

Researching the Specifics of an Educare Curriculum for Children Aged 6-36 Months Based on the Concept of Play/Playing

Dušan Kostrub, Eva Severini, Katarína Mahrer-Milovčíková*

Comenius University in Bratislava, Faculty of Education, Department of Pre-primary and Primary Education, Bratislava, Slovakia

*Corresponding author: milovcikova1@fedu.uniba.sk

Abstract Number of studies reports how the quality of childcare during the first three years affects children. They show the affect on a child's academic readiness for entering school as well as the long-term impact on child development. Valuable data is being missed that would help to ascertain the quality of childcare for children age 6-36 months in Slovakia. Slovakia also lacks curriculums geared towards infants and toddlers. The project is aimed at developing the concept of early childhood education and the creation of an educational program that takes into account the specifics of the development of children at an early age in Slovakia. In this paper we focus on autonomous play as one of the specifics of an educare curriculum. The project has significant methodological nature: qualitative methodology will be applied, which is desirable when examining subjects and their social activities. The project is based on the realization of research and development since the research will find subject elements and will develop the educational program. We will use observation and focus groups as a method for data collection. The authors will draft a curriculum for children of early age using action research conducted in the educational context.

Keywords: *autonomy, play, curriculum models*

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1. Introduction

In Slovakia, early childhood education is separated into nursery schools and kindergartens. Given the socio-economic situation, new nurseries and child centers emerge that provide care for children from 6 months to 36 months. According to information from the Slovak Ministry of Education, in accordance with current applicable laws, establishment of children's nurseries as traditional institutions providing care for children up to 2-3 years of age, or their activities in terms of content (curriculum), does not currently fall within the purview of any government ministry. Their establishment is voluntary, and is primarily the responsibility of local service providers. A number of studies document how the quality of childcare during the first three years not only affects the child's academic readiness associated with entering school but also has long-term impact on child development. Since the nurseries are mostly regulated at the local level, valuable data is being missed that would help to ascertain the quality of child care for children age 6-36 months. Also, Slovakia lacks curriculums geared towards infants and toddlers.

Brief Current Situation in the Slovak Republic:

- Currently, the systematic scientific education of a child at an early age is absent. Educational materials are not published for parents, or the child care centers.

- Educational programs for children of early age are not available.
- Attention to children of early age is narrowed only for commercial purposes.
- Commercialism is bound to advertisement of guarding or babysitting while the parents are absent/busy.
- Families/parents cannot find support in the literature (info source) that would explain questions of education of the child at an early age. Commercial literature does not provide a systematic view of the educational principles; it ignores the developmental specifications, or development possibilities.
- Parents need to consult about issues of the education of their child with a professional, not only on the basic level.
- Parents reflect upon the upbringing of their child as a partly successful debut, as a premiere, in which the parents felt rather lost, without concise guidance and effective educational principles and their application [7,10].
- Childcare centers (mother centers et al.), as well as the establishments that provide childcare want to pedagogically and didactically conceptualize their daily educational activities, but without the support of the science, activities are deprived of knowledge in this field (Kostrub, D., Tománková, M. 2015). The aim of the study is to present the specifics of education of children of an early age anchored in a curricular model; this paper specifically focus on autonomous play.

2. Theories Cross Analysis

Cultural and discursive practices represent the cultural tools of development of individuals and groups in society that correspond to socio-cultural dimensions. It is a settled practice in the proceedings, actions and communications. For our socio-cultural dimension it is significant that people join together to communicate with each other, carry out various activities and participate in various shared activities. These thoughts are bound by typical discursive (communication based on both the debate and argument) and cultural (conducting a targeted prominent activity) practices. School (school educational context) has a role in its social function to develop cultural literacy of young generations and to provide guidance of young generations in the belonging to culture by undergoing a conscious realization of discursive and cultural practices adapted to the level of the young generation.

In accordance with the socio-cultural conditions of the modern world, early education is indicated as necessary for child development in fast-changing conditions, as well as for parents who quickly return to their profession as well as for the poor orientation of parents on issues of systematic support of educational needs of their child. Parents at the time of the information boom also have a problem with the selection of parental educational strategies, and the absence of also educational services, including educational programs for children. Current adult society places demands on the active and meaningful participation in society, but does not indicate the attention needed and seriousness to the question of education of children of an early age. Care for the youngest generation of children is provided in nurseries, mother centers, child care establishments, while the educational component in care giving is rather unintentional, involuntary, and random.

Autonomous play as one of the specifics of an educare curriculum

In the period from birth to three years children evolve from complete dependence on adults, they experience through the important levels of autonomy constant obstacles and challenging processes. The authors of this study interpret autonomy as the ability of the child to make decisions without external interference. The authors of this study also consider the child's autonomy as a certain relative independence from adults, but they interpret it as emerging/developing autonomy; i.e., they consider the child as a cooperating entity that within the socio-cultural, family and school limits seeks to acquire his own autonomy. The adult consciously supports the child who gradually becomes less dependent on the adult. This results because the child realizes not only received and processed information from the external environment, but also it's developing cultural and discursive practices. This requires both the decentralization of the adult's proceedings/actions and the proceedings/actions of the child, but also an area of mutual actions and comprehensiveness of context. Determination of free will in actions, owing to which human being lives as a rational being, but also on the contrary man is a rational being and he can and is capable to determine free will. We do not mean unreasonable will but reasonable and independent proceeding/actions, which are the result of self-regulatory mechanisms. Being capable of rational decisions in socio-situational contexts is a real competence which is

educationally contingent. Actions of free will are evaluated by the society as appropriate or inappropriate. The authors of this study are considering socially desirable and acceptable actions/proceedings related to each stage of development. Therefore, we ask in our research what is children's autonomy from the perspective of parents and caregivers.

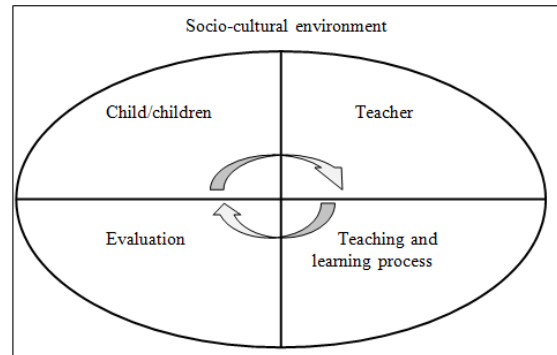


Figure 1. Promoting autonomy, competence and collaboration of the child / children

In the process of enculturation play has an important place, play/playing as a key/main formative activity (childhood). It reflects reality, but it is also a diversion from reality. Play/playing allows us to look closely on reality and symbolically represents it. Learning progress through play/playing allows the child to diverge from reality and soon get closer symbolically so that the reality of the play subjects is represented as one of the options of reality. It is a change of the form of looking at reality, thinking about it and acting in it, but these are only partial forms of complex proceedings. The critical change (as evidence of learning) requires contrast, a plurality of alternatives, changing forms of viewing, and position. Then, the basic framework is constituted in the play for essential models of cultural and discursive practices that people apply to understand and intervene in personal, social and professional life. Play/playing is a type of preparation for adult life. Play/playing is a fundamental didactic tool, which is a form of communication among children and adults, enabling the development of cognition and language in reciprocal interactions. A child at play gets a natural space for (self-) presentation and the teacher has room to teach what needs to be taught. Play/playing eliminates superiority in knowledge, because during play knowledge is mutually formed together between the playing subjects. Play provokes intelligence while acting and operating subjects in terms of their further development. Play provokes an individual (socially conditioned) experience (as cultural contents set in the minds of subjects) in terms of its further restructuring. From the moment of provoking intelligence and provoking personal experience the child's personality is constructed - his identity, autonomy, competence and et al. This construction is essentially social because it is being structured by the teacher to take place in play-learning group of active children. The teacher realizes that in the teaching and learning process based on the play/playing he has to support the creation of constructive and not aggressive relations between playing children and together develop critical aspects of play information. Optimal control of play is indirect didactic intervention in children's play, in which the teacher is a teammate

presenting a model of the play, but leaves room for independent, individual actions of the children. Individual, independent actions of the children indirectly but deliberately encouraged by teachers enables the development of self-regulatory mechanisms of the child/children using cultural and discursive practices in the frame of adaptation to the socio-cultural systems of the society. Therefore, the second research question is: To which degree the Slovak caregivers support autonomous play.

For the teacher to understand what and why children play, it is necessary to systematically observe the play. It is the reconstruction of play, which occurs in the teaching and learning process that will lead to full understanding of the processes and the development of descriptive terms to describe and evaluate the processes. Implementation/realization should rely on observation of behavior (action and proceedings) of the children during play. In connection with the observation of playing children, the teacher allows children (the teacher also participates in it) the creation of themed conceptual maps before and after the realization of the game. The conceptual map (as a visualization of mental content, as an option to their subjective interpretations) is used as a diagnostic tool for learning about the actual level of development of the child, to define the next level of development of the child and to predict the didactic possibilities which will allow meaningful achievement of the child's potential level of development. The map is part of the teacher's didactics. External mediators are also used in the diagnosis of the play/playing of the child that allow the playing children to see and to reflect "steps in the game." At the end of play, feedback takes place and is based on feedback control carried out by "steps in the game," as conscious internalization of the method of acquiring educational content and its awareness by the child/children. Photos and video recordings are also valuable resources providing information about the realization of play/playing children. All these elements serve to implement the reconstruction of the play and its terms, which occurred in the teaching and learning process. Reconstruction of play/playing allows the teacher to analyze and induce the educational and socio-cultural entities that have/had effect on the character of the play/playing.

Diagnosis based on evidence corresponds to/with the consistency of diagnosis. This type of diagnosis prevents errors. The teacher detects, evaluates and assesses the actual state of the proceedings and the actions of the child; it serves to identify the nature and causes of something that is (in signs or in profile) present in the proceedings and actions of the child. It focuses on the relationship of cause and effect. The teacher focuses on at least two areas; a) what is present in the proceedings and actions of the child and its nature, and b) what is not yet present in the proceedings and actions of the child along with searching for and identifying the cause of said absence. We have in mind mainly cultural and discursive practices, which have not yet been internalized, as characteristic for our socio-cultural schemes of proceedings and actions, which the child has not developed. Within the pedagogical optimism it may be noted that many developing options present some developmental potential, which means that the teacher's proceedings and actions focus on developing entities. This is more than a positive starting point for evidence-based diagnostics, because pedagogics is a

hypothetical science that operates with pedagogical (didactic) assumptions (including operation of themes), and therefore focuses on whether to confirm or disprove any potential presence (often implicit nature) of something. Pedagogics, of course, focuses on the real presence of outcomes of development, when it defines the condition, character, profile and prognosis of stage development outcomes and its consequences. It does not neglect regularities or developmental specifics and considers learning objectives and content (subject matter) in connection with the development of the child. In the teaching and learning processes, the teacher most frequently uses observation to obtain and record all available information on the procedures and operations of the subject and creates a list of observed phenomena and considers the question "why is that?". The teacher, in play/playing (learning), focuses on protocompetence (the emerging competence), which is a part of a conglomerate of competencies, and assesses the possibilities of its didactic support and outlines indications for further instructions in the teaching and learning processes. The teacher also, via diagnostics, finds discrepancies between what should already be achieved and yet, for various reasons, is not achieved. Diagnosis based on evidence corresponds to the preciseness of diagnosis. This type of diagnosis does not overlook the context of the situation, but takes it into account. The teacher avoids diagnosing episodic manifestations of proceedings and actions of the child/children, taking into account the entire situational context and its impact. The teacher (in contrast to the parent) has a certain advantage in the diagnosis, the teacher observes children in relatively constant (even repetitive) situations. The fact that the teacher knows the observed child enables him to carry out diagnostics considering the child's level of development. However, the teacher's rough estimate is incorporated into systematic diagnosis. The teacher diagnoses, if possible, in representative situations, he must make the distinction between diagnostic ways of proceedings and action and of their attributed sociocultural characteristics. It is advisable for the teacher to consider the possibility of conflicting indications, depending on the situational context. The situational context evokes situated learning. From this aspect, the diagnosis based on evidence has value for both the one who diagnoses and one who is being diagnosed. Pedagogical diagnostics are particularly important in order for the didactic indications to be targeted and dealt with effectively. In the teaching and learning processes, the teacher intensively searches for important moments that are present, in order to support development of the child/children. To prevent errors, it is important to make the diagnosis based on evidence. Diagnostics based on evidence allows a more accurate indication of the teaching and learning processes (including the teaching and learning process based on play/playing) and allows the teacher to focus on and reflect upon before he starts his teaching. Case studies and their solutions also have their application in such diagnostics.

In connection with the points above, it should be considered that:

- The learning process begins around the time of birth of the subject.
- Care and attention are inseparable: quality of care is a question of education and quality of education should be the norm.

- Every child develops in its own rhythm, but adults can stimulate and encourage their learning.
- All children benefit (profit) from the care and education, which should be always adequate in their development.
- Systematic, precise observation and examination are the key to good help for a child.
- Cultural and physical diversity must be valued and respected.
- Learning is holistic and cannot be divided: confidence, motivation, interest, happiness, social and physical skill (competence) are as important as cognitive success.
- Children learn best through play (playing), direct experience and conversation (discussion) with others.
- Teachers and other professionals must collaborate with parents who first help self-forming of child.
- The quality of care and education requires teachers and other knowledgeable professionals who constantly take part in various forms of continuing education and professional development [1].

Therefore, we ask whether there is a relationship between the caregiver's view on autonomous play and their educational practices.

3. Research Methods

The research is part of a larger project; refer to appendix for particulars. For the study presented in this paper, we will use focus groups and observation to gather data.

Research Questions

What is children's autonomy from the perspective of parents and caregivers?

To which degree the Slovak caregivers support autonomous play?

Is there a relationship between the caregiver's view on autonomous play and their educational practices?

Participants

We plan to work with six nurseries in Slovakia, and will have eight focus groups with at least four participants in each group. There will be four focus groups with parent-participants, and four focus groups with teacher-participants.

Also, researchers will observe eight teacher's interactions with children to examine the teacher's behavior in free play and in teacher directed activity.

All participants will have to give consent to participate in the study and to be recorded.

Procedure/Setting:

After permission from the director of the nursery, parents and teachers will be invited to participate in the study.

Focus group will meet separately, in selected nurseries in Slovakia that provide care for children age 6-36 months. The duration of each session is one hour.

Observations of teachers will take place in the same nurseries that provide care for children 6-36 months old. Observations will last, on average, 80 minutes. Researchers will observe the teachers' behavior towards one boy and one girl (whenever possible) in the classroom during free play and in teacher directed activity.

Data analysis:

We will collect audio recordings, which will be transcribed into written form, for a closer study. The gathered data will be coded and analyzed.

4. Discussion: Qualitative Methodology as a Tool for Project Implementation

The Qualitative Methodology Potential – the main goal of qualitative research is to understand, interpret social reality, to transform and change the social reality from the perspective of research subjects together with the contextualization of individual and social knowledge. Qualitative investigation represents a consistent and complex approach to subjective and inter-subjective realities as legitimate objects of scientific knowledge. It means the study of everyday life, which is the basic scenario of auto/socio-constructivism, constitutes and develops a variety of personal (including professional) plans, which configure and integrate specific dimensions of the human world. These dimensions acquire a unique, multi-layered and dynamic nature of the human (not sub-human) realities.

Qualitative methodology brings in a holistic and global perspective of the phenomenon studied without reducing the research subjects into variables (and statistical data). It does not deal with the quotas fulfilling, but recognizing the elements, which shape and co-create the studied phenomenon. The goal of qualitative research is not to describe complex phenomena, but rather to identify and outline few central themes that explain why and how a particular phenomenon operates in a particular context. Qualitative methodology enables detailed recognition of the research subjects' perspectives. Persons (entities), contexts or groups are not reduced to variables but they are considered as a whole. Each context is unique such as a research subject or group of research subjects, accordingly. Carrying out intensive studies on a small scale, qualitative methodology supports the opportunities for gathering and analyzing the subjective data through adequate strategies. It is not aimed at investigating representative samples of the masses in studying the population, but it is engaged in deep and detailed analysis of a small number of research subjects. Furthermore, it points out particularities, exceptionalities, and dissimilarities in the study of human realities. It does not seek the expected, but it is aimed at the findings, which have not been revealed and described yet. It does not take out of context, but it strives to contextualize; put in the natural course of the research subjects.

Qualitative methodology emphasizes the human dimension while investigating human beings, which means thinking at the level of a researcher's natural behavior with regard to the fact that the research has the character of interaction, transaction and intra-action. By using qualitative methodology, researchers seek to understand human behavior and human intentions; they do not want to refer to the established cause and effect relationships between the phenomena. Qualitative methodology is referred to as inductive and participatory because the design (emerging design) and the findings emerge from the activities carried out in the collaboration between the researcher and the research subject in close relation to the object of investigation. It corresponds with the flexible research, which allows organic incorporation of the findings that have not been considered prior to the investigation since these findings can be useful in order to understand the studied phenomenon.

Qualitative methodology is not aimed to verify theories and hypotheses, but it is aimed to generate theories, define research problems as well as research questions, which open future possibilities of other investigations. The research problem, research questions and the research objectives are designed with the aim to enable real induction within the creative mental activity, including participation. Qualitative research seeks to explore the experiences of a small number of individuals in detail. It is not concerned with generalizing these findings to the wider population but rather at seeking new insights and deepening understandings. Qualitative methodology and its research is focused on in-depth examination – complex social reality understanding by which the researcher gathers the data through the accumulation of numerous texts obtained by different methods and techniques of data collection (the data are gathered in a verbal and visual, not in a numeric form). It does not concern the declaration of facts and actuality but it strives to describe the origin and nature of the investigated actuality with regard to its participants; it pursues setting the actuality into the context of events and its co-constructing.

According to J. P. Goetz & M. D. LeCompte, the analysis of information should be carried out systematically, focusing on the creation of structures and relationships among them. It means that by utilizing the qualitative methodology, the process of theorization can be achieved in a coherent way. The concept of systematic (systematization process) refers to the concept of the system, i.e. the interconnected group of entities will be dealt with comprehensively. Systematization in the qualitative investigation is necessary due to the fact that having formalized and systematized the data; the theorization is the result of creative mental activity, not pure empirical examination or speculation. Not all analytical, interpretative models and methods in qualitative investigations that are currently applied are aimed to generate theories. However, when the aim of the research activities of the researcher is theorization, it is necessary to apply the comparison of conceptions with a view to reveal which of them is more important, more reliable.

Qualitative investigation enables the theory to emerge from interpersonal interaction and transaction as well as from the interaction, which is carried out on the research material obtained in the research field (the elaboration of the research material). The point is to accomplish non-mathematical interpretation, which aims to discover – to identify concepts and relationships and organize them into explicative theoretical schemes. Qualitative methodology provides the findings of investigations related to the meaning/s, determination of regularities, patterns, explications, and possible configurations as well as causal and intentional effects.

The challenge of the contemporary (postmodern) period is to conceptualize pedagogical science. This cannot be achieved on the basis of partial research studies of purely quantitative character. There is a strong requirement for the design of research that will enable us not only to interpret the current state of didactic practice on the basis of scientific knowledge of human activity, but also to change how it is perceived. Since didactics (as pedagogical science) examines individuals living in inter-subjective relations within mutually and jointly created human realities (as opposed to, e.g. pathology), qualitative

approach is inevitable, undeniable and methodologically indicated in order to investigate the teaching and learning process (which represents a human intra-action, interaction and transaction).

According to C. Marshall and G. B. Rosmann, the purpose of qualitative research has several different foundations. These are exploratory, explanatory, descriptive, and emancipatory. They are defined as follows:

- exploratory – to identify, discover or generate hypotheses about some phenomena or important categories of meaning. This means identifying the problematic factors in the process of teaching so that the reasons can be eliminated. An example would be a learner's continuous and long-term disinterest in participating in group discussions in the EFL classroom;
- explanatory – to explain or identify the current relationships or plausible relationships concerning a phenomenon in question. This would include an explanation of the likely reasons for disruption of the relationship between a teacher and his students while teaching in a classroom that has a negative atmosphere. For example, continuous teacher negative feedback on assessment of a student's pronunciation and oral performance;
- descriptive – to document and describe the characteristics of the phenomenon of interest. This is a developed description, which highlights the overlap of the specific features of the phenomenon of interest. For example, a teacher describes learning situations which result in repeated occurrence of a learner's errors;
- emancipatory – to create opportunities for social transformation. This is affected by the implementation of the action research with the purpose to transform the model of teaching in school educational context. For example, teacher's research causes a significant change in the approach of individual teachers in taking action.

Therefore, it is appropriate to use the qualitative methodology when investigating didactic practice and reality since its main form is inductive and socio-critical investigation of the reality. Qualitative methodology is highly appropriate in cases of deep understanding of the phenomenon under its investigation. A substantial part of qualitative investigation is based on case studies or series of case studies, i.e. a case (its history and complexity) often represents an important context for understanding what is being investigated. The qualitative methodology utilizes participatory observation and informal interviews. The qualitative methodology and its application in didactics (studying the patterns, models, processes, conditions, subjects, etc. of their development, their evaluation) represent conceptual art when research subjects (including other research subjects, such as children/pupils/students/trainees in further education) jointly and mutually conceptualize the investigated phenomenon with regard to its applicability.

The qualitative methodology does not misrepresent subjects' opinions; the research findings and their specific asset are defined a posteriori. Forming concepts, mutual construction of constructs generated a posteriori, represent active shaping of symbolically constructed future. The

progress in the field of pedagogical science can neither be made on the basis of the research carried out purely by external institutions without the active involvement and commitment of particular school associates, nor on the investigation pursued by teaching staff within school educational environment. The progress can be made due to mutual collaboration of form-setting entities with regard to the world of science and appropriate methodology.

Action research as reported by S. Kemmis and R. McTaggart (1982) is a specifically oriented investigation that is carried out by the group of researchers in the process of teaching and learning. It is characterized as spiral cycles of problem identification, systematic data collection, reflection, analysis, and procedures, which are managed on the basis of the obtained data and redefinition.

Connection of concepts "action" and "research" highlights the essential specifics of this method, more specifically tries out proposals for change in the didactic practice as a means to gain knowledge and/or improve the conditions of learning and the learning process. The objective of action research as part of the teacher's activity (in our project with the children, parents, and children's teachers participation) is to obtain practical outcomes that can be immediately used in the didactic situation, and it does not exclude the contribution to the formation of broader generalizations, or - as a higher level - for the development of concepts and scientific theories. Methodology of the process of action research as stated by T. Hernández Gil [2] is represented as a cyclic form, in a spiral or ring (J. Elliott, 1997 In [2]). The cyclic process consists of several phases:

- 1) Diagnosis of the teaching and learning process;
- 2) The design of intervention (action plan);
- 3) Intervention for the collection of data;
- 4) Analyzing and interpreting data;
- 5) Illustration of the change in the teaching and learning process (an emerging theoretical model).

The above phases are covered through reflection - action - reflection (as well as the action - reflection - revision)

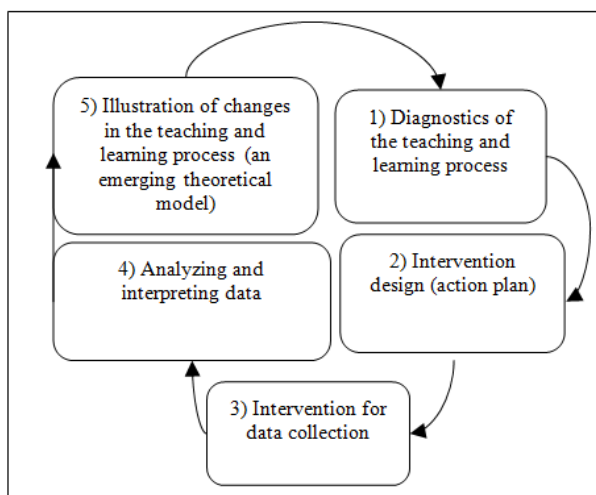


Figure 2. Methodology of action research process: J. Elliott in Hernández Gil, T. [2]

5. Conclusion

The project is aimed at developing the concept of early childhood education and the creation of an educational

program that takes into account the specifics of the development of children at an early age. Currently, from the pedagogical and didactic aspects of education, not enough scientific and professional attention is paid to an early childhood education in Slovakia. From this aspect we can talk about neglect of educationally targeted opportunities for the child to develop in the period prior to entry into pre-primary education. From a cultural-anthropological, psychological, pedagogical, didactic and socio-cultural aspect it is a significant stage of human development, when man looks at life from the perspective of socio-cultural emancipation - coping with the fast changes of today's life. It is the pre-primary education, which deals with child development from birth to entry into primary education.

Therefore, the project is scientifically oriented to answer these topics.

- The project has a research and development nature: research will be applied as the fundamental instrument in the development of science, and the educational program for the education of children of an early age will be developed.

- The project has socio-cultural character: parents of children, children, teachers who are carriers of experience of the world of children, etc., will be involved.

- The project has significant social character: it interfaces with an area that has a wide presence, but insufficient scientific research.

- The project has a significant scientific nature: it interfaces with pedagogics - pre-primary education with input of conceptualization topics, as well as in the scientific interface, since it is oriented to develop a new pedagogical model, creating a learning program highlighting new approaches in the context of education and culture that are typical for Europe.

- The project has (as already mentioned above) significant methodological nature: qualitative methodology will be applied, which is desirable when examining subjects and their social activities.

The project is based on the realization of research and development since the research will find subject elements and will develop the educational program. Research and development requires application of a methodology that allows conceptualization of the major topic of inquiry.

Content of this research project is focused on:

- Identifying and assessing the scope and quality of institutionalized educational childcare of children of an early age in Slovakia;
- Assessing the conditions necessary for providing knowledgeable and professional institutionalized educational childcare of children of an early age;
- Identifying the real educational needs of children of early ages, which exceeds the educational efforts of parents and requires an institutional socio-cultural dimension;
- Identifying parental strategies, their impact on the child and the abstraction of effective educational strategies;
- Identifying experiences that derive from the realization of educational activities in childcare centers (mother centers et al.), as well as from establishments that provide childcare;
- Creating an educational program that takes into account the specifics of educational needs, and

socio-cultural aspects of the education of children of an early age.

The process of creating a conceptual, theoretical framework for early childhood care will use the corresponding methodological instruments (see appendix).

- Conceptualising the education of children of an early age in the family from the aspect of the parents themselves, as is currently carried out by parents.
- Identifying educational parallels between the upbringing of the child in the family and educational counseling opportunities for parents including consideration of adequate institutionalized forms of education of children of early ages.
- Identifying educational aspects of institutionalized care provided in the following facilities: nurseries, children's centers, establishment of child care and nursery centers.
- Conceptualizing methodological form and educational content of young children based on the identification of educational issues and educational needs from the perspective of parents and depending on the currently defined socio-cultural conditions.
- Developing an educational program for early-education.

Concrete product of the project will be educational program, which goals are:

- To present social need and justification for the education of children of an early age.
- To present the educational program of education of children of early ages adapted to educational needs and socio-cultural conditions.
- To present educational strategies of parents following the concept of educational programs that will be implemented institutionally.
- To highlight one of the ways of fulfilling children's rights; children's fundamental rights, especially the right to be educated with their peers and to get high quality of education via form of educational play in dedicated institutions.

Findings from this study, which focuses on autonomous play as one of the specifics of an educare curriculum will be implemented in the creating of an educational program for children age 6-36 months in Slovakia.

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Appendix:

Outline of the overall curriculum project:

Implementation	Name of the main / sub-objective	Description of the process
Phase 1	Conceptualization of education/parenting strategies of young children in the family from the aspect of the parents, as is currently carried out by parents	Collaborating intensively with parents and teachers of children in order to recruit participants. Managing interviews with parents and teachers. Performing qualitative analysis of research material. Designing of conceptual maps. Comparing of theories.
Phase 2	Identification of educational parallels between the upbringing (parenting strategies, education) of the child in the family and opportunities for pedagogic counseling for parents including consideration of adequate institutionalized forms of education of young children.	Implementing focus groups with parents. Performing qualitative analysis of research material. Applying inductive strategies. Predicting areas of educational counseling in connection to the obtained results. Contrasting of conceptual maps in the overlap of identical characteristics.
Phase 3	Identification of the educational aspects of institutionalized care that is provided by following facilities: nurseries, children's centers, and establishment of childcare and nursery centers.	Implementing focus groups with teachers. Performing qualitative analysis of research material. Applying inductive strategies. Predicting areas of educational counseling in connection to the obtained results. Contrasting conceptual maps in the overlap of identical characteristics.
Phase 4	Conceptualization of methodological and content forms of education for young children based on identification of educational issues and educational needs from the perspective of parents and depending on the currently defined socio-cultural conditions.	Extracting conceptual maps based on the overlap of findings derived from the realization of the objectives (first, second and third). Designing educational needs for a young child in accordance with developmental and socio-cultural conditions.
Phase 5	Drafting an educational program for early-childhood education.	Conceptualizing concentric programs of education for young children containing educational needs and learning opportunities based on defined educational goals, principles and educational content. Implementing objective, content and graphic features of the monograph, which contains the educational program.