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PARENT-CHILD EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES SUPPORTING
THE CHILD'S SCHOOL READINESS – A CZECH EXAMPLE

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Abstract

The paper focuses on parent-child activities supporting the preschool child's readiness to enter the primary school. The educational activity is defined as purposeful, aimed activity to develop the socio-cognitive and physical characteristic of a child. The quantitative research based on a questionnaire was conducted with preschool child's parents in Northern region in the Czech Republic. The aim of the research was to find out how parents assess and evaluate individual common learning activities from the point of view of the importance of entry to primary school, also the quantity of the importance of joint activities from the parents' point of view and also clarify any limitations defending parents to be engaged more frequently in common activities. The data analysis from questionnaires with close, semi-closed and open questions showed that parents assess the importance of educational activities, preferring mainly different types of outdoor activities, playing games, art activities and reading books with a child. From the point of parents' view, the key role in child's education and preparation to enter the primary school plays the kindergarten. However, as the main barriers and limitations, the parents consider the lack of time to spend with the child to develop the child's social skills and autonomy. The results point out the importance of parents' reflections on the activities they consider as good-chosen to support the child's preparation for school. As highlighting seems to be the absence of parent's concentrated activities developing the child's social skills that are mainly needed for the easier transition to primary school.

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Keywords: Educational activities, parents, school readiness, skills, transition.



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1. Introduction

The process of children's education is widely understood through the personal development (Malach, 2007). Education is considered as the overall and lifelong development of the personality by the action of formal institutional education, informal and nonformal education environments. In this context, all activities in which a child is involved in learning is mediated differently. Průcha, Mareš, & Walterová (2009) distinguish several types of educational processes based on the degree of intentionality and their management. In addition to exposed intentional learning, such as mother tongue acquisition, it occurs intentional learning controlled externally with different attention. For the purposes of this study, we focus on educational activities in the informal and nonformal education of a child realized outside of the school education, mostly individually and voluntarily interested or motivated by individuals, in this case from the family environment point of view. According to Průcha (2016), into informal education we include activities through which people acquire knowledge, get skills and other competencies. These activities are realized randomly and unintentionally, as well as deliberately, moreover, the process is not organized institutionally. In reality, this includes monitoring the training program in television or common learning activities in the family as reading and playing games). Education is a priority not only in the school educational environment but also in education social context of families with children of school age. The role plays also intergenerational learning in everyday communication contacts with the environment of education, both in the external environment, with social, economic, demographic and internal characteristics, psychosocial characteristics of the climate of classes and schools or other educational facilities involved in the development of child education. The parents' engagement into the educational process is considered to be an essential part of quality preschool education (Bernčnik & Devjak, 2017). For the purpose of this paper, we define education activity as educational activity realized between parents and their children. There is also the possibility of dividing into two areas, namely:

- unintended educational activities - here it is possible to include in basically all day activities, such as cleaning teeth or dressing;
- intentional educational activities - parents' certain goals, for example, learning how to ride a bicycle to go for a trip together.

However, the problem remains to what is being realized unintentionally by parents themselves or which activities are intended with the clear purpose. In agreement with Čáp & Mareš (2001), education, in general, is based on a positive emotional relation to the parent-child interaction with the certain signs of communication:

- Eye contact that should be adult with keeping the child throughout the conversation
- Kindly look and tone of speech (or gentle touch).
- Listening to the baby.
- By paraphrasing the verbal communication of the child, the adult expresses interest in the child.
- By using emotions.
- Positive rating of the child.
- The climate of well-being in common activities (games, fun, work, learning).

2. Problem Statement

The transition from kindergarten into the elementary school is undoubtedly a breakthrough event for the child. The transition is characterized by Santos (2015) as a complex process impacted the child's future education. The child's school preparedness is a state of the child's quality of development, which should guarantee the management of the requirements that are brought to primary school education (Kofátková, 2008). However, it should be noted that the child's school success is mainly dependent on parents, especially at the beginning of school attendance (Franclová, 2013). Tomášová (2012) describes the benefits of children's kindergarten's attendance in the way of understanding of what the institution expects from the child and how is able to improve the child for the future education at the school in social area, behaviour and acting. The child learns to cooperate and behave in a socially acceptable way. Therefore, parents exhibit to children different social situations, closely observe their behaviour and demonstrate how to behave. It emphasizes the importance of a parent as a friend, listener, assistant, and others play roles that have a huge impact on the child's future school life. The child's development, social, intellectual, and perceptual-motor skills are dependent on the socializing factors that apply the learning process. In most cases, beside the children, important variables such as the family, school and the environment are also included. In compliance with Tomášová (2012) school preparedness includes the reached level of the child due to the functional and intentional environment surrounding the child and under whose influence the child develops innate potentiality. The specificity of the child's home preparation for learning, in all levels of education from primary to tertiary level, is currently an important issue. The obligation of school attendance brings a new responsible role for the parents not only in cooperation with the school but also in engaging in the home preparation. Upon entering the school, a child is permanently confronted with the duties and tasks influencing the school achievement and the future carrier.

3. Research Questions

The research questions ask for How do parents evaluate common educational activities with their children in terms of importance and popularity? How the parents evaluate the importance of joint activities with their child? Another problem can be seen in question What are the possible limitations preventing parents from exercising common educational activities more frequently?

4. Purpose of the Study

There were also identified activities or areas where parents should be given more attention not only to the family but also in preschools. The intent was to point out the importance of preparation to the transition to the elementary school through the eyes of parents and to reveal any limits that prevent them from doing more often with common children's educational activities. The questionnaire was also focused on the cognitive, affective, psychomotor and social areas and activities that parents should be given more attention in families and kindergartens. In the research, we focused mainly on semi-open and open items, which have produced a verbal expression proving the preferences and popularity of the activities of children and parents, conceived as a common educational activity.

Activities were selected within the following areas:

- Reading, working with books designed for children, working with children's magazines
- Meeting with peers, visiting the family members
- Painting, cutting
- Participation in the logopedic visit
- Games (board games, puzzle, jigsaw puzzles ...), dramatic games (for a shop, for mom and dad ...)
- Household assistance, purchase in the shop
- Cycling, swimming
- Pet care
- Help in the kitchen
- Educational and support program to support entry to elementary schools
- Singing, listening to music
- Visiting museum, gallery, exhibition, concert, visiting cinemas or theatres
- Skating, skiing
- Parental and child joint ring (course)
- Other music, sport, art activities

5. Research Methods

For this survey, we chose a quantitative research design, specifically a non-standardized questionnaire. Following the goal of the paper, the questionnaire was mainly focused on assessing the importance of selected activities for entering primary school from the point of view of parents as well as their popularity. Furthermore, the partial aim was to identify the importance of mentioned activities and to identify possible limitations preventing parents from engaging more frequently. The research sample was the result of a total of 62 parents of preschool children who should begin schooling in the next school year. The selection was available and was comprised of respondents from 4 nursery schools in the Moravian-Silesian and Zlín region in the Czech Republic.

6. Findings

For the smooth transition of the child into primary school, parents consider the most important reading and as unimportant, they have identified other art activities. Mostly the parents evaluated activities coincided with reading and differed in other art activities. From the point of view of importance parents considered reading as the most important common educational activity for parents, which is quite interesting, it has been stated several times that parents themselves should have a greater interest in reading. On the other hand, parents have marked other sporting activities besides those mentioned in the questionnaire. However, it is possible that, given this enumeration, there is no other sporting activity and they have therefore been evaluated in this way.

The popularity of the joint educational activities of the parent was assessed not only from the point of view of their own but also from the point of view of children. In answering the research question, however, it is appropriate to focus only on the answers of the parents who, as the most popular, have described swimming and as unpopular shopping in the shop. Here, however, the question arises as to whether they considered this activity to be genuinely common, not only in their view an inevitable necessity.

In this research study consider the joint educational activities with their children to be of considerable importance, in the vast majority (74%). On the other hand, in relation to the activities in the second research question, it is quite contrasting that some of the activities do not perform a large part of the parents at all or give them little importance. Therefore, it can be concluded that although common educational activities for parents are significant, each of them usually sees the importance in different areas or even focuses on one particular (eg. sports). A lot of parents also identified the possibility of trying to make their child easier or easier to get into the primary school with the time it spends with it. The questionnaire, however, not focus on the frequency of joint activities performed and their time span, which would certainly be very stimulating for further research, because every parent may need training, to understand the importance and timing for the judge differently.

As an example, in Table 01 the parents' statements connected to in which area should the parents be more involved, parents most frequent answers are were:

Table 01. The parents' engagement statements

The parents' engagement statements
In nothing
Give more time to the child
General preparation for entrance to primary school
Good behaviour, education
Self-help, self-reliance
Logopaedic (pronunciation, communication)
Reading
Basic numbers, mathematics
Sports, exercise
Social relationships, empathy
Other (cooperation with kindergarten, setting regime and order)

7. Conclusion

According to question of inquiry can be answered quite unambiguously by the frequency of one particular answer. The most frequent limit preventing parents from performing more common educational activities more often than not $\frac{3}{4}$. This limitation may be directed to the fact that the parents because of the child's free time often avoid other activities. Interestingly, there is also a very low frequency of responses to the possibility that parents do not know what kind of activities are appropriate for preparing for admission to primary schools.

From the research, we found out how parents assess the importance and popularity of selected common educational activities. Undoubtedly, most of the respondents also agreed that they consider these

activities to be crucial for entering primary school. The most frequent limitation to the more frequent performance of these activities for them was clearly lack of time. This preliminary research study showed the importance of family environment depending on the child's future education.

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