

## Usage of Visual Tools for Light Exploring with Children in the Geographical Istria Region Kindergartens in Republic of Croatia and Republic of Slovenia

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**Abstract :** Inspired by the Reggio Pedagogy approach that explores light from physical, mathematical, artistic, and natural perspectives, emphasizes the value of visual tools in light exploring that opens up a wide area of experiential discovery and knowledge, especially if used in kindergartens with children. While there is some literature evidence of visual tool usage for light exploring in kindergartens in the Republic of Slovenia, in the Republic of Croatia there are few researches, and those published are focused at shadow exploring, exploring of physical characteristics and theatrical play of light and shadow. The objectives of this research are to assess how much visual tools are used for light exploring by preschool teachers from geographical Istria kindergartens as part of the activities offered to children and if the usage of the visual tool for light exploring it's different regarding the work environment (Slovenian and Croatian Istria kindergartens; city vs. village kindergartens; preschool teachers age and length of service). One hundred one preschool teachers from Croatian Istria Region and 70 preschool teachers from Slovenian Istria Region responded to a self-made questionnaire regarding visual tool usage habits in their work. As predicted, results show significant differences in visual tool usage regarding preschool teachers' work environment, length of service, and age. Preschool teachers from Slovenian Istria that work in kindergartens located in the city that have from 15 to 19 years of service and are more than 30 years of age use significantly more visual tools for light exploring. The results highlight the differences in visual tools usage for light exploring in the small Istria peninsula that can be attributed to different University art curricula in Slovenia and Croatia or lifelong education offered in Slovenia that is more open to Italian reggio pedagogy influence and are further used by older preschool teachers with more service experience. Considering the small number of researches, this research significantly contributes to science and motivates preschool teachers and scientists to implement the use of light tools in the preschool and university curriculum, especially in Croatia.

**Keywords :** activities with light, light exploring, preschool children, visual tools

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