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# Summary

## Early-childhood education in the creche. Image and perception

Early-childhood education in the creche is a topic increasingly taken up by social science in Poland, which is probably the result of the need to clarify the principles of early childhood education in accordance with European Commission recommendations, and with regard to social dilemmas related to how children up to three years of age function in institutional environments outside the family. One of the results of changes suggested in Europe was the 2011 Act on Child Care for the under-threes, in which creches were assigned an educational function, in addition to their welfare and care functions.

The Polish educational literature contains a wealth of publications concentrating on educational strategies implemented in pre-schools and schools, although it is worth noting that "thus far researchers have shown least interest in creches"<sup>1</sup>.

Consequently, the subject of this work is early-childhood education in creches. In view of the fact that children's education in early childhood does not correspond to the standards of pre-school or infant school education, the author introduces the idea of early-childhood education as education focussed on creating the conditions for a child's optimal development before and after he or she starts to speak.

The author assumes that the key to early-education and care processes is the quality of child-oriented activities, and the quality of the social and physical space created for the child by adults. Of lesser importance is the location in which these activities take place, which prompts the question: home or institution?

Early education in the creche is presented here as a pedagogic monograph in the field of humanist pedagogy (which includes child pedagogy), but takes into consideration knowledge from developmental psychology, social pedagogy, welfare pedagogy, philosophy and the history of education.

The following concepts are crucial to this study: early-childhood education, the creche as the place for such education, image and perception.

In formulating methodological principles for her research, the author was motivated by the belief that by applying a qualitative interpretation to research findings, "the so-

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<sup>1</sup> L. Telka, *Przekształcanie przestrzeni społecznej placówki. Studium społeczno-pedagogiczne na przykładzie żłobków*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2007, p. 11.

cial construction of reality is achieved”<sup>2</sup>, and that “analysing a phenomenon qualitatively might have particular significance for the description of education activities”<sup>3</sup>.

This study comprises seven chapters.

Chapter One contains an attempt to use the subject literature to analyse the most important developmental aspects for a child in the pre-speaking stage and once the child has started speaking. The author also attempts to show ways to stimulate a young child’s development in the process of interacting with adults.

Chapter Two concentrates on early-childhood education in Europe and discusses selected European education systems for children up to the age of three in the light of European Commission documents and the subject literature. Examples of “good practices” which could be utilised in constructing the framework of early-childhood education in Polish creches are also presented.

The next contains an attempt to present early-childhood education in the Polish educational tradition. It is particularly important to present the historical aspects of how such education functions in the creches in what is broadly understood as the Polish educational tradition, because one of history’s tasks, in the opinion of Jerzy Topolski, is to “bring an integral point of view to research on society”<sup>4</sup>. During the analysis of the research material, attention is paid to legal acts and information in the academic literature that indicate directions in which institutional forms of care for children under the age of three might develop.

Chapter Four is devoted to a presentation of key issues for children in the under-three age group, as well as in the context of child development, the reality of 21st-century Poland, and in legal acts currently in force, as well as terms of the commercialisation and instrumentalisation of education.

Chapter Five seeks an answer to the question of how carers for children up to the age of three and national experts view early-childhood education in the creche.

The aim of Chapter Six is to present the ways in which early-childhood education is perceived by providers of private creches in the Poznań area and institutions providing information in electronic media about creches in Wielkopolska voivodeship.

The seventh and final chapter attempts to define the basic implications for constructing methodological principles for early creche education.

It is worth noting that this is not an exhaustive nor all-comprehending study of issues related to creche education. The author’s main objective is to focus attention on the real phenomena, dilemmas, the image and perception and definition of early-childhood education. The author’s analysis is also an attempt to structure certain concepts, traditions, objectives methods and the reflections of adults on stimulating children’s development in the creche. This study also contributes to further presentations of the problem and should encourage readers to engage in academic, social and educational discussions on how young children function in the process of early-childhood education outside the Polish home.

*Translated Rob Pagett*

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<sup>2</sup> Quotation: D. Urbaniak-Zajac, J. Piekarski, *Badania jakościowe – uwagi wprowadzające* [in:] *Jakościowe orientacje w badaniach pedagogicznych. Studia i materiały*, D. Urbaniak-Zajac, J. Piekarski (ed.), Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, Łódź 2001, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>4</sup> Compare J. Topolski, *Metodologia historii*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa 1984, p. 558.