

Capacities of Early Childhood Education Professionals for the Prevention of Social Exclusion of Children

Authors : Dejana Bouillet, Vlatka Domović

Abstract : Both policymakers and researchers recognize that participating in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is useful for all children, especially for those who are exposed to the high risk of social exclusion. Social exclusion of children is understood as a multidimensional construct including economic, social, cultural, health, and other aspects of disadvantage and deprivation, which individually or combined can have an unfavorable effect on the current life and development of a child, as well as on the child's development and on disadvantaged life chances in adult life. ECEC institutions should be able to promote educational approaches that portray developmental, cultural, language, and other diversity amongst children. However, little is known about the ways in which Croatian ECEC institutions recognize and respect the diversity of children and their families and how they respond to their educational needs. That is why this paper is dedicated to the analysis of the capacities of ECEC professionals to respond to the demands of educational needs of this very diverse group of children and their families. The results obtained in the frame of the project "Models of response to educational needs of children at risk of social exclusion in ECEC institutions," funded by the Croatian Science Foundation, will be presented. The research methodology arises from explanations of educational processes and risks of social exclusion as a complex and heterogeneous phenomenon. The preliminary results of the qualitative data analysis of educational practices regarding capacities to identify and appropriately respond to the requirements of children at risk of social exclusion will be presented. The data have been collected by interviewing educational staff in 10 Croatian ECEC institutions (n = 10). The questions in the interviews were related to various aspects of inclusive institutional policy, culture, and practices. According to the analysis, it is possible to conclude that Croatian ECEC professionals are still faced with great challenges in the process of implementation of inclusive policies, culture, and practices. There are several baselines of this conclusion. The interviewed educational professionals are not familiar enough with the whole complexity and diversity of needs of children at risk of social exclusion, and the ECEC institutions do not have enough resources to provide all interventions that these children and their families need.

Keywords : children at risk of social exclusion, ECEC professionals, inclusive policies, culture and practices, qualitative analysis

Conference Title : ICEQECE 2021 : International Conference on Educational Quality and Early Childhood Education

Conference Location : Venice, Italy

Conference Dates : November 11-12, 2021