volunteers, Nurturing and Educating Parents, and Active Involvement of the Parents. Parents do not only want kindergartens to provide security but also friendly, harmonious, family-like environments. Parents expect that their children can play freely in kindergarten and that their social, emotional and cognitive development is supported.

The kindergarten educators underline their role in organising innovative ways of several involvement models working with families. The models show us the role of parents from different points of view from the adult-centred to the more involved representations examining the three main actors' experiences.

The aim was to explore ways of developing the involvement model into a partnership model where reciprocity is respected, and pedagogues develop sensitivities towards parent initiation instead of responding or reacting to what they may regard as parental need.

Kindergartens need to keep the child's interests at the centre of their work and, at the same time, have realistic expectations of parents and consider their starting points for collaboration so that they can move forward together in an enabling manner. The uniqueness of the research is in its analysis of parental involvement in kindergarten life from the perspective of all three participants in the educational process. Through the analysis of research data, we can understand the motivations of the participants and, based on the results, make recommendations on how to approach parental involvement in the institution's life more effectively and successfully on the principle of child-centred pedagogy.

Summarizing the main conclusion the outcomes of the presentation are several models to work with families in kindergarten settings and see what differences are in the ECEC approach on parental involvement. The presentation concludes the key findings of the study by identifying some directions of travel in strengthening relationships with all families and developing ways of working that benefit children, families, and kindergartens.

Keywords: parental involvement, early childhood education, cooperating with families,

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Mathematics outdoor education in early childhood education: An experience with Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

Outdoor education, a pedagogical method that achieves more meaningful learning (Kortland, 2007) and emphasizes learning in natural environments, has gained recognition for its numerous benefits to physical, mental, and social well-being. This approach has been used in different fields, including mathematics at different educational levels. Mathematics outdoor education in Early Childhood Education combines the principles of outdoor learning with mathematical concepts tailored to children. Thus, children can experience experiential learning related to mathematics through the integration of concepts in natural contexts. Outdoor environments offer diverse and dynamic settings, providing opportunities to explore mathematical concepts in real-world contexts. Outdoor education can be carried out through mathematical routes. These mathematical trails allow to analyze, solve, and formulate mathematical tasks (Shoaf et al., 2004), which require interaction with the place or object where the task is located. In this way, a mathematical modeling process is carried out, which transforms the real situation into a mathematical model. In this method, educators play a crucial role as facilitators of the experience. The routes are developed with the help of the MathCityMap application. This introduces the development of digital competence in both future teachers and children. Likewise, after doing the route, future teachers will show the children the results in GeoGebra. The aim of this study is to analyze an experience carried out with preservice Early Childhood Education teachers at Rey Juan Carlos University in Madrid (Spain). Six third-year student teachers voluntarily took part in an activity to design and implement mathematical trails for Early Childhood Education. For example, the future teachers included activities as measuring the height of a tree, sorting natural objects by size or shape, or exploring symmetry in natural patterns. They put the designed trail into practice with a group of ten 5-year-old children, who solved the proposed tasks. This experiment is based on the one carried out by Guede-Cid et al. (2023) with future secondary school teachers. Afterwards, qualitative in-depth interviews were conducted with the preservice teachers. Findings show that these future teachers emphasized the fundamental role of teachers providing scaffolding and support to help children make connections between their outdoor experiences and mathematical concepts. Outdoor mathematics education can also facilitate interdisciplinary learning experiences by integrating mathematical concepts with other areas of the curriculum, such as science, language arts, and art. In addition, the results of the interviews highlight that mathematics outdoor education in early childhood often adopts a play-based approach, recognizing the importance of play in young children's learning and development. Digital competence in mathematical trails enhances the learning experience by integrating technology into outdoor mathematical activities. Interactive apps and digital tools provided engaging activities, challenges, and feedback that make the learning experience more dynamic. In this sense, digital competence development in mathematical trails enhances the engagement in mathematical

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learning experiences. The use of technology helps to support children's inquiry and understanding of mathematical concepts in a meaningful way.

Keywords: outdoor education, mathematics, initial teacher education, early childhood education

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Sensory integration therapies: A case study in an eastern Hungarian county

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Abstract

Sensory processing is necessary to adapt to stimuli from our environment. In addition, it helps us to understand the signals reaching us and then react appropriately to them. A ground-breaking work establishing the definition and suggesting therapies for improving sensory processing disorders was published by Ayres in 1972. Nowadays there are many alternative therapies available around the world, including some designed by Hungarian researchers. These include Neurorehabiliation Training by Katona, Huple Therapy, Psychomotoric Development, Planned Senso-Motoric Training, Hydrotherapeutic Rehabilitation Gymnastics and Grounding Therapy.

In our research, we seek to discover and document what types of sensory integration therapies are available for families raising children with SEN in a given Hungarian county. Moreover, we consider where parents obtain information about the different therapies as well as showing how financial issues, SES and distance influence the availability of the therapies.

The goal of our research is to see what common features describe families whose children take part in some kind of sensory integration therapy such as finding the most suitable one for their children, and what steps they take to support them.

In our research, we contacted parents/families (N=71) whose child(ren) previously took part in a sensory integration therapy or – at the time of the research - was taking part in it and asked them to fill out our questionnaire. The data collection took place between October 2022 and January 2023. The questionnaires - containing open, semi-open, closed question and Likert Scale - , were available online and in a printed version too. We asked professionals, Special Educators and Physiotherapists to distribute them among families in effect.

We decided to choose this research method to get the most reliable answers to our questions concerning the way of arriving at a diagnosis, and the diagnostic tools during the therapy of the respondents' children. Finally, we asked the parents' personal experience and opinions (length, forms, frequency and costs of the therapy, parents' satisfaction) in terms of the therapy.

Taking part in the research was voluntary. While analyzing the questionnaires with SPSS, the relevant ethical issues were taken seriously. The research has revealed that there is strong correlation between SES of families and accessibility to therapies. We found that 80% of the respondents consider that providing the appropriate therapy for the child with SEN was financially overwhelming because taking the child to such therapies is costly. Another burden is if they need to change the therapy or the therapist.

The parents involved in the research also informed us that there is a long and difficult process to get the right diagnosis. What is more, they often get advice from other parents or family friends and they do not

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always rely on the opinion of professionals. It was surprising that some children did not have any diagnosis during the therapy. The most well-known therapy involved was Planned Senso-Motoric Training (TSMT). Also, parents found its weekly sessions effective.

We came to the conclusion that despite Bill 15/2013. (II.26) providing sensory integration therapies at Pedagogical Special Services in Hungary, the relevant institutions do not have enough professionals to carry out therapies. As a result, two-thirds of the families looked for help in the private sector. With respect to geographical distribution, we can see differences: therapies are not available in villages, and taking children to the nearest town is not only time-consuming but costly as well. The sensory integration therapies could be more effective if the parents consult a specialist before enrolling their child for a therapy. Finally, it is advisable to provide more information about sensory therapies for health visitors and other professionals working with young children.

Keywords: geographical distribution, diagnosis, parents' personal experience and opinion

Educational robots for the development of problem-solving thinking

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Abstract

The emergence of educational robots in the education of children has been seen since the end of the 1990s, primarily in America and Finland, but nowadays it is also gaining ground in Hungarian public education. One of the reasons for this is that the Digital Education Strategy was introduced in Hungary in 2016 (Digital Education Strategy of Hungary adopted by the Government with Government Resolution 1536/2016. X. 13.), as a result of which a great emphasis was placed on the development of information and communication technology in public education institutions, including the provision of educational robotics devices. Educational robotics means pedagogical development with tangible, programmable tools, physical objects, and technologies (such as programmable LEGO, ELEKIT, and floor robots), which can be used to support also understanding, conceptualization, and problem-solving thinking in learning. In childhood, among these, they first start getting to know programming with the easier-to-use floor robots, Bee-Bots, and/or Fisher Pice Cide-a Pillar robots, then the Coding Awbie-Osmo and Lego WeDo robots will come to the fore. Their primary goal is to develop playful IT skills and knowledge and to develop problem-solving thinking by learning the basics of robot programming.

The purpose of this presentation is to show how these tools can contribute to the development of children's problem-solving thinking from an early age. Furthermore, we examine whether, according to educators, the use of robots has a right to exist in today's pedagogy. Besides that, we will analyze how open and willing educators are to learn about and use these tools, and which tools they use most often.

In the study, we asked the opinions of n=84 educators using a questionnaire. The results were analyzed using SPSS with descriptive statistical analysis and Chi-square test calculation.

100% of the respondents reported that educational robotics tools are available in their institution (since the launch of the Digital Education Strategy program in 2016), however, the willingness of educators to use robotic devices in the institutions is significantly different ($\chi2 = 15.524$, df = 3, p ≤ 0.001). Those who do not use the available tools usually explain their lack of use of robots as a lack of robotics qualification. All of the respondents (n=84, 100%) believe that educational robots are suitable for developing children's problem-solving and algorithmic thinking. The types of robots used in institutions for educational robotics purposes are diverse: the respondents reported using 27 different types of devices. Among these, the most popular tools were Bee-Bot, BlueBot, and LEGO-WeDo, LEGO-Mindstorms.

Although technical support is already provided in Hungarian institutions, it is essential to improve the robotics awareness and training of educators, because the lack of qualifications of educators can prevent the use of robots for educational purposes from spreading. Educational robots can be a useful experiential pedagogical element of education and can be well integrated into the development of children's algorithmic and problem-solving thinking, in addition, they can also be well used for awareness of spatial directions

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and the development of laterality. Robot programming sessions organized based on experiential pedagogy provide a good opportunity for the talent development of children with outstanding abilities, too.

Keywords: Educational robots, problem-solving thinking, algorithmic thinking,

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A toddler's exploration in language development through translanguaging

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Abstract

Conducted within the qualitative paradigm and employing a parent-as-researcher methodology, this comprehensive study endeavors to delve into the intricate translanguaging practices of a 2-year-old toddler. While extant literature has duly acknowledged the significance of family and home literacy in shaping children's language and literacy skills (Lau & Richards, 2021; Payne et al., 1994; Sénéchal & LeFevre, 2002), a discernible void exists in comprehending the nuanced dynamics surrounding the development of literacy skills in bilingual toddlers, specifically in the context of their proficiency in both languages.

Drawing inspiration from García's seminal work on translanguaging (2009), this empirical investigation strives to illuminate the intricate processes through which a bilingual toddler navigates between two languages. Additionally, it explores the co-construction of a translanguaging space, wherein the toddler actively engages and contributes, fostering a profound sense of belonging within the familial context. This study aims to transcend the conventional boundaries of research by unraveling the ways in which translanguaging practices unfold in the early stages of a toddler's linguistic journey.

Building upon this foundation, we advocate for the establishment of bilingual and multilingual environments for toddlers, with a particular emphasis on the intentional incorporation of translanguaging practices. This approach underscores the vital role of providing consistent exposure to each language, thus accentuating the pivotal role of translanguaging in shaping not only their linguistic competencies but also contributing significantly to their broader cultural development. Join us in exploring the multifaceted landscape of translanguaging in the early years, emphasizing its potential as a dynamic and enriching force in nurturing the linguistic and cultural flourishing of our youngest learners.

Keywords: Toddler, translanguaging, parent-as-researcher, bilingual children, immigrant families, family/home literacy

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Navigating professional well-being: A qualitative exploration of preschool teachers' experiences in Istanbul's ECE centers

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Abstract

This study explores the experiences of preschool teachers working in Istanbul's local government-run early childhood education centers (ECECs), focusing on the challenges they encounter and the strategies they employ to maintain their professional well-being and effectiveness.

Existing research highlights the crucial role of teacher well-being in shaping positive learning environments (Van Petegem et al., 2007; Spilt et al., 2011). It is linked to better classroom climates, improved teaching practices, and stronger child-teacher relationships (Jeon et al., 2018; Harding et al., 2019). Additionally, studies emphasize the importance of supportive school environments for both teacher and child well-being (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This research aims to contribute to this literature by exploring the experiences of preschool teachers in Istanbul, focusing on the challenges they face and the strategies they employ to maintain their professional well-being and effectiveness.

Qualitative methods, including interviews and focus groups, were employed with 40 teachers from 6 Istanbul ECE centers. Data collection (February-June 2023) involved 10 unstructured interviews and 6 focus groups, totaling 12 hours of recordings analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interviews and focus groups explored various aspects of teachers' professional well-being, including daily routines, working conditions, collegial relationships, emotional needs, administrative support, coping mechanisms for stress, and professional development needs. These discussions aimed to elicit comprehensive insights, guided by follow-up questions and prompts.

Thematic analysis revealed two key themes: barriers to teachers' professional well-being and coping strategies employed. School climate and interpersonal dynamics emerged as prominent barriers. Teachers highlighted demanding work conditions, challenges specific to newly established centers, and complexities of catering to children with special needs. Additionally, emotional strain, unmet needs for personal and communal spaces, lack of agency, insufficient emotional support, and exclusion from decision-making processes were identified as significant stressors. Interpersonal dynamics further exacerbated these challenges, with conflicts with colleagues and parents mentioned as major stressors.

The study underlines the critical role of teacher well-being in effective early childhood education, aligning with its known effects on classroom climate, teaching quality, and child-teacher relations (Van Petegem et al., 2007; Spilt et al., 2011; Jeon et al., 2018). It also reinforces the need for school cultures that support professional growth and community (Harding et al., 2019; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). Adaptive coping strategies like emotion regulation and social support are vital for teachers' well-being, enhancing their performance and positively impacting children's learning and development (Spilt et al., 2011; Jeon et al., 2018).

Addressing teachers' well-being challenges through a supportive school community offers a pathway for improved teaching practices, fostering positive teacher-child relationships (Van Petegem et al., 2007; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). This study highlights the importance of being part of a supportive professional community for sustaining teacher well-being.

Situated within broader discussions on ECE teacher professional development and well-being (Brophy-Herb et al., 2024; Schonert-Reichl et al., 2017), this research emphasizes the pressing challenges faced by preschool teachers and the systemic support required for their well-being and effectiveness (Molla & Nolan, 2019; Ratner et al., 2021). It underscores the critical need for administrative support, professional development, and community initiatives to enhance ECE teachers' professional lives. This research enriches our understanding of preschool teaching and calls for further research and the implementation of support systems such as professional development programs, administrative support structures, and community-based initiatives to enhance the well-being and effectiveness of preschool teachers in Istanbul and beyond.

Keywords: Early childhood education, ECE teacher professional development, teacher well-being, supportive school community

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Childhood sociology in the first quarter of the 21st century: A systematic review of early childhood education research

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Abstract

With the emergence of the Sociology of Childhood paradigm in the 1980s (Corsaro, 2015) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children in 1989, children started to be viewed as active agents and social actors in their interactions with their peers and adults (Prout, 2011). Moreover, children are seen as beings who can engage in discourse on matters, that influence their lives, including culture, society, politics, education, and economy (Mayall, 2013). Accordingly, there is a growing emphasis on studies finding out children's viewpoints on issues impacting them or discovering their peer culture in early childhood education settings in different countries (i.e., Breathnach et al., 2018; Olafsdottir & Einarsdottir, 2021). However, no such study compiling early childhood education research based on childhood sociology has been found in the literature. Thus, this study aims to understand the current and future directions of childhood sociology emerging from synthesizing current empirical research in the early childhood education field. The current study will provide not only insight into how children deal with childhood but also an interesting area for future studies and, more importantly, the future world.

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Firstly, databases including Web of Science (WoS), Scopus, ERIC, and Ebscohost were scanned to find empirical studies based on childhood sociology in early childhood education. Totally 966 studies were found by using keywords like "childhood sociology", "sociology of childhood", "child agency", "peer culture", "social actor", "early childhood education", "preschool" and "kindergarten". Second, the articles' titles and abstracts were screened. A total of 233 studies related to the goal of the study were carefully examined by utilizing inclusion and exclusion criteria demonstrated in Figure 1. Finally, the content of 31 studies was analyzed in this systematic review (Figure 2).
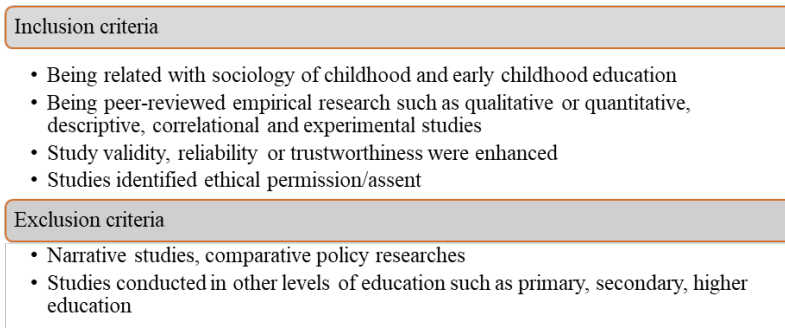
Figure 1: Inclusion and exclusion criteria
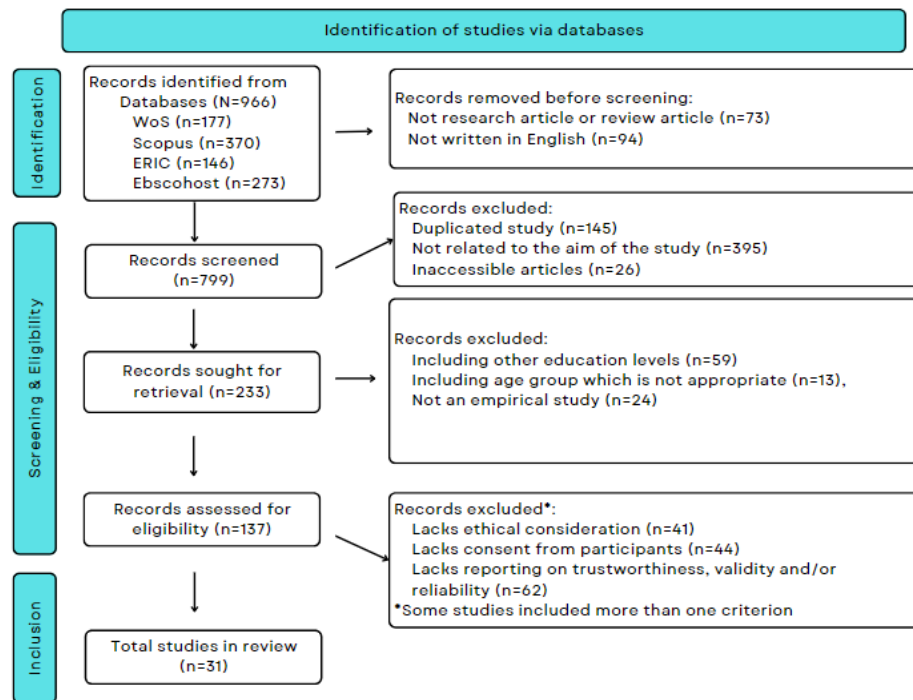
Figure 2: Search procedure for the studies

Studies that have been reviewed in the childhood sociology context were found to be conducted qualitatively through ethnographical research based on mosaic approach and child-centric methodology involving drawing-prompted group interviews, story magician's playtime method, class discussions, or representations activities. Moreover, children's agency was investigated regarding several topics affecting their lives such as play, relaxation, well-being, sustainability, health-care situations, religion, transition to primary school, and mealtime. Furthermore, childhood sociology studies focused on peer culture in preschool settings to understand the roles of boys and girls, routines in meals, circle time, and play activities, rules, and ways of forming playgroups, sense of belonging and power in the preschool community, inclusion, and exclusion of children in peer groups, access and participation in play activities in several multicultural and multilingual preschool contexts. Also, it was seen through this review (Figure 2) that the issues of validity, reliability, ethical considerations, and participant consent were not addressed in many studies. As in other studies, especially in studies involving children, it is recommended to pay attention to these issues in future studies. Finally, it could be inferred that children offer rich insights about their worlds when given the opportunity to engage as knowledgeable and expert informants. In this way, policies and practices that are more comprehensive, meaningful, and sensitive to children's lived experiences can be developed.

Keywords: Sociology of childhood, early childhood education, peer culture, child agency, systematic review

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Environmental education should start in early childhood: A comprehensive proposal for recycling education

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Abstract

Early childhood period represents the initial stage during which individuals develop their sensitivity towards the environment. Early childhood encompasses the age range of 0-8 years in a person's life, and it is during this period that children traverse roughly half of the distance they will cover in various domains of development throughout their lives (Tunçeli & Zembat, 2017). It is thought that studies carried out in early childhood years, when most of the brain development is completed and therefore most of the learning takes place, can provide significant support to children in becoming conscious consumers throughout their lives (Bulut & Polat, 2019) maintaining environmental education as a dimension of sustainability. Environmental education also appears as a dimension of sustainability. The Turkish Environment Foundation (2007) states that the foundation of sustainability is the effective use of natural resources, waste reduction, resource recycling, provision for the requirements of future generations, and ongoing environmental protection. Although it is emphasized in the literature that environmental education should begin as early as possible, it is also stated that teachers should conduct environmental education with children based on their own experiences, and it is advised that training be given in this area.

The aim isto to raise awareness in children about protecting their environment through activities applied to preschool children, and to lay the foundation based on environmental awareness in children's future daily lives

The research method employed in this project is the case study design among qualitative research methods. According to Creswell (2007), a case study is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher extensively investigates one or more bounded cases over time using multiple sources of data (observations, interviews, audio-visual materials, documents, reports). In this research, a case study will be used to provide an in-depth explanation of the situation, understand the context, and gather comprehensive data.

Firstly, research and implementation permission were obtained from the relevant institution, and parental consent forms were also collected from the families of the children participating in the research. During the implementation of the research, preliminary interviews will be initially conducted with the children. Following this, an educational program focused on environmental education will be implemented. Lastly, a final interview session will be conducted to assess the impact of the implemented activities. The fundamental method used is verbal communication. Through interviews, efforts will be made to understand experiences, attitudes, thoughts, intentions, comments, mental perceptions, and reactions which couldn't be observed otherwise.

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Drawing upon existing research findings indicating significant gaps in sustainability education during early childhood (Bulut & Polat, 2019) and our own observations, it is posited that focusing on recycling; a pivotal component of overall sustainability, in our Project could address the identified void in the educational realm. Consequently, it is believed that the outcomes of this project could make substantial contributions to the academic literature. Therefore, in order to develop environmental knowledge and awareness in preschoolers aged 60-72 months, a variety of environmental education activities will be undertaken, embracing genres such as drama, Turkish language, science, mathematics, music, and art.

The initial phase involved the development of five pre-interview questions which underwent expert consultation. Subsequently, one extra question was added to the final interview questionnaires it became six questions. The proposed activities underwent audit by experts of early childhood education and the ministry of education; necessary adjustments were made according to their recommendations. Data acquisition is scheduled to commence in the first week of March, with an estimated duration of nine weeks. Data collection, rigorous analysis and evaluation will all be finished until the presentation of findings at the forthcoming congress.

Keywords: Preschool education, environmental education, recycling, sustainability.

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Unveiling perspectives: Exploring preschool teachers' approaches to children's rights

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Abstract

The historical evolution of children's rights is deeply intertwined with societal perceptions of childhood (Ben-Arieh, 2008; Prout & James, 1997). The formal recognition of these rights by the United Nations General Assembly (UNCRC, 1989) underscores the significance of understanding adults' conceptualizations of childhood concerning children's rights, particularly within educational contexts. Despite legal mandates outlining state responsibilities for promoting and implementing children's rights, practical realization of these rights in the lives of young children, particularly in early childhood education settings, may vary based on adults' beliefs about childhood (Alderson, 2008; Correia et al., 2019; Hanson & Peleg, 2020).

This study aims to explore the intersection of children's rights and preschool teachers' perceptions of childhood and children's competencies within early childhood education. Particularly, this research seeks to unveil underlying beliefs regarding children's rights by examining key factors such as the image of childhood, children's competencies, and the types of rights attributed to them.

Using an interpretive approach, this phenomenological study engaged five preschool teachers in synchronous online semi-structured interviews. Verbatim transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis with MAXQDA 2023 Software (Braun and Clark, 2019). Data analysis focused on identifying themes related to preschool teachers' approaches to children's rights, including their conceptions of childhood, children's competencies, and the rights of children.

The findings revealed that participants perceived children as situated between being potentially autonomous meaning-makers who enjoy the present moment but also require care and protection due to their perceived incompetencies compared to adults. Participants associated adulthood with authority, independence, and responsibility while recognizing the innocence and purity of childhood, contrasting it with the burdens and duties of adulthood. They viewed the transition from childhood to adulthood as marked by an increasing sense of autonomy and responsibility. Competency indicators identified in the findings included personal autonomy, cognitive proficiency, social-emotional competence, and decision-making capacity. Barriers to children's potential competencies were attributed to various societal layers, including national early childhood education programs and policies, family dynamics, extended social networks, and teacher attitudes and behaviors. Participants explicitly prioritized the need for protection and provision rights, emphasizing children's need for care and guidance, while implicitly addressing participation rights through discussions on children's competencies, particularly in decision-making processes.

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While participants approached each concept differently, they collectively contributed nuanced understandings to the discourse on children's rights. Despite initially viewing childhood as a phase where individuals are potentially autonomous with rights and freedoms, discussions on the adult-child dichotomy and real-life interactions with children in educational settings led participants to adopt a more pragmatic perspective. They shared indicators of competency and incompetency concerning children's ability to assert their rights. Participants concluded that adults' interdependence with their rights and those of children surpass children's capacity to advocate for their protection and provision of rights. Overall, children were perceived as capable of understanding and exercising their rights, but the crucial role of adults was underscored in equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills due to children's inherent vulnerabilities. While participants' statements presented a balanced perspective on approaching childhood, oscillating between being and becoming, and viewing children as potentially competent when provided with appropriate support, their discussions on children's decision-making capacity revealed a limited understanding of participation rights. Nevertheless, participants recognized children's rights to protection, provision, and participation to varying degrees, reflecting a multifaceted understanding of children's rights within educational contexts.

This study underscores the complexity of adults' perceptions of childhood and their implications for children's rights within early childhood education. Moving forward, it is essential to continue exploring and promoting a comprehensive understanding of children's rights, ensuring their voices are heard and respected in educational settings.

Keywords: Children's Rights, Childhood Image, Preschool Teacher

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The commitment of a sustainable school: Eco-schools

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Abstract

The economic, social and environmental dimensions, which are the three basic dimensions of the Sustainable Development Goals, together include the effective use of natural resources through sustainable consumption and production and taking action against climate change (United Nations, 2015).It is seen that there is an important effort to reflect international policies on educational practices with the idea of "Education for Sustainability" on the way to achieving development goals(Dale and Newman, 2005).). In order for the process to serve this goal, in addition to standard programs, it is seen that extra programs such as Eco-School are adopted by educational institutions and even these programs make schools more prestigious (Agbedahin, 2019). Therefore, in the limited time left to achieve the goals, seeing to what extent sustainability-conscious schools serve the dimensions and basic philosophy of the development goals will show what sustainability in education is means.

The Eco-School program, one of the sustainability education initiatives in Türkiye, is a program that aims to provide environmental education and sustainability education to pre-school, primary and secondary school children. Schools are entitled to receive the "Green Flag" according to their success in environmental education and sustainability activities. Of the 7 kindergartens in the Southeastern Anatolia Region, 3 are located in Adıyaman, 3 in Batman and 1 in Mardin. The kindergarten in Mardin is also the only Green Flag school in the province. Considering both the cultural structure and geographical characteristics of Mardin province, it is important to examine the environmental education and sustainability activities of a Green Flag school in the province to see the functioning of the program in schools. In this context, with the planned research, it is aimed to examine the sustainability activities of a pre-school education institution in Mardin province, which has the feature of being an Eco-School with a "Green Flag". Within the scope of the research, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What kind of activities does the educational institution carry out with its Eco-School identity?

2. What is the role of sustainability in the activities carried out by the educational institution with its Eco-School identity?

The research was planned with the case study design, one of the qualitative research methods. The study group of the research will be determined according to the criterion sampling method, one of the purposeful sampling methods (Patton, 2014). The criterion was determined as being a school that has activities within the scope of sustainability. Within the scope of this criterion, a kindergarten within the scope of the Eco-School program was reached. The study group consists of administrators, teachers, students and staff in the kindergarten. At the beginning of the process, teachers, staff and children's families will be contacted and the necessary permissions will be obtained. During the research process, interviews will be held with administrators, teachers and staff in order to obtain information about the studies carried out within the

scope of Eco-School activities, and questions will be asked to understand the Eco-School culture. Thus, it is aimed to learn the thoughts of school stakeholders about integrating sustainability into the process in activities. Observations will be made regarding indoor and outdoor activities in order to examine children's adoption of the Eco-School identity. Children's drawings, video recordings and photographs will be analyzed using the content analysis method and the impact of sustainability on economic, social and environmental issues will be made. The results and recommendations section will be completed by discussing the research findings in the context of other studies in the literature and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Keywords: Sustainability, Eco-Schools, Early Childhood

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Parental perceptions of AI and robotics: Impacts on parent-child attachment

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Abstract

The evolution of artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics has profoundly influenced various aspects of human life, transforming industry landscapes, personal lifestyles, and the dynamics of human relationships. This paper explores the transformative effects of AI and robotics on family structures, focusing specifically on the impact on parent-child attachment among children aged 2-5 years. Utilizing qualitative research methods, the study investigates parents' perceptions of how these technological advancements affect their bonding and emotional connections with their children. Through semi-structured interviews, this research adds to the nuanced discussion on technology's role in shaping human development and interpersonal relationships, providing insights into the challenges and opportunities AI and robotics offer in developing parent-child attachments.

The integration of AI and robotics into daily life has introduced new avenues for interaction and learning among children, adding complex variables to the established processes of attachment formation. Rooted in attachment theory, which emphasizes the importance of early relationships between parents and children for emotional and social development, this study aims to fill a significant gap in the literature regarding the effects of AI and robotics on these crucial relationships, exploring both the potential benefits and ramifications within family settings.

This investigation seeks to understand parents' perspectives on the influence of AI and robotics on attachment dynamics between them and their children. By identifying perceived benefits and challenges, the study aims to shed light on how these technologies could either support or disrupt emotional bonds within families.

Thirty parents of children aged 2-5 years participated in this study. Preschools with three distinct demographic characteristics were identified, and an informational session for parents was held. From this, a diverse group of participants was selected, ensuring a wide range of demographic backgrounds and levels of technological exposure.

Employing qualitative methods, the study gathered data through semi-structured interviews to explore participants' experiences and perceptions of AI, robotics, and parent-child attachment. Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using thematic analysis, as described by Braun and Clarke (2006), to identify key themes and insights.

The findings reveal a complex perspective among parents, who acknowledge both the developmental benefits and the risks of reduced direct interaction due to AI and robotics. The analysis highlighted themes of moderation and the thoughtful integration of technology into caregiving practices, indicating a cautious

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optimism about using AI and robotics to support child development without undermining emotional bonds.

The discussion underscores the need to maintain a balance between technological engagement and human interaction to promote healthy emotional and social development in children. This study contributes to the existing knowledge by emphasizing the dual role of AI and robotics as facilitators and potential disruptors of attachment processes, advocating for a nuanced approach to technology adoption in family environments.

In conclusion, while AI and robotics offer promising opportunities for supporting child development, their impact on parent-child attachment requires a careful and informed approach. This paper calls for further research into designing and integrating technology in ways that enhance, rather than replace, vital human connections, highlighting the critical role of parents in mediating the effects of technology on the emotional growth of young children.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, robotics, attachment, parent, early childhood

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Daily life of immigrant children with special needs

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Abstract

The intersection of immigration and special needs in children presents a complex landscape of challenges and adaptations within new societal contexts. This study explores the daily life quality of children with special needs within immigrant families in Türkiye, a topic of critical importance given the country's significant immigrant population and the unique challenges faced by families of children with special needs. This research addresses the overarching question of which factors most significantly impact the daily life quality of these children in an immigrant context.

The primary objective of this research is to identify and analyze the factors that influence the daily life quality of children with special needs living in immigrant families in Türkiye. By understanding these factors, the study aims to contribute to the development of more effective policies and support mechanisms for these families, ultimately enhancing the well-being and integration of special needs children within the Turkish societal fabric.

The study focused on immigrant families residing in Türkiye with children aged 0-8 who have special needs. Participants were selected through purposive stratified sampling to ensure a diverse representation of immigration statuses, origins, types of special needs, genders, locations of residence and age groups. Data were collected through a combination of structured surveys with caregivers, and focus group discussions within community settings. The research utilized both qualitative and quantitative analysis methods to dissect the complex interplay of factors impacting daily life quality, including health services accessibility, educational and rehabilitation support, economic stability, social integration, discrimination, and the effects of cultural and linguistic barriers.

The study uncovered that lack of access to specialized education and health services, linguistic barriers, economic hardship, house conditions, discrimination and social isolation were the primary factors negatively impacting the daily life quality of children with special needs in immigrant families. Moreover, the absence of targeted educational and rehabilitation programs further exacerbates these challenges.

The findings highlight the multifaceted nature of challenges faced by these families, underscoring the need for comprehensive policy interventions that address not just health and education services but also linguistic and economic integration. The role of social support networks, both within and outside the immigrant community, emerged as a critical buffer against these challenges.

This research concludes that improving the daily life quality of children with special needs in immigrant families requires a holistic approach that encompasses policy reforms, community support mechanisms, and targeted programs addressing the specific needs of this vulnerable population. Recommendations include enhancing accessibility to specialized services, facilitating language acquisition for both children and their families, and promoting inclusive education and community engagement practices.

Keywords: Immigrant Children, Special Needs, Early Years

Children's behavioral self-regulation and their early math and science skills: The moderating role of teacher-child relationship

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Abstract

The main objective of this study is to investigate the intricate interplay between behavioral self-regulation and the quality of teacher-child relationships concerning the development of children's early mathematical and scientific skills. Specifically, we explore the moderating role of the quality of teacher-child relationships, as measured by closeness and conflict, in shaping the associations between behavioral self-regulation and children's proficiency in mathematics and science during their early developmental years.

Numerous empirical studies have underscored the pivotal role of early mathematics skills in predicting individuals' long-term performance in mathematics at school (Byrnes & Wasik, 2009; Duncan et al., 2007; Watts et al., 2018). Likewise, the development of scientific aptitude initiates in early childhood, affording children the opportunity to explore and comprehend the natural world through tangible experiences. These foundational scientific skills build progressively over time, with early childhood serving as the bedrock upon which subsequent development relies (Charlesworth & Lind, 2013; Gallenstein, 2005).

The research encompassed 212 participants, equally distributed between genders (50% girls), and boasting an average age of 60.80 months (SD = 7.39). Teachers assessed the characteristics of teacher-child relationships using the Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (Pianta, 2001; Acar et al., 2018; Beyazkurk & Kesner, 2005). To evaluate children's behavioral self-regulation, we employed structured performance-based tasks known as the "Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders tasks measure" (Ponitz et al., 2009; Sezgin & Demiriz, 2015). Additionally, we gauged children's early mathematical and scientific aptitudes through direct assessment tools (Ahmetoğlu et al., 2021). It is worth noting that all of these measures have been extensively employed within the Turkish context, attesting to their cultural relevance and validity. Required ethical procedures were approved by the Ethics Committee of the University. Teachers were asked to provide their consent for voluntary participation. Parents also were informed about the purpose of the study and signed a consent form for their children's voluntary participation.

In the data analysis phase, hierarchical regression analysis was employed to evaluate the study's hypotheses. The regression analyses revealed significant associations within the study's variables. Firstly, children's behavioral self-regulation exhibited a significant positive relationship with their mathematical competencies ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 4.68$, $p < 0.001$). Secondly, children's behavioral regulation ($\beta = 0.24$, $t = 3.57$, $p < 0.001$) and teacher-child closeness ($\beta = 0.13$, $t = 2.02$, $p = .04$) were predictive of children's proficiency in science. Notably, the combination of high teacher-child conflict and strong child behavioral self-regulation was linked to elevated levels of both mathematical and scientific skills.

The findings from this study underscore the significant roles played by both environmental and individual factors in shaping the development of early childhood academic competencies, specifically in the domains

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of mathematics and science. Children's mastery of behavioral regulation skills emerges as a pivotal contributor to their overall academic proficiency. Consequently, it becomes paramount to implement targeted programs aimed at enhancing the quality of teacher-child relationships within the early childhood education setting. By doing so, children may gain invaluable opportunities to cultivate their early academic skills, which, in turn, serve as fundamental determinants of their future success in subsequent years of schooling.

Keywords: Self-Regulation, Teacher-Child Relationship, Math, Science, Children

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The place and the emancipatory role of early childhood care and education services in the lives of mothers: A breath of fresh air

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Abstract

In a world of rapid changes and challenges which deeply affect our lives, the perception regarding childhood and the lives of children are continuosly changing, and this brings together the changes regarding the perception of parenthood and the parenting practices. However, we see that within these 're-defined' and -in some aspects- progressive parenting definitions and practices, it will be difficult to say that the concept of motherhood is transforming at the same speed and towards a more egalitarian and libertarian route.

Throughout history, the existence and purpose of receiving care and education service from pre-school institutions have been discussed extensively in terms of ensuring women's employment. On the other hand, discussing early childhood care and education (ECCE) services only in this dimension has long been replaced by discussion in terms of the developmental and educational needs of children during early childhood, and it has long been accepted that this field is an area of expertise not only in ensuring women's employment but also in improving the lives of children.

From an additional and third perpective, this paper aims to discuss the role of ECCE services in the lives of mothers through a critical lens which zooms in the -taken for granted- definition of 'motherhood as an institution' (Rich, 1995) which shapes the experience of women through predetermined norms and expectations of patriarchal ideology (Timurturkan, 2019). To discuss this perspective, there has been an attempt to answer this research question: What are the roles of ECCE services in the lives of women as mothers?

As O'Reilly (2008) states: "while motherhood as an institution is a male-defined site of oppression, women's own expression of mothering can nonetheless be a source of power" (p.3). Under the guidance of this mind-opening phrase of O'Reilly, a part of the face-to-face semi-structured interview data from a more comprehensive phenomenographic study built the stones for a progressive discussion ground for this question. The interview data for this paper came from 15 mothers with different demographic characteristics who have children between the ages of 2-6.

Women as mothers reported various roles and purposes of ECCE services in their lives beyond returning work or starting to work. A selection of these findings is as follows:

- the mothers have time to spare for themselves, their professions, interests, pursuits and to rest,

- they get rid of the exhausting effect of constantly being together with the child, and accordingly have a healthier and more effective mother-child relationship,

- they have a sense of comfort and inner peace provided by the knowledge that their children are having developmentally appropriate experiences at school and having an enjoyable time socializing with their peers, and this also helps them to cope with the feeling of inadequacy as mothers imposed by modern society,

- they have a shield against interferences - often from the extended family - in their mothering and child-rearing practices through guidance provided by teachers and other specialist staff of the ECCE institutions,

- sharing the responsibility for the child's care and education with experts in the field prevents the insecurities and unrest that may arise from alternative care possibilities.

To summarize and conclude, it won't be wrong to say that these findings imply us that having available, reachable, affordable and qualified ECCE services is a breath of fresh air for both women and their children to cope with changing and challenging demands of society. Therefore, a systemic perspective is urgently needed which considers quality ECCE as crucial to build a possibility for a society nourished by equity and justice for women as mothers in a world of full with gender based parental expectancies.

Keywords: Early Childhood Care and Education, Motherhood, Patriarchy

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Mixed economy of early childhood education and care sector in Türkiye

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Abstract

The vital role of early childhood education and care (ECEC) in children's basic development and future academic success is recognized worldwide. In Türkiye, ECEC services are provided in a mixed economy with public and private institutional actors. Care and education institutions serving 0-6-year-old children are affiliated with a responsible ministry (Ministry of National Education or Ministry of Family and Social Services), a local government or the Presidency of Religious Affairs. The service provision varies in terms of the physical conditions of the schools, the method, content, and quality of education, and the hours of care. On the other hand, the demands of families also differ depending on their socioeconomic, cultural, and ideological backgrounds. Therefore, the unevenness of the ECEC service sector is in a controversial position between meeting the needs of the diversity in society and the inability to provide services of sufficient quality for every child. A qualitative data-based assessment of the effectiveness of services provided in this mixed economy will shed light on the challenges and pave the way for effective solutions.

This study aims to explore how early childhood education and care (ECEC) is provided within a mixed economy and its effectiveness in meeting social diversity and universal rights-based needs, highlighting the case of Türkiye, which has different socioeconomic, cultural, and ideological contexts in preschool education.

The study was carried out in Istanbul, recognized for its vast diversity and size within Türkiye, employing a qualitative analysis approach. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted with 26 participants, including both service providers and parents from the private and public education sectors, as well as participant observations in preschool settings and parent discussion groups. The thematic analysis method was conducted with MAXQDA software, facilitating a comprehensive examination of the collected data.

The data showed that the uneven institutional structure of the ECEC sector meets certain needs of social diversity, but simultaneously produces inequalities in terms of accessibility, affordability, and quality of child care services for all. Public preschools affiliated with the MoNE fall short in several areas, including operational hours, age coverage, facilities, teacher-student ratios, and educational quality. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is noted as the only full-time public provider for the 3-year-olds, with a limited number of centers. Nurseries under the MoFSS are private schools, not affordable for some segments of society. During the data collection years (2022-23), significant fee disparities were observed between public and private institutions (2 to 10 times), with variances in private school prices (up to 5 times). The study also points out that the implementation of the MoNE curriculum is influenced by various factors such as teacher initiative, parental demand, and the ideology/educational philosophy of schools. The demand for preschool religious education is met in some private schools as well as in the 4-6-year-old Quran courses run by the Presidency of Religious Affairs, which employ theologians, not preschool teachers. It was observed that the quality of education in all types of schools is most dependent on the initiative of the

teacher. Regular training, vision support, and supervision of teachers seem pivotal to improving the overall quality of ECEC.

It is crucial to meet both social diversity and universal rights-based needs in early childhood education and care for the well-being of children and society. However, the current situation of the sector in Türkiye shows that adequate service in terms of accessibility, affordability, and quality cannot be provided for everyone considering these two domains of need.

Keywords: ECEC, Mixed Economy, Türkiye, Affordability, Access, Quality

Children's navigations through uncertainty and inequality in Istanbul

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Abstract

This study delves into workshops conducted with the Istanbul City Council's Children's Advisory Board, a group of volunteer children actively participating in various participatory democracy projects throughout Istanbul. My engagement with these children provided unique insights into their experiences with participatory democracy and the challenges they face in their daily lives. This presentation aims to underscore the interconnectedness of children with the adult world, demonstrating their direct exposure to adult concerns, and elucidating the creative ways in which they articulate these effects.

The primary goal of this study is to shed light on the aspirations of children within the advisory board who, having become accustomed to democratic processes, wish for their voices to be heard. A specific focus is placed on unraveling the uncertainties and inequalities prevalent in Türkiye that directly impact these children living in a big city, Istanbul.

This research involves a cohort of 30 children, aged 9-17, all of whom have actively participated in various participatory processes. The children were brought together in workshops, each thematic group empowered to employ arts-based and creative techniques to address the problems they encounter in their lives. The six thematic groups were given the autonomy to choose their own approach, such as drawing pictures, writing lyrics, creating content, and preparing posters, to articulate the issues affecting them.

The outcomes of the workshops revealed five distinctive themes of concern to the children: social issues, environment and climate, bullying, equality and justice, and education. Within these themes, the children exhibited a remarkable depth of understanding and concern for their surroundings. In the social issues segment, the children passionately discussed the repercussions of economic crises in Türkiye, with a compelling plea for free school lunches. Discrimination and racism, particularly directed towards immigrant children, were highlighted, shedding light on exclusionary practices within their school communities. The environment and climate discussions were intricate, touching upon water, air, soil, light, sound, and radiation pollution. The children substantiated their concerns with concrete examples, emphasizing the direct impact of these environmental issues on their lives and futures. Bullying, both in school and digital spaces, emerged as a significant and deeply personal issue for the children. Their discussions reflected a nuanced understanding of the different forms of bullying affecting various areas of their lives. In the equality and justice segment, the children eloquently expressed their views on gender and income inequality, while also delving into global issues like the Israel-Gaza conflict. The depth of their awareness in navigating these complex topics was commendable. Finally, the education theme brought attention to infrastructure inadequacies, the destabilizing effects of frequent changes in the education system, overcrowded classrooms, and the financial burden of expensive school food.

The overarching conclusion underscores the active engagement of children with the intricacies of social, economic, political, and environmental dynamics. Contrary to stereotypical expectations, children assert

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their right to be heard, signaling a desire for their perspectives to be actively considered and incorporated into policy and decision-making processes.

Keywords: Uncertainty, Inequality, Childhood, Children Advisory Board

Enhancing preschoolers' risky play experiences: A review investigating the environmental design for risky play

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Abstract

There is a growing debate about what kinds of risks should be presented to young children and to what extent they should be kept safe (Sandseter, 2007). Although the word "risk" generally interpreted negatively (Lupton & Tulloch, 2002), risk involves situations in which individuals are required to make some choices among different alternatives when the result of the action is unknown (Little et al., 2011). Risky play, on the other hand, is a form of play in which there is excitement, thrilling experiences, and a risk of getting injured physically (Sandseter, 2009). This includes engaging in specific play activities such as those involving great heights, high speed, dangerous tools, proximity to dangerous elements, rough and tumble play, play in areas where children can disappear or get lost, play with impact, and vicarious play (Sandseter et al., 2020). Several studies highlight mental and physical benefits of all types of risky play (Obee et al., 2020; Sandseter, 2009), making it a crucial concept in early childhood education. Examining the impact on children's risky play, one of the most significant factors is the environment's design (Little et al., 2011; Sandseter et al., 2021). However, it is known that studies specifically targeting environmental design for risky play are limited (Obee et al., 2020). Therefore, the current study aims to review related literature on environmental design for risky play. During the study search, two sets of terms -one related to "risky play" and the other to "early childhood"- were applied across 10 databases, including Web of Science, Scopus, SAGE Journals, Google Scholar, and others. Inclusion criteria were defined as studies focusing on early childhood, emphasizing environmental design in the context of risky play, and employing empirical research methodologies. Exclusion criteria encompassed studies targeting older age groups, those concentrating on general outdoor play instead of risky play, studies not in English or Turkish and review/scale development articles, theses or conference papers. Out of the 1063 research identified through the search, following the application of inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of 20 studies were included. In general, studies emphasized that the physical environment and design of play space influence the occurrence and quality of children's risky play. According to findings, children engage in risky play more in natural areas, comprising fixed natural elements (trees, boulders, etc.) and open-ended natural materials (stumps, mulch, etc.). Additionally, factors such as varied topography, loose parts, physically challenging equipment, and well-defined spaces contribute to this engagement. Another significant finding was that, regardless of the nation, many play areas present in early childhood institutions are not adequate to encourage young children's risky play. One reason for this can be attributed to the common call in the studies that design principles specific to risky play are lacking in the current literature, and principles valid for outdoor areas are not entirely comprehensive for each type of risky play support. Overall, the review identified certain trends in the existing literature on environmental design for risky play, revealing notable gaps in other areas. These include a heavy reliance on qualitative research due to limited scales assessing environmental design for risky play, a predominant focus on outdoor risky play with limited indoor

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studies, a concentration on preschoolers (ages 3-6) with a lack of studies on infants and toddlers' risky play design, the majority of studies originated from the Western side, and present lack of an Eastern perspective on risky play design. The study presented a guideline checklist, prepared based on the findings of the reviewed articles for each category of risky play, for enhancing risky play through environmental design, serving as a major implication.

Keywords: Risky Play, Adventurous Play, Early Childhood, Preschool, Environment, Environmental Design

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Pre-service early childhood education teachers' views on young children's learning in the Netherlands and Türkiye

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Abstract

The concept of learning is understood in various ways, shaped by local practices (Lave & Wenger, 2005). The theoretical framework of this study is based on socio-cultural development theories. In this framework, children are seen as active members of the society and culture in which they are born (Vygotsky, 2004).

The aim of this study is to examine and compare the views of pre-service early childhood education teachers in Türkiye and the Netherlands about how children learn and the conditions that support learning.

This study utilized the survey model and was conducted with 99 pre-service teachers who were seniors in the education faculty of two public universities in Türkiye and 90 pre-service teachers who were seniors in two teacher training colleges specialising in primary education in the Netherlands in the spring semester of 2017-2018 academic year.

A structured questionnaire (Broström et al., 2014) was used to collect data. The questionnaire consisted of three main questions to determine pre-service teachers' views on how children learn in preschool period: Which situations can be characterized as learning? Which activities are important for learning? What are the best conditions for children to learn? The responses to each question were analysed to determine the frequency and percentage of importance ratings for each item. The chi-square test and then post-hoc analysis was used to indicate whether one group tended to place more importance on a particular aspect of children's learning.

There are many similarities in Dutch and Turkish pre-service teachers' views on learning, but also some differences. 'Situations that contribute to social development' was most frequently rated as 'most important' by Dutch pre-service teachers (78%), while 'creative activities' was most frequently rated as 'most important' by Turkish pre-service teachers (62%). This may be because the development of creativity is at the forefront of Turkish national preschool curriculum (2013). 'Play where children and adults participate' was least likely to be rated as most important situations that characterise learning by Dutch pre-service teachers (15%) while 'reading and writing activities' was least likely to be rated as most important by Turkish pre-service teachers (16%). This may be because Turkish national preschool curriculum does not include reading and writing instruction and activities to show and write letters while in the Netherlands children learn to show and write letters in early childhood education. According to both Dutch (74%) and Turkish (47%) pre-service teachers, children learn the most through playing together with other children. 'Seeing what adults do and say', 'participating activities together with adults' and 'the adults explain and show" were least likely to be rated as most important situations that characterise learning by both groups (less than 27%). It could be said that both groups emphasized more child-centred approach rather than teacher-directed approach.

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Compared with Turkish pre-service teachers (between 57% and 67%), there were significantly more Dutch pre-service teachers (between 70% and 78%) who considered as 'most important' in learning the children's experiences of respect and security from adults, preschool teachers' active interaction with children and supporting them and teachers' creating conditions for children's well-being. At the same time, Turkish pre-service teachers (between 44% and 60%) emphasised significantly more often children's getting many experiences, good cooperation with parents and children's own choices without adult intervention than Dutch pre-service teachers (between 25% and 53%). Turkish national preschool curriculum states that teachers should address learning outcomes and indicators related to all areas of development in a balanced way in their education plans. On the other hand, in Dutch preschool education framework, child-initiated activities take dominance over those initiated by teachers (Slot, 2014).

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Pre-Service Teachers, Learning; Preschool

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The examination of the recent and preceding Turkish national ECE curricula

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Abstract

Pamela Oberhuemer (2005) provided a comprehensive list of six factors that have contributed to the growing attention towards early childhood education (ECE) and care curricula. 1) The knowledge society boosts the significance of early childhood (EC) services. 2) A recent study on brain development highlights the significance of EC experiences. 3) National decentralization necessitates the implementation of a curriculum guide. 4) It offers an organized foundation for professionals. 5) Mandatory guidelines enhance norms and standardization. 6) A curriculum facilitates effective communication between EC staff and parents. Due to these factors, almost every nation worldwide has been endeavoring to establish a national curriculum for EC education. In order to effectively implement education and meet the developmental requirements of children, it is crucial to carefully plan and create curricula (Aral et al., 2002; Eliason and Jenkins, 2003; Krough and Slentz, 2001). The relationship between the quality of the curriculum being implemented and the quality of education offered in ECEinstitutions has been established as an empirical fact (Albrect & Miller, 2004; Kandır & Kurt, 2010). Türkiye, a country focused on expanding the quantity and improving the quality of ECE, has produced many ECE curricula for over twenty years. Since the 2000s, the ECE curriculum has undergone four revisions and redesigns. The most recent update was conducted and presented to professionals in the field of ECE at the beginning of 2024. Nevertheless, it is essential to determine the degree of innovation that the new curriculum has introduced, the particular domains in which it integrates contemporary knowledge, and the extent to which it deviates from the existing program.

The aim of this study is to examine and compare the most recent ECE curriculum with the prior curriculum. Similarities and differences between these two curriculums will be identified. Such investigations are considered significant for improving the recognition of the Turkish ECE curriculum in international literature and may be used as a point of reference for policymakers. Both programs will be examined according to sub-dimensions such as general structural organization, gains and indicators, planning, assessment, and involvement of parents. An analysis will be conducted to highlight these sub-dimensions in order to uncover the similarities and differences of both programs with regard to these characteristics, and recommendations will be provided. The present study will employ document review as a qualitative research method.

Although the study's entire research findings have not been presented yet, the expected results are consistent with the preliminary results as follows: The presence of additional gains and indicators, namely those related to fundamental literacy skills, body awareness, daily life-related skills, first aid, disaster awareness, sustainability, values, etc., is readily evident when contrasting the present program with its 2014 version. The prior program included a comprehensive explanation and highlighted the activity plan, whereas the new program presents a daily schedule with only a certain number of activities. The most notable aspect of the new curriculum is its explicit focus on topics such as outdoor education and outdoor

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recreation. Moreover, the updated curriculum prioritizes value education to a greater extent than the prior curriculum. Furthermore, the development of predetermined concepts for the children was enhanced through the incorporation of novel concepts. Another notable change is the emphasis on community involvement combined with family involvement practices. Additionally, the emphasis on the evaluation and documentation cycles and implementing some strategies to make children's learning and development visible can be considered among the prominent differences of the new program. However, the adaptation, which was frequently lauded as a highly effective and groundbreaking aspect of the previous program, was absent in the most recent version (MEB, 2013; 2024).

Keywords: Curriculum, Early Childhood, Parent Involvement, Assessment, Juxtaposing of Programs

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A systematic review of the empirical research on forest pedagogy in the context of early childhood education

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Abstract

Multiple studies have indicated that contemporary children spend less time outside compared to their parents and grandparents during their early years (Bento & Dias, 2017; Clement, 2004; Karsten, 2005). Therefore, early childhood education (ECE) has an essential role in fulfilling children's needs for engaging with natural environments. At that point, several researchers (Frenkel et al., 2019; Paci, 2016) propose that Forest Kindergartens (FK), where children engage in free play and develop comprehension of nature, might serve as an appropriate replacement for conventional ECE environments. Hence, forest pedagogy is gaining popularity due to its capacity to fulfill a requirement in the domain of ECE (Leather, 2018). Due to its increasing popularity, influenced by Nordic nature kindergartens, the worldwide population of FKs is growing gradually. FKs has attracted the interest of researchers who advocate for outdoor activities. As a result, extensive research has been carried out in the field of FKs. Since these studies have established a knowledge foundation, it is necessary for them to highlight the trends in this subject to facilitate researchers in exploring new study dimensions.

As one of the qualitative research designs, a semi-systematic literature review defines the current study. To inform practices and policies, semi-systematic literature reviews perform well at synthesizing and presenting studies on a specific subject. Scholars can identify gaps in knowledge through the utilization of the literature review, which involves synthesizing and summarizing numerous empirical studies (Snyder, 2019). Based on this rationale, this study aimed to review empirical research performed between 2014 and 2024 on the Forest School Approach and FKs worldwide to identify trends in this field. To achieve this aim, a comprehensive search was carried out in the ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, and Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ) databases using the following keywords: "forest school", "forest kindergartens", "bush kinder", "nature-based education", "nature preschool", "nature-based learning", "nature preschool", and "nature-based early learning." Following the initial keyword search, publications were filtered based on many criteria, including open access, peer-reviewed status, publication date after 2014, relevance to the social sciences, research article type, and availability of full text. Review articles were excluded. The multi-step evaluation procedure succeeded in the final stage. Initially, the articles were evaluated based upon their titles, so the duplicates were eliminated from the sample. Subsequently, abstract and full reviews, using a rapid scanning process, were conducted. Ultimately, a comprehensive evaluation of the articles was carried out.

The studies were categorized into three groups based on their purposes. The initial set of studies focused on developmental research, where the researchers examined certain or multiple aspects of the influence of forest pedagogy on children's development. The second category refers to research that focuses on

examining the characteristics of FKs. The third group includes research that was categorized as "other studies" since it did not fit into the first two groups. The employees of nature, or FKs, were the main participants of these investigations, which examined their views, practices, and perceptions regarding risky play, sustainability, and other related topics.

While longitudinal studies examining the effects of Forest Pedagogy are rare, short-term studies have demonstrated the influence of attending FKs. The researchers empirically examined a variety of behaviors and developmental outcomes, including children's sleeping patterns (Choi et al., 2014), creative thinking abilities (Wojciehowski and Ernst, 2018), well-being and motor skills (Lysklett, Berger & Moe, 2019), connection to nature, readiness for school (Cordiano et al., 2019), and executive function skills (Zamzow and Ernst, 2020), within the context of FK. A certain amount of the research is intended to compare the knowledge, skills, and behavior of children in FKs as opposed to non-nature/traditional kindergartens.

Keywords: Forest Pedagogy, Forest Kindergartens, Review Study, Trends

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Empowering resilience: Nurturing children's emotional strength through parental emotional coaching

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Abstract

Resilience, defined as the ability to adapt to adversity and the capacity to maintain psychological well-being, (Klohnen, 1996) serves as a critical protective mechanism against the onset of psychosocial problems (Jiang et al., 2022). In this challenging post-pandemic era, the question of how to raise resilient children becomes increasingly urgent. While extensive research has explored the impact of positive parent-child relationships and family functioning on children's resilience (Orbuch et al., 2005), limited attention has been given to specific parental strategies in shaping resilience in young children.

One critical aspect of children's resilience lies in their ability to adapt to new challenges and effectively manage negative emotions (Curtis & Cicchetti, 2007; Mestre et al., 2017) skills largely influenced by parents' emotional socialization practices. According to Gottman's framework of parental emotional socialization, parents may employ various strategies when their children experience negative emotions, categorized into emotion coaching (acceptance, validation, and encouragement of children's emotional expression) and emotion-dismissing parental strategies (minimization and punitive responses) (Gottman et al., 1996). Prior empirical studies and meta-analyses have demonstrated that emotion-coaching parenting correlates with favorable outcomes for children, including lower levels of behavioral problems and higher levels of emotional knowledge and regulation skills (Bjørk et al., 2020; Buckholdt et al., 2016). However, the specific links between parental emotional socialization and children's resilience remain relatively unexplored.

This study utilizes Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to investigate how the latent variables of parental emotional coaching and dismissing relate to young children's resilience in a diverse sample. We hypothesize that parental emotional coaching is positively associated with higher resilience, while parental dismissing responses are negatively related to children's resilience.

Participants included 112 primary caregivers with children aged between 4 and 8 years old, recruited from the Midwest region of the United States. The sample encompassed families with an average income of $60,000-$75,000 and an average primary caregiver education level of 12 years.

As part of a broader research project on children's mastery motivation, primary caregivers completed a 50-minute online survey covering demographic information, parenting attitudes, parental strategies, parental stress, children's temperament, and child resilience. Relevant measures included the Coping with Children's Negative Emotions Scale (a short version) to assess parents' emotion coaching and The California Child Q-set to measure child resilience. Both measures had acceptable reliability with the current sample. The study received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB).

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Figure 1 showed the relations between parents' emotional coaching and dismissing and the child's resilience. As hypothesized, parents' emotional coaching was positively related to children's resilience (β = .72, *p* <.001), but parents' emotional dismissing was not related to children's resilience (β = .09, *p* =.017). No significant effects of covariates on the outcome.

This paper contributes to the understanding of the association between parental emotion coaching strategies and young children's resilience. Unlike previous studies that often examined the effects of parental emotional coaching and dismissing separately, this study employed SEM to explore the effects of both latent variables in the same model. Surprisingly, after accounting for the effects of parental emotional coaching, parental emotional dismissing showed no significant relation with children's resilience. This finding suggests that interventions and programs should prioritize strengthening parents' positive emotion coaching strategies rather than correcting negative ones.

These preliminary results are based on pilot data, and future research will aim to expand the sample size and employ more comprehensive statistical analyses, such as SEM, to deepen our understanding once adequate power is achieved.

Keywords: Child Resilience, Emotional Coaching, Emotional Dismissing

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Examining the relationship between parental attitudes and their children's scientific process skills

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Abstract

Children exhibit a strong interest towards science when they start school (Brown, 1997) but appropriate activities are important and necessary for children to give meaning to their scientific knowledge (Eshach, & Fried, 2005). Vygotsky (1994) argued that scientific concepts are not naturally occurring, but rather they can only be developed by purposeful contact or education with others (cited in Gilligan et al., 2020). In another word, according to the Vygotskian framework of early science learning, the involvement of early childhood educators and caregivers is extremely important in facilitating the growth of scientific concepts and scientific process skills through intentional interactions and enjoyable instruction (Sikder & Fleer, 2018). Children's initial exposure to science occurs through informal interactions with their parents (Crowley et al., 2001). For interactions to be effective in the developmental process of children, parents must have a supportive parental attitude (Karabulut Demir & Şendil, 2008). It was reported that parents' parental attitudes are highly effective on children's behavior and academic success (Braza et al., 2015; Huang & Gove, 2015; Wang, 2014). Therefore, it is thought that democratic, authoritarian, overprotective, or permissive attitudes of parents (Karabulut Demir & Şendil, 2008) can be related to scientific process skills of young children which include observation, comparison, classification, communication, measurement, prediction and inference are defined as basic scientific process skills (Ayvacı & Yurt, 2016). These skills are used to create knowledge, think about problems and find solutions, make it easier for children to learn, provide skills in research, enable them to be active and take responsibility (Özkan, 2015). The purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between parental attitudes and their children's scientific process skills.

The sample of this survey research consisted of 220 preschool children and their parents. The data was collected through the Personal Information Form developed by the researchers, the Parents' Attitude Scale (PAS) (Karabulut & Şendil, 2008) and the Scientific Process Skills Scale (Kavak & Deretarla Gül, 2021). Since the data did not show a normal distribution, they were analyzed using non-parametric tests.

As a result of the data analysis, a positive and significant relationship was found between democratic parental attitude and children's scientific process skills. However, it was determined that there was no significant relationship between authoritarian, permissive and overprotective parental attitudes and children's scientific process skills. Therefore, parents of young children should be informed about the positive effects of democratic attitudes and the importance of gaining scientific process skills.

Keywords: Parental Attitudes, Scientific Process Skills, Young Children

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Exploring primary school teachers' perspectives on behavioral problems and speech and language difficulties of their students in inclusive classrooms: Experience-based insights and resource needs in Türkiye

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Abstract

The participation of individuals with special needs in society and educational life has changed over time. Today, both globally and in Türkiye, the prevailing view regarding the education of children with special needs is the inclusive education system, where children are integrated with their typically developing peers (Barton & Smith, 2014; Bendová et al., 2014; Winton, 2016). In the literature, inclusive education/inclusiveness is defined as the access of all children, with or without special needs, to an equal and quality education system that adheres to universal design principles (Barton & Smith, 2014; Salvia et al., 2016; Winton, 2016). Although the benefits of inclusive education practices to society, the environment in which the child interacts, and the child's development have been demonstrated by scientific research (Dew et al., 2014; Sucuoğlu et al., 2020), various problems may be encountered in the functioning of this system. One of the most fundamental issues is the lack of knowledge and training among teachers (Bakkaloğlu et al., 2018; Barton & Smith, 2014; Buysse & Hollingsworth, 2009; Nilholm & Göransson, 2017). Studies have shown that although teachers believe in the necessity of inclusive education, their lack of practical knowledge and training may lead them to develop negative attitudes towards it (Bennett et al., 1997; Jury, et al., 2021; Recchia & Puig, 2011; Odom, 2016; Odom & Schwartz, 2002). It is stated that the primary areas requiring information and training are problem behaviors and practices for coping with speech and language difficulties (Can & Kara, 2017; Gürgür & Hasanoğlu-Yazçayır, 2019; Işıtan & Dayı, 2022; Koçak, 2020; Nungesser & Watkins, 2005).

The aim of this study is to determine the opinions of primary school teachers about the problem behaviors and speech and language difficulties they encounter in their students based on their experiences and to reveal their needs for these issues. A basic qualitative research design, also known as basic interpretive qualitative research or interpretive qualitative research, was employed. The study's participants were 28 teachers employed at various primary schools and across different grade levels in a city within the Central Anatolia region of Türkiye during the 2023-2024 academic year. Focus group interviews were utilized to explore the prior knowledge, opinions, and experiences of primary school teachers in enhancing the language skills of students with special needs and in managing their problem behaviors interactively. Teachers predominantly reported encountering externalized problem behaviors, including physical and

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verbal aggression, property damage, bullying, and classroom disruption. Teachers frequently encounter speech and language difficulties with their students in inclusive classrooms in their professional careers, with most reporting experiences with speech difficulties such as speech sound disorder, rapid slurred speech, and stuttering. The need for enhanced training and information is further highlighted by the challenges teachers face in inclusive education settings, particularly in classroom management, addressing problem behaviors, and promoting positive behaviors and supporting speech and language skills of students. Recommendations for practice and further research were provided.

Keywords: Primary School Teachers, Inclusion, Problem Behaviors, Speech and Language Difficulties, Qualitative Research, Türkiye.

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Froebelian practitioners' perspectives on professional identities and childhood: Reflections from the Scottish context

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Abstract

The term "Froebelian" refers to the early years practitioners who adopt Froebelian principles in their ongoing practice with children. Today's Froebelians in the Scottish context have numerous opportunities to reflect upon their practice with other Froebelians to grow, reaffirm and extend their views. However, it is vital to notice that some practitioners are drawn to being Froebelians, and some are not. For some others, it takes a lifetime journey to be(come) a Froebelian. This diversification suggests that understanding who a Froebelian practitioner is and what makes one is a complex endeavour. It is not to suggest that a single idealised Froebelian practitioner identity exists. Instead, this study questions practitioners' diverse paths and positionings that grow and evolve what would be possible by adopting Froebelian thinking in terms of understanding childhood in the current time. The present study draws upon data, which is derived from the authors' PhD studies, obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with 14 practitioners who self-identify as Froebelian or work within a setting that adopts Froebelian pedagogy. Essentially, the reconceptualisation movement in the transglobal arena suggests raising questions about the relevance of Froebelian thinking in the face of what we know about childhood today. Being Froebelian ultimately offers engagement in deep thinking about the conceptual and theoretical perspectives challenging the status quo surrounding childhood images. Taking its departure from the Froebelian principle of *developing knowledgeable, nurturing, reflective educators*, this presentation opens up some critical avenues to (re)construct childhood by reflecting on the practitioners' accounts of what it means/takes to be a Froebelian in the early learning and childcare context in Scotland.

Keywords: Froebelian Identity, Reflective Practitioners, Childhood Conceptualisations

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Preschool teachers' demographics and its relation to teacher's social and emotional competence and student-teacher relationship

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Abstract

Over the past decade, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) has captured the attention of researchers due to the accumulated evidence of its relation to academic performance (Carmen et al., 2002; Jennings et al., 2017). Defined as a developmental process fostering healthy identities through skills in emotion management, interpersonal understanding, relationship building, and responsible decision-making (CASEL, 2020), SEL has demonstrated positive outcomes in other child development areas. Previous research has linked SEL skills to academic success, psychological well-being, elevated self-efficacy, and stress reduction (Jennings et al., 2019; Zins et al., 2007).

Grounded in the Prosocial Classroom Model proposed by Jennings and Greenberg (2009), this study explores whether student-teacher relationship scores differ in relation to the teachers' social and emotional competencies. Emphasizing the influential role of socially and emotionally competent teachers, the model suggests an impact on students' academic and SEL outcomes through the cultivation of supportive teacher-student relationships.

The study involved 440 early childhood educators working in Istanbul. Data collection completed in the beginning of a professional development program through online surveys. In data collection, the "Assessing Teachers' Social-Emotional Competencies" tool, adapted into Turkish by Sarisoy and colleagues (2021) was utilized. This instrument comprises 25 items and 4 subscales (i.e., student-teacher relationship, emotion regulation, social awareness, interpersonal skills) evaluated on a 6-point Likert scale. The higher scores from the scale represents higher level of SEL skills. Additionally, the "Student-Teacher Relationship" scale, adapted into Turkish by Ogelman and Seven (2014), includes 28 items and 3 subscales (i.e., conflict, closeness, and dependency) assessed on a 5-point likert scale. Higher total scores obtained from student-teacher relationships are interpreted as a positive relationship. Some demographics such as age (20-25, 26-31 and 32 and above), education level (2-year degree and bachelor/master degree), and year of experience (3 years of experience and 4 years and above) were also asked.

Teacher groups were divided into two based on the mean score of SEL (M=131). An independent sample t-test was conducted to compare student-teacher relationship scores of teachers with high and low SEL score groups. The results revealed that there was a significant difference in the scores of teachers with high SEL (M=121.28, SD=14.94) and low SEL (M= 113.90, SD=13.35); t (438) =-5.404, p=.001. An independent sample t-test was also performed to compare education levels and SEL and education levels and student-teacher relationship respectively. There were no statistically significant differences between education levels (2-year degree M=133.11, bachelor degree M=131.09) on SEL (t (438)= 1.686, p=.092) whereas statistically difference was found between education levels (2-year degree M=123.19, bachelor degree M=116.24) on student-child relationship (t (438)= 4.368, p=.001). In addition, one way ANOVA was conducted to explore

the impact of the age groups of teachers on SEL and student-teacher relationship scores respectively and no significant difference was found (F (2,437)=.108, p=.89), (F(2,437)=.273, p=.76). As determined by an independent sample t-test, there were significant differences between teachers who have less than 3 years of experience (M=130.28) and 4 years and above experience (M=132.48) on SEL (t (438)= -2.097, p=.037) whereas there was no significant differences between teachers who have less than 3 years of experience (M=117.26) and 4 years and above (M=118.43) on student-teacher relationship (t (438)= -.822, p=.411). These findings underscore the potential of integrating SEL content into the teachers' training programs offering a promising way to enhance teacher effectiveness and, consequently, their relationships with students. Teachers can be strengthened through SEL integrated professional development programs. Besides, SEL courses can be integrated with existing curriculum at universities to support pre-service teachers to make them ready for their future classrooms. Equipping teachers/pre-service teachers with SEL skills may promote student-teacher relationships.

Keywords: Early Childhood Teachers, Student-Teacher Relationship, Social and Emotional Competence

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Tired of being a human, I will be a ship!: Children's choice and control in free play

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Abstract

Children's agency is explained as a process of envisioning possible actions, making a choice, and transforming their actions in line with their choices into desired actions individually or in concert with others (Edmonds, 2019), which requires experiencing some level of control.

Children's agency in the context of free play represents a fundamental aspect of their social and psychological development. Within the realm of free play, children exercise their control, and decision-making abilities, shaping their play experiences through social interaction in profound ways. Understanding how children exercise agency to form their play within early childhood education settings is essential for educators and researchers to understand children's holistic development from a critical theory perspective. Therefore, the current study investigates how children perform their agency during free play in relation to children's control and choices and how teachers respond to or react to children's actions.

Participants were thirty-six 4-year-old children who attended a municipal preschool in Istanbul. Using a qualitative study design with a descriptive approach enabled the researcher to explore children's agency in relation to how they exercise control and make choices within play and factors that influence these processes. Observations and reflective discussions with children were used to collect data. Observations were done twice a week for six weeks in the classroom and in the garden during free play times. The data was collected and discussed with children about their play choices in certain cases. Thematic analysis, as suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), was used for data analysis.

The findings revealed that there are three different conditions that affect children's agentic actions and their control over choices in free play. These are; (1) children in control: children's use of control when teachers are disengaged in free play, (2) teachers in control: when teachers are in control and children's agency is adversely affected, and (3) shared control: when teachers share control with children. Understanding children's agentic actions in free play was found to be directly related to teacher-child interactions in the preschool environment. This finding supports Scott's (2019) claim about educators' engagement in children's agentic actions. Children perform agency and act based on their choices in free play when they are free of teacher engagement, mostly (children in control), or when children are encouraged to make decisions and given freedom to have control by teachers (shared control). Teachers' engagement in free play when they are in absolute control is experienced by children as interference in play. These are (1) asking for teachers' permission for anything, (2) reminding them of rules and limitations during play, and (3) giving them a timeout as a consequence of behaviors during the day. As an example, not following teachers' rules during rest time causes children to lose play time in the garden while a child expresses her preference to be a ship in their fantasy play, when there is no interference by the teachers for rationalization.

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The current research supports the relational nature of agency (Edmonds, 2019). The findings revealed that children's agentic actions in free play are dependent on their relationship with adults, specifically teachers in preschool settings, and how they are making choices in play and acting on them. Based on the agency's relational nature, the most direct way to support it in the early childhood education environment is by working with the teachers' understanding of agency, control, and freedom of choice concepts. Future studies need to light the way for understanding the teacher-child relationship, teachers' rules and expectations from children, how school culture sets expectations for children, and family practices and culture as an indicator to understand children's agentic actions.

Keywords: Children's Agency, Free Play, Control, Choice, Teacher-Child Interactions, Early Childhood

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What is the connection between the parent-child relationship and digital parental awareness? The role of parental media mediation

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Abstract

There are many factors that determine the quality of the parent-child relationship. In the digital age, family relationships are changing under the influence of technology and moving away from traditional structures. This situation requires parents to reconsider their understanding of children's development and their knowledge of how to interact within the digital environments. Parents should learn methods to teach relevant technological skills to their children and how to interact with digital tools. In this way, they can both support their children in technology use and prevent conflicts that may arise within the family.

From this point of view, the aim of this study is to examine the mediating effect of media mediation behaviors between digital parenting awareness of preschool parents and the parent-child relationship.

The research was conducted as a cross-sectional survey study based on quantitative research method. The sample of this study consists of parents whose children are in preschool education. The data collection tools used were a Demographic Information Form, Digital Parenting Awareness Scale (Manap & Durmuş, 2020), Parental Media Mediation Scale (Şen et al., 2020), and Child-Parent Relationship Scale (Akgün, & Yeşilyaprak, 2010), which were administered to the parents. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability coefficients of the scales used in the study ranged between .607 and .911. Data analysis was conducted using mediation tests (Hayes, 2017).

The results of the analysis revealed significant relationships between all variables. Furthermore, it was found that media mediation behaviors mediated the parent-child relationship in all dimensions of digital parenting. Therefore, parents with a high level of digital awareness positively influence their relationship with their children. It is considered important to provide training for parents to enhance their digital parenting awareness and teach them how to effectively use media tools in a family context. In addition, parental perceptions of media use can be investigated to understand how parental mediation shapes children's behaviors towards technological tools.

Keywords: Digital Parenting, Early Childhood, Parental Mediation, Parent-Child Relationship, Digital Childhood

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The preservice early childhood teachers' beliefs about the importance of academic and developmental areas

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Abstract

This study was conducted to determine the preservice early childhood teachers' beliefs about the importance of academic and developmental areas. More specially, researchers aimed to examine curricular beliefs of preservice early childhood teachers and whether their beliefs change within an academic year as a result of participating teacher education program.

The sample of this research consisted of 187 preservice teachers (male:21, female:165; missing:1) at the beginning of the academic year and 170 preservice teachers (male:16, female:151 missing:3) at the end of the academic year. Data were collected via questionnaire where preservice teachers were asked to rank eight academic and developmental areas, including mathematics, prereading, prewriting, science, foreign language, art and aesthetics, social studies, ethics and moral values, in descending order. The data were collected twice, at the beginning and the end of academic year.

The data were analyzed using a cluster analysis procedure which is a mathematical method of profiling participants with similar patterns of responses (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984; Hair, et al., 2006).). Two-step cluster analysis was used to classify preservice teachers using log-likelihood distance measurement (Kaufmann & Rousseeuw, 2005; Rezanková & Everitt, 2009). The number of clusters was automatically determined by SPSS 28 using the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC) as the clustering criterion.

The analysis of the data collected at the beginning of the academic year showed that preservice teachers can be classified into three groups: academic (n=53, 28,3%), developmental (n=62, 33,2%), and balanced (n=72, 38,5%). However, the analysis of the data collected at the end of the academic year demonstrated that preservice teachers can be classified into two groups: academic (n=55, 32,4%) and developmental (n=115, 67,6%). At the beginning of the academic year, it was observed that most of the freshman students (44.2%) were in the developmental cluster, most of the sophomore students (45.5%) were in the balanced cluster, most of the junior students were in the balanced (42.3%) and the developmental cluster (42%), and most of the senior students were in the academic cluster (40%). On the other hand, the analysis of the data collected at the end of the academic year demonstrated that the majority of the freshman students (%70,2), the sophomore students (91.7%), the junior students (58.1%), and the senior students (51.2%) were in the developmental cluster.

The results indicated that only 30.5% of the preservice teachers remained in the same cluster. More than two third of the preservice teachers changed their cluster membership from beginning to the end of the academic year. Preservice early childhood teachers seemed to move away from a balanced approach to curriculum and lean more towards approaches focused on academics and developmental during their training. This suggests that curricular beliefs of preservice early childhood teachers change throughout the program.

Keywords: Preservice Early Childhood Teachers, Curriculum Beliefs

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A scale development study for parental attitudes towards outdoor activities in early childhood education

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Abstract

The significance of outdoor play and activities for children's physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development has long been empirically supported by scholars and acknowledged by educators and parents (Cheng & Johnson, 2010; Faulkner et al., 2015; Gleave & Cole-Hamilton, 2012). Current research on parental attitudes emphasizes the significant role parents play in shaping their children's activity behaviors. Various factors influence parental activity preferences, including their own childhood experiences, personal interests, and perceived benefits of different activities. Parallel findings between children's attitudes towards outdoor activities and parental attitudes were revealed in a study conducted by Mart (2021). This suggests that parents who hold positive attitudes towards outdoor activities may also support similar approaches for their children. Tandon et al. (2017) examined parental attitudes towards the physical activity and outdoor time of preschool children at home and in school. They found that while some parents prioritize daily physical activity for their children, others express discomfort specifically regarding outdoor play, particularly in streets and during cold weather. Revealing parental attitudes toward outdoor activities is crucial for guiding parents towards prioritizing outdoor activities known to be important for children's development and learning. This study aims to develop a scale for determining the attitudes of parents of preschool children towards outdoor activities in early childhood education.

In this research, the research sample consisted of 303 parents with children aged 36-72 months residing in various provinces of Türkiye. During the development of the scale, the scale development process steps recommended by DeVellis (2017) were followed. As a result of the literature review and examination of the measurement tools used in similar studies, the scale consisting of 33 items was generated to examine the opinions of parents regarding outdoor activities. The programs "FACTOR (Ferrando & Lorenzo-Seva, 2017)" and "IBM SPSS Statistics 25" were utilized to analyze the data gathered from the scale.

Exploratory factor analysis was conducted to examine the reliability analysis and construct validity of the scores obtained from the scale. In the exploratory factor analysis, a "Polychorich Correlation Matrix" was created, which is stated to be more suitable for the analysis of ordinal data (Basto & Pereira, 2012). 33 items of the scale were subjected to principal component analysis using the FACTOR program for exploratory factor analysis. Before conducting the principal component analysis, the suitability of the data for factor analysis was evaluated. To examine the factorability of these correlations, KMO sampling adequacy measurement, and Bartlett's sphericity test were performed. KMO (.931) and Bartlett Sphericity test (p < .01) results show that the data obtained is suitable for factor analysis (Büyüköztürk, 2012). Kaiser's rule and parallel analysis were used to decide the number of factors. Kaiser's rule indicated that a three-factor structure might be appropriate for the scale. However, parallel analysis results indicated that a two-factor structure was more appropriate for the scale. As a result, the new structure of the scale with two-factor and 20 items, explained 70.86% of the variance. In the reliability analysis performed to calculate the internal

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consistency coefficient of the scores obtained from the scale, the "Development and Learning" subscale (14 items) reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) was calculated as .95, and the "Environment and Security" subscale (6 items) was calculated as .76. The reliability coefficient (Cronbach's Alpha) of the scores obtained from the entire scale (20 items) was calculated as .90. This result shows that the scores obtained from the scale have an acceptable level of reliability. As such, the scale can be accepted as a valid and reliable tool to examine parents' attitudes towards outdoor activities in early childhood education.

Keywords: Outdoor Activities, Early Childhood Education, Parent Attitudes, Scale Development

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Investigation of the leadership strategies of preschool children in the context of different types of play

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Abstract

This qualitative research conducted to examine the leadership strategies used by preschool children and how these strategies emerge in different types of play. The study followed an interpretivist approach and the researcher remained completely non-participatory in the children's play activities. Data in the study were collected through observation, interviews, document analysis, and researcher diary techniques. In this study, leadership behaviors of 15 five-year-old Turkish children were observed during free play in an independent kindergarten affiliated with the Ministry of National Education in the city center of Gaziantep. One of the researchers followed children's independent collaborative play in her own classroom for two weeks. After completing observations, the researcher interviewed with all the children individually. In this study, in addition, the researcher took photographs during the data collection process and recorded the process visually. The content analysis method used for data analysis and the data were coded and organized in appropriate categories and themes. Mawson's (2011) study was based on the analysis of children's leadership strategies, and Lillard's (2014) play categories were used for playtypes. The findings reveal that children use four different leadership strategies (physical aggression, physical assertiveness, relational aggression and relational assertiveness) and these strategies vary according to the types of play. It was observed that relational assertiveness strategy is used most among the four leadership strategies by the children, while dramatic play and structure-building play were the types of play where all leadership strategies are used. Physical aggression strategy emerged in structure-building play, physical (locomotor) play and rule-based games. Relational aggression strategy emerges in dramatic play, structure-building play and physical (locomotor) play. Finally, the relational assertiveness strategy was more common in dramatic play, physical (locomotor) play and manipulative play. Findings are discussed with reference to implications for practice, including implications for early childhood teacher education, and suggestions for further study.

Keywords: Leadership, Preschool; Play

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Promoting civic competence among primary school pupils: The need for constant training on improvisation of instructional materials for the teaching of civic education

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Abstract

Civic Education as a core subject in Nigerian primary schools promotes the acquisition of civic competence in children who are the future leaders of our society. Civic competence in this context includes civic knowledge civic skills and civic attitudes. Civic knowledge involves understanding of political and civic rights, social and economic rights as well as children's understanding of their roles, rights and responsibilities. Civic skill While civic attitudes are the traits necessary for a democracy, such traits are tolerance, public spiritedness, civility, critical mindedness and willingness to listen, negotiate and compromise. Civic attitudes encompass intrapersonal values, virtues, and behaviours. While, civic skills of communication, problem solving, critical and creative reflection, decision making, responsibility, respect for others' values which include awareness of diversity and the attitudes and values of solidarity, human rights, equality and democracy. The study is a qualitative research, in which data were collected through secondary sources. The study analysed that the development of Civic Competence in children is very important towards the progress and development of the larger society. The study discussed the importance of instructional materials in the teaching of civic education, as it brings the reality of the child in the society into the classroom, hence, enhancing the development of civic competence in the pupils. It is also discovered that among others, insufficient fund hinders some civic education teachers from using instructional materials for the teaching of civic education, hence, the reason for the improvisation of instructional materials, that is making a substitute of instructional materials from local resources. Meanwhile, it was also observed that the use of improvised instructional materials was deterred by lack of necessary skills for the teaching and learning of civic education teachers. Therefore, the study justified the need for constant training of Civic Education teachers on improvisation of instructional materials for the teaching of Civic Education in order to promote civic knowledge, civic skills and civic disposition in primary school pupils so that they grow to become effective and functional citizens of the society. Among others it was recommended that government through the Ministry of Education should constantly organise compulsory training on improvisation of instructional materials for the teaching of Civic Education and related subject, Social Studies, as well as other subjects. This will help learners to acquire the necessary civic knowledge, skills and positive attitude towards improvisation and the use of instructional materials in classes.

Keywords: Instructional Materials, Improvisation, Training, Civic Competence, Civic Education

Design thinking approach to teaching STEAM in early childhood and primary education

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Abstract

Educational goal is to develop students' skills and competencies, resulting in competitive individuals who will thrive in a changing society, gaining more than just factual knowledge. STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics) education is important because it integrates concepts and principles from multiple disciplines, fostering interdisciplinary connections and providing a more holistic understanding of the world. This approach reflects the interconnected nature of real-world challenges and prepares students to tackle complex problems that require diverse perspectives and skill sets. Design thinking can be a powerful framework for teaching STEAM subjects because it emphasizes creativity, problem-solving, collaboration, and real-world application. Since the final purpose of design thinking process is to create an innovation, it is an extremely useful approach to STEAM subjects.

To investigate if early childhood educators and primary school teachers understand the design thinking approach and how do they apply it, as well as how do students of early childhood education and primary teacher education see the benefit of the design thinking approach in STEM and STEAM teaching.

In a previously conducted research, the results had shown that early childhood educators and teachers are not familiar with the design thinking approach. Therefore, prior to this research, we have educated the principals of these institutions who later on transferred those insights to their employees. Finally, the employees were interviewed to investigate if they understood and in which ways they used the design thinking approach in teaching STEAM topics.

The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews with 20 early childhood educators and 20 primary school teachers, as well as 35 students of early childhood education and 30 students of primary teacher education. The obtained qualitative data was analysed and coded thematically.

Concerning STEAM topics, early childhood educators recognized the possibility of its application in creating solutions for reducing plastic waste. Also, they confirmed that they often follow design thinking phases without realizing it, especially the phase of prototyping the possible solution which is mainly performed by the help of LEGO bricks and cardboard structures. Teachers noticed that the method of brainstorming, which they frequently use, can be broadened by the rest of design thinking stages, resulting in a greater contribution to learning outcomes and improving empathy. They agreed on the appropriateness of the method to improve the educational process. Students of early childhood education and primary teacher education, after being introduced to the design thinking method, recognized its value and mainly discussed about the appropriateness of using the method to reflect on and enhance different educational challenges and children's developmental stages. The method was considered applicable to STEAM topics acquisition.

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The results indicate that this method is not familiar to the participants and not frequently used in practice. Additionally, it is not familiar to students in preschool and primary teacher education. It would be helpful to organize more thorough educational programmes which would serve educators to gain a systematic perspective on children's development, laws of learning, current curriculums and active methods of learning. They would also need to be included in workshops to gain a practical insight.

Even though we expected educators and teachers to be proficient in using active learning methods such as design thinking to teach STEAM, considering that curriculums of both educational levels suggest using active learning methods, the research indicated that educators are not sufficiently familiar with the method and do not regularly use it in their daily activities. Students were also not confident in their competencies in implementing this method.

Keywords: Design Thinking, Innovative Thinking, STEM, STEAM, Empathy, Professional Development

Resilience of Muslim children: Exploring boundaries and resistance

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Abstract

Early childhood education (ECE) and schools are the primary formal societal institutions that children with immigrant and minority backgrounds encounter and they play an important role in creating a culture of equality, tolerance and unity in diversity within the boundaries (Bauloz, Vathi, and Acosta 2019). Boundaries are personal property lines that define who you are and who you are not, and influence all areas of your life (Cloud & Townsend, 2017). In this study, I share several excerpts and multiple interpretations of the excerpts to discuss how two Saudi Arabian (Muslim) children express their autonomy and engage in peer culture within the boundaries. I argue that the meanings of children's statements should not be taken at face value. Instead, they address interpretive strategies taken from Butler, Post-Colonial Theory and Critical Race Theory to indicate that the girls' utterances can be seen as having a performative dimension within the boundaries and as expressing tensions around immigration that can be found in the larger society (Kurban & Tobin, 2009). In fact, children create, organize and participate in the community by creatively taking in and adjusting information from the adult world to address their own actions and behaviors.

This research draws data from an ethnographic study in a progressive faith-based school that prides itself on its inclusivity and integration. I spent fifteen months in two kindergarten/1st grade multiage classrooms. Throughout my time in the classroom, I saw the children constantly negotiating with the available resources as they worked through their status as either insiders or "good citizens" or outsiders, "bad citizens." Yet belonging, to the extent that this suggests "blending in," was problematic for the minoritized children, since that seemed to often suggest a denial or erasure of differences and was, in any case, a status that was often not available to the Arabian children. For these children, the two Muslim girls, just going along with the norm was a complicated thing that they sometimes rejected for the sake of other aspects of their identity that seemed to me more important to them.

My analysis reveals that even the well-intentioned and "democratic" progressive approaches at this faith-based school, which consist of authorizing children to enact practices of citizenship, may be counterproductive, and that attentions of belonging of young children need to focus on power relationships and the addition of critical praxis. This praxis defines how larger social structures of inequity related to social and cultural identity might unknowingly be reproduced in schools. In fact, Muslim children represent cultural conservatism and cultural nationalism in the US as a reaction to the racism, assimilation, and discrimination that they face in society.

Keywords: Muslim Children, Ethnography, Monocultural Education

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Teacher tells us in language where we must go and in art we getting to show where we wanna go: Children's decision making in early childhood

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Abstract

Children's decision making is highly contributory to their learning and development and is necessary for a socially inclusive early childhood educational environment. It is therefore crucial that adults working with children take the time to carefully listen to children and support their decision making. This calls for teachers to attend to the feelings, beliefs, thoughts, preferences, attitudes and wishes of young children (Murray, 2019). Whilst this should be the case we also are aware that listening to young children and supporting their decision making might be a challenge as adults might not understand young children's forms of communication (Murray, 2017a). It is also important to note that whilst children might not have the necessary vocabulary to express themselves, they are highly capable of using other modalities of expressing themselves such as smiling, crying, babbling, gaze, grasping, touching, pointing and uses of materials. This small-scale study undertaken in the Western Cape South Africa explores children's understanding of decision making and where in the early childhood centre do they make decisions. A qualitative approach within the interpretive paradigm was selected. A focus group interview was conducted with twenty children between the ages of four and five. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Health and Sciences Research Committee of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology. Findings reveal that children's decision making emanates from experiences in the home through given choices by parents. Another important finding revealed that children make decisions related to art and free play which only occurred on freeplay Fridays whilst teachers made decisions related to language. These findings have important implications for supporting a democratic educational environment as children should also participate in decision making for formal subjects and not just be restricted to only making decisions for art and play. Supporting children's decision making in every activity is pivotal as it will strenghten their participation as articulated in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Children will feel valued and their self-esteem will be enhanced (Honneth, 1995) as co-constructors of knowledge and their participation will be meaningful. Ignoring children's views and decision making can be harmful to their learning and development (Cleary & Kitsantas, 2017). This study has important implications for further research about how children can be supported to make decisions in formal activities and how policy can be reconceptualised to offer more opportunities for children to make decisions.

Keywords: Children's Decision Making, Early Childhood

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Becoming island in a minor key: Young islanders and the Anthropocene

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Abstract

Islands are important for young people and adults alike, not just as homes and lived places, but as larger ways of knowing and contexts of thought. I argue that islands are generative and productive forces of new ways of being (ontology), knowing (epistemology), and becoming (transformations) in the broader Anthropocene. To embrace Continental notions of modernity is to suggest that there really is a human/nature divide, that there really is a thing called development, that science and technology really are panaceas for environmental ills, and that social and spatial justice are alleviated only through neoliberal policies and actions. These are all unjust solutions to the seeming intractable problems of the Anthropocene. Islands and young people, to Continental thinking, are at best empty stages or blank spaces for the development of contemporary ways of knowing. I use archival materials and interviews from a variety of North Atlantic island communities (from Ireland and Scotland to the Faroe Islands) to turn this thinking around. I argue that the human/nature connections and social contracts of the Enlightenment and modernity have collapsed and that the Anthropocene needs to be characterized as a new problematic focused on more-than-human and youthful entanglements. This way of thinking emanates from the margins and is characterized by a generation of voices and songs in a minor key. I embrace the notion of minor theory from Cindi Katz's (1996, 2017) reading of Deleuze and Guattari's description of Kafka's work as a minor literature, and I elaborate the relations between minor theory and 'becoming island' as a way to synthesize the empirical and theoretical parts of this paper.

Keywords: Youth, Islands, Anthropocene, Continental Thinking

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Assessment practices for stimulating learning in kindergarten education: Teachers' perspective

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Abstract

While there is a consensus on the importance of kindergarten education for later learning, scientific literature highlights a duality between a developmental perspective, essentially focused on the child and the overall development, and an academic perspective, more oriented towards mastering specific academic content and preparing for elementary school (Bernier et al., 2017; Dumais & Marinova, 2020). The academic perspective is justified by the desire to combat inequalities (Little & Cohen-Vögel, 2016), by ensuring that by the end of kindergarten education, all pupils have mastered the disciplinary prerequisites needed to tackle primary school. Advocates of the developmental perspective, however, seem to fear that setting precise standards will lead to a formal approach to teaching that is detrimental to children's development. While these two perspectives may seem antagonistic, DeLuca et al. (2020) believe that they can be combined in kindergarten classes: it's a question of striking the right balance between respect for the child's development and the desire to bring all pupils to master expectations in content areas. Do teachers clearly perceive this balance and, if so, how will they reconcile these two visions? This is the question addressed in this paper. Focusing on the assessment practices of teachers in the last year of kindergarten, it aims to explore their conceptions, as well as the problems posed by assessment in kindergarten. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 19 teachers. These were supplemented by photographs assessment tools and observation of assessment practice. These data were analysed through a qualitative approach. The results raised two major questions. The first concerns teachers' attitudes to the heterogeneity of students in the classroom: teachers were much more likely to talk about their attitude towards students in difficulty, compared with advanced students. Managing heterogeneity even means sometimes focusing exclusively on struggling students. Behind this desire to mobilize resources on the students who need them most, isn't there a risk of encouraging the stigmatization of difficulties that are only emerging or entirely transitory? Aren't certain postures towards pupils in difficulty likely to lead to an impoverishment of the learning opportunities offered to these pupils? The second question arises from what some teachers have to say about the attitudes of certain children. Some seem to attribute these attitudes to characteristics internal to the child (for example, the fact of systematically choosing a play workshop, when offered the choice, is sometimes interpreted as a supposedly stable characteristic of the child's character, such as laziness). Such a error of judgement made, this could also amplify the problem by looking, through other observations, for clues that reinforce teacher's feeling. More broadly speaking, given that the evaluation of developmental objectives is often based on free observations, we feel it is important to examine the issue of evaluative judgment in greater depth, to ensure that the findings can lead to actions to support students' progress in this domain.

Keynotes: Assessment, Kindergarten, Teachers, Academic Perspective, Developmental Perspective

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