

Preschool institutions in Kosovo and the role of Psychologists

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Abstract: As a result of a range of socioeconomic factors in Kosovo, still lack a serious approach to the first level of the education system and preschool education. The level of preschool education has not yet taken the place it deserves within the education system and our entire society. Regarding to the involvement of children in preschool education, this involvement is not satisfactory because rural areas are neglected in this regard. The role of the psychologist, although very important in the development of a child since from preschool and school stages, nevertheless, doesn't have a positive implementation in Kosovo, since there are no regulations for psychologists and official records in preschool institutions, even the issue of psychologists in schools is unclear and problematic for many years. This is a literature review, that has explorative purpose about the state of preschool institutions and the role of psychologists in these institutions, while the resources which were used in this work were: Various laws and regulations of the Assembly of Kosovo and Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) in Kosovo, Reports on Education in Kosovo for the European Union (EU), national and international studies and articles.

Key words: Preschool institutions, Psychologist, Children, Kosovo

Introduction:

Kosovo as a country in transition, including political, cultural and economic issues, this might cause a lack access on educational system especially, in preschool education. Where these preschool institutions faced an absence of multidisciplinary staff, as well as their presence is only in urban areas, which are leaving aside the involvement of children in rural areas. Furthermore, the psychologist in Kosovo performs as an educator and school psychologist at the same time (National Council for European Integration, 2013; Aliu-Gashi, 2014). Psychologist role in Kosovo is undefined, no shortage of them in the educational system, while not predict their presence in preschool institutions. Moreover, is not any written rules to specify the role of psychologists, although very important in the development of a child since from preschool and school stages (Shala, 2011; Gjelaj, 2014). A preschool institution is an educational institution providing care and preschool education for preschool children and develop preschool children needs till their enrollment in the primary school (Law The Assembly of Kosovo, Law no. 02 / L-52 on preschool education, 2006). In Kosovo these institutions are characterized with two nominations by the age of children: daycare-center for 0-3 years and kindergarten for age 3-6. (Zuna-Deva, 2003). Preschool education in the Republic of Kosovo is currently organized as follows: In public institutions (day care center that include children of the age group 6 months to 3 years old and kindergarten that include children 3-6 years; in private institutions (daycare-center for children 0 -6 years old) in pre-primary classes (children aged 5-6 years, mainly attached to the regular schools). The number of suitably qualified educators in the preschool level 0-3 years is limited (The Assembly of Kosovo, Law no. 02 / L-52 on preschool education, 2006; MEST, 2011a). It is estimated that the majority of educators at this level do not meet the conditions of optimal education to work with children on this development (Shala, 2011; Paqarada, 2014). Only 23 of the 34 municipalities have at least one public preschool institution. Funds allocated for the enrollment of children in preschool education in the municipalities are limited (MEST, 2011b). Public preschools are only 41 and there are more in the cities than in the countryside, also private preschool institutions, mostly located in large urban centers, some of which are in conformity with European standards, but some of them are still not registered and monitored (Aliu-Gashi, 2014; Gjelaj 2014). According to the statistical

dates from the Kosovo Agency of Statistics, Census (2011) the number of population for the ages 0-6 is 210747, also according to the statistical dates from MEST: the number of children involved in preschool (kindergarten) this year is 5167 children in 41 public and private gardens which means that only 2.45% Kosovar's children ages 0-6 years are involved in the preschool education institute (MEST, 2011a). Most of the children in Kosovo still have no access to formal education programs in early childhood. As the number of children attending preschool institutions continues to be very low in Kosovo, it makes the care for early childhood education to be exclusively in the hands of families, regardless of their educational level (National Council for European Integration, 2013).

Findings

According to the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (2011b) there are no official data on how many psychologists are employed in Kosovo schools and preschool institutions. While, for those who are employed in these institutions, there is no job description and this is causing controversy and uncertainty in their work as a psychologist. Moreover, besides working as a psychologist very often they perform the administrative work, or replace any educator that is missing. (Gjelaj, 2014). Preschool psychologist is part of the institution which assists in the development and learning of children and is one of the first promoters of inclusive education (Kaplinski, Lidz & Rosenfield, 1992). Preschool psychologists could help children in the elimination of various difficulties that hinder the process of learning and developing, these difficulties can be: difficulties in learning, communication, physical difficulties, social and emotional. As a result of their education and experience, preschool psychologists should give special contribution to the developing, learning and progressive achievement of children (Miranda & Andrews, 1994).

1. Individual work with children: preschool psychologist during individual work with the child, usually perform a thorough evaluation of the child or his/her special educational needs, examination of the history of the child that may affect the development, learning and academic achievement. This includes: children observation, consultation with parents and reviewing other relevant documents. In this way the psychologist reports for parents or preschool staff and consult with other appropriate professional (Farrell, Jimerson, & Oakland 2007).

2. Cooperation with educators. Regarding to the work plan, preschool psychologist should collaborate with educators and multidisciplinary staff when children refuse to come or remain in care institutions, when children refuse to play, or if they have any social/emotional, behavior and learning difficulties. So a preschool psychologist in cooperation with educators helps children to face those difficulties and to learn more easily (Jimerson, Graydon, Curtis, & Staskal, 2007; Watkins, Crosby & Pearson, 2001).

Based on this psychologists working in preschools should carry out assessments of preschool children, should understand their development in that early stage, the functioning of the family and his/her functioning within the context of education, and these psychologists must be certified in these trainings (Lidz, Alfonso, Mowder, Ross, Rubenstein & Thies, 1999; Poulou, 2003) also they should have basic skills of assessments such as: knowledge of psychometric method, observational skills, ability to work with parents, to understand typical and atypical development of children (Preator & McAllister, 1995, Trice, 2007).

Discussion and Conclusion

Although, preschool education is well defined as of the laws of the Assembly and the regulations of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, it still has shortcomings in the implementation of their own regulations, there is a lack of preschool institutions in the whole territory of Kosovo, the most affected are rural areas, where 34 municipalities have only 23 preschool institutions, also there are no dates about how many preschool institutions are in rural areas, and there is no data or examination for private preschool institutions. As a result of all this, is missing the awareness of parents how important is

for children to attend in preschool institutions, and the number of children in these institutions is limited and the fate of children who do not attend preschool education, remains in the hands of their parents: how they can be helpful or if they have the proper time and education to educate their children. Also one of the problems faced preschools are limited staff and lack of adequate staff, where, according to the report by the (National Council for European Integration, 2013) in some public preschool institutions, the employees are without degree to work there, and they do not have a multidisciplinary staff when children could be observed and educated in many processes. Furthermore, the involvement or presence of a psychologist in preschool is very important and has a big impact on child development and preparing (him/her) for school stage, and identifying various difficulties with which children can encounter and various psychometric estimates. However, for this issue central system has not given due importance, when they did not clarify the competencies of psychologist in preschool institutions, also is missing the awareness of parents in this regard, even there are no reported cases where parents have requested the involvement of psychologists in these institutions.

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