

Importance of a Positive Climate for Conducting Self-Evaluation in Kindergarten

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POVZETEK – Zagotavljanje dostopne in visokokakovostne predšolske vzgoje je nujen pogoj, da omogočimo otroku ustrezen duševni in telesni razvoj in razvoj njegove individualnosti, zmanjšamo osip v rednem šolanju ter tveganja za revščino in socialno izključenost. V tem kontekstu se znotraj kakovostnega vrtca poudarja potreba po visoko usposobljenem kadru, saj je dokazano, da višje kot je strokovno osebe v vrtcu usposobljeno, višja je kakovost storitev, ki jo vrtec lahko ponuja. Področje predšolske vzgoje potrebuje stalno in načrtno strokovno ter znanstveno raziskovanje, ki bo prispevalo k ohranjanju dosežene in razvijanju višje ravni kakovosti vrtcev. V prispevku nas je v okviru empirične raziskave ($N = 398$ vzgojiteljev) zanimalo področje samoevalvacije vzgojiteljev predšolskih otrok v slovenskih vrtcih, ocena njihove usposobljenosti za povezava med dojemanjem klime v vrtcu ter pogostostjo samoevalvacije in raziskovalnega dela. Ugotovili smo, da samoevalvacija lahko postane pomemben dejavnik zagotavljanja kakovosti v vrtcu, vendar je za to potrebno v njem ustvariti ustrežno klimo.

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ABSTRACT – Providing accessible and high-quality early childhood education is a prerequisite for enabling the child's mental and physical development, his/her individuality, reducing early school leaving, reducing the risk of poverty and social exclusion. In this context, a quality kindergarten highlights the need for highly qualified staff, as it has been proved that the more the professional staff in the kindergarten is qualified, the higher the quality of services that the kindergarten can provide. The field of pre-school education requires constant, planned professional and scientific work, which will contribute to maintaining the achieved quality of kindergartens and to developing a higher level thereof. In the empirical research ($N = 398$ educators), we were interested in the self-evaluation of the pre-school teachers in the Slovenian kindergartens, in their assessment of their self-evaluation skills, their perception of the kindergarten climate, and in the relationship between their kindergarten climate perception and their self-evaluation frequency and research work. It was established that self-evaluation could be an important kindergarten quality assurance element when a stimulating kindergarten climate is created.

1 Introduction

The process of kindergarten assurance focuses on the experiences gathered in educational settings, such as child – educator interactions, and on the types of activities in which children are engaged. High-quality kindergarten experiences enhance children's abilities to take advantage of the educational opportunities in school and reduce deficits, e.g. in speech and in the social background, which children from a socially deprived environment might have. Nowadays, educators are faced with professional challenges on a daily basis and are expected to create appropriate interactions and learning situations while taking into account the child's individuality. For this reason, educators

should systematically collect data on their work and the child's progress and perform self-evaluation, thus verifying the achievement of specific goals and objectives. By doing so, they are also motivated to change, improve their work practices, and adapt them to the needs of all the kindergarten participants (children, parents, the local and wider society). In addition, they plan their further activities and the pre-school field development, which is highlighted in the Kindergarten Act (1996, 2005) and the Curriculum for Kindergartens (1999). In the empirical research, the frequency and areas of the self-evaluation of Slovenian pre-school teachers were examined. We were interested in the educators' evaluation of the kindergarten climate, in the frequency of their involvement in research work and self-evaluation, and in their correlation.

2 Evaluation as an Element of Kindergarten Quality Assurance

Apart from respecting human rights, autonomy and justice, quality is one of the general principles of education in the Republic of Slovenia, and the right to quality education is one of the fundamental rights. Ensuring accessible and high-quality early childhood education, which is the first step in the school system, is a prerequisite for enabling the child's mental and physical development, his individuality, for reducing early school leaving, the risk of poverty and social exclusion, and for learning about the environment in which the child lives (White Paper, 2011; Campbell-Barr, 2017; Devjak & Berčnik, 2017; Jager, 2013). In this context, a quality kindergarten highlights the need for highly qualified staff, as it has been proved that the more the professional staff in the kindergarten is qualified, the higher the quality of services that the kindergarten can provide. The so-called pedagogical quality focuses on the employment of pedagogical processes in kindergarten (how educators interact with children, what level of pedagogical awareness they possess, and what forms and methods of work they use) and their conformity with the curriculum goals. It is a multifaceted and intersubjective definition, which stems, on the one hand, from the pedagogical competencies of educators and, on the other hand, from their experience (Sheridan et al., 2009). According to Sheridan (2007), quality as a pedagogical phenomenon consists of four dimensions that interact and co-exist: society, child, educator and learning context. Thus, a good kindergarten is a community of children, educators, and parents striving for a common goal (the development and growth of an individual who will be able to contribute to the well-being of society with his/her full potential in the future), who are connected by shared values and beliefs (Devjak & Berčnik, 2017; Jager, 2013; Marjanovič Umek, 2002; Sheridan, 2007; Sheridan et al., 2009).

Although part of the general school system, pre-school education is specific in terms of the institutional functioning of a kindergarten, and in terms of kindergarten life organization; it is embedded in the local community, it contributes to the quality of family life, and it is also specific in terms of goals, content, and working methods. The field of pre-school education requires constant, planned professional and scientific work, which will contribute to maintaining the achieved quality of kindergartens and to developing a higher level thereof (Devjak & Berčnik 2017). According to Medveš (2000), the concept of quality assurance in educational institutions has evolved in pro-

portion to the concept of their autonomy. In the process of enhancing autonomy, the responsibility for individual issues of organization and the content of work have moved from external, school inspection to local communities and institutions, and with the increased autonomy of the educator, his/her responsibility for quality pre-school education has also increased (Babič, 2011). Educators are thus faced with numerous professional challenges and are expected to maintain quality at multiple levels. The educator must be able “to create appropriate interactions and learning situations, based on the knowledge of early and pre-school learning and child development, taking into account the child’s individuality” (Valenčič Zuljan & Blanuša Trošelj, 2014, p. 44). “Awareness of the importance of the child’s rights and their realization also necessitates the consideration of the research participation of children: i.e. to allow children to express their own experiences, feelings, views, as well as to properly protect them in the process, so that they can themselves decide on their role in the research, and that their participation does not produce any negative consequences for them” (Štemberger, 2019, p. 3). Along with the theoretical knowledge of different scientific branches (e.g. psychology, pedagogy), professional competencies also include experiential knowledge, which complements the theory and practice (ibid.). By systematically collecting the data on his/her work and through evaluation, the educator can verify the level of his/her achievement of the specific goals, thereby being motivated to change the work processes and to adapt them to the needs of children, parents, and the local and wider society. Through evaluation, the data on work effectiveness are collected, based on which further activities are planned (Devjak & Berčnik, 2017; Marjanovič Umek, 2002; 2011). Both the Kindergarten Act (1996; 2005) and the Curriculum for Kindergartens (1999) “require further development of the pre-school field towards the development of modern quality concepts within which self-evaluation models are developed” (Babič 2001, p. 59). Self-evaluation, understood as systematic, structured and continuous attention paid to the quality of the work of educational institutions, should be carried out by internal quality control educators who should evaluate their own functioning and the programme improvement (Babič, 2011; Devjak & Berčnik, 2017). Thus, critical reflection and self-evaluation are important elements contributing to the quality of the educational institution. Self-evaluation, the advantage of which is better knowledge and understanding of one’s own work, the ability to promptly remedy the identified shortcomings and to prepare faster for change is thus part of the day-to-day tasks of educators and as such part of their professional development (ibid.). It is important for the educator to upgrade the information about effective ways of teaching children and working methods, to pursue the curriculum goals, and to learn about the knowledge needed to be successful in the changing world (Valenčič Zuljan & Blanuša Trošelj, 2014). Self-evaluation is thus an integral part of kindergarten life and covers all the main aspects of kindergarten work that are important for educators, children and parents. The main goal of self-evaluation is to create a culture (in this case in kindergarten) in which everyone can make a change, and in which it is believed that improving kindergarten is the right and responsibility of everyone involved (Macbeath, 2006). Self-evaluation, therefore, arises from the specific kindergarten needs, so it is also necessary to adapt to the kindergarten conditions when performing self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process carried out in the course of the programme enables us to analyse the quality of the work of professionals, and its sensibly evaluated results serve as guidelines for further programme development (Babič, 2011; Možina, 2002). The teaching profession is thus “extremely complex, re-

quiring a high level of professional awareness and a wide range of competencies among which the ones to explore practice and to build a new theory based on common thinking are very important for professional development” (Valenčič Zuljan & Blanuša Trošelj, 2014, p. 45). The educator’s work should be based on theoretical knowledge and research work, whereby, as a member of the profession, he/she strives for the well-being of users, while at the same time is aware that he/she is entitled to an autonomous judgment, without external interference (Podgornik, Devjak & Vogrinc, 2010). Self-evaluation by which an educator can improve his/her professional functioning and thinking can, therefore, be reasonably regarded as an important element of a pre-school teacher’s professional development, which in turn influences the successful performance of his/her role in kindergarten.

3 Organizational Culture and Kindergarten Atmosphere

In his/her critical reflection, the educator as a competent professional should focus not only on teaching methods but also on attitudes, values, behaviour, and beliefs that are part of the kindergarten’s organizational culture. As Selimović, Opić and Selimović (2018) point out, it is necessary to satisfy specific preconditions for the institution’s good functioning and “among the significant elements of its successful functioning are the relationships between the elements of the educational system” (ibid. p. 66). The organizational culture is composed of a set of values adopted by kindergarten employees, of the ways of performing activities, a management style, the relationship between the management, employees and service users – parents, of the ways of resolving conflicts, and communication. It is reflected indirectly in the institution by what we do and how we do it. All these factors are hidden; many times, one is not even aware of them, even though they importantly co-shape the life of the institution (Kavčič 2011). However, it should be pointed out that “departments in kindergarten can also draw up their own agreements on work and mutual relations according to their specifics, i.e. they can identify their own values in the scope of the agreed ones, which should be in accordance with the national regulations and with the kindergarten policy” (Berčnik & Devjak, 2017, p. 71). The concept of organizational culture was extensively used in the last decade, when it became apparent that the institution’s management, the reactions of the employees to the institutional events and the environment were influenced not only by rational elements but also by symbols (rituals, beliefs, ideology, etc.) (cf. Ferjan, 2005; Černetič, 2007; Ivanko & Stare, 2007; Kavčič, 2011; Mihalič, 2007). Culture in an institution thus represents a system of beliefs, habits and values of people, and is defined as the dynamic phenomenon unique to each institution (Možina, 2004; Mihalič, 2007; Schein, 2010). Kavčič (2003) notes that the strength of the organizational culture is expressed in the agreement of the employees on the values and norms and in the manner of their realization. A strong organizational culture applies when a majority of the employees agree with the values of the organization, and when equality, improvement, openness and change are promoted. Culture in an organization is, therefore, shaped by people, and it consists of communication, values, beliefs, products of every member of the organization, corporate architecture, role models, rituals and customs, and linguis-

tic abilities. Management is crucial in shaping the organizational culture, as it should direct the employees towards new ways of thinking and acting. The relationships in the organization belonging to the organizational climate, which is an integral part of the organizational culture, also depend on the management (Kavčič, 2003; Možina, 2004). Organizational culture and climate are linked to different elements – culture is more tied to global, strategic and system elements, and thus to the development vision, capital goals, global interaction, system stability, organizational growth and system organization itself, whereas organizational climate is tied to process and operational elements, such as short-term goals, operationalization, procedures, ways of doing business/work, the structure of employees, and the internal environment (Mihalič, 2007). The organizational climate reflects the individual's experience of the organizational culture, and influences the kindergarten atmosphere as a relationship between what people expect and what they actually get. It may include the employees' attitudes towards the organization of work, the relationships with the organization, and individual systems within the organization. The organizational atmosphere is primarily affected by positive or negative employees' relationships. When employees within the organization understand each other, are satisfied with their work and salaries, they form positive relationships; on the other hand, when there is dissatisfaction, low productivity and conflicts in the organization, the relationships between the employees are negative, influencing the entire collective, and causing fluctuation and absenteeism (Ivančič, 2007; Ivanko & Stare, 2007; Lipičnik, 1998). The organizational climate may be open or closed, which is mainly due to the attitude of the management. In an open climate, the management listens to and accepts the employees' suggestions and opinions, while in closed environments, it does not give the employees the opportunity to express their opinions. In the latter case, the employees do their jobs but do not help or support each other, which negatively affects the organizational climate (Ahghar, 2008). An unfavourable, negative or closed climate is not always a reason for poor performance, which can also be attributed to the ignorance and incompetence of the employees. In addition to relationships, the organizational climate is shaped by organizational affiliation, leadership, motivation, innovation, initiative, learning, competence, and knowledge of the mission, vision and goals of the organization (Ivanko & Stare, 2007; Siok, 2007; Škerget, 2016).

According to Ahghar (2008), the organizational climate in education is relatively stable and is part of the school environment, which is influenced by leadership. Research (Polutnik, 2014) showed that a favourable organizational climate was a prerequisite for the effective functioning of the organization, which also affected the performance of the organization and its achievement of goals. Each organization uses different performance indicators that depend on the work, the employees' attitude towards the work, and on the co-workers. Good associates and stimulating physical working conditions, an efficient and successful working environment, strong management, substantial salary, as well as the possibility of professional and personal growth influence the individual's satisfaction, which is a key element of the organizational climate. Clear goal setting, highlighting achievements, fostering self-initiative, establishing friendships, promoting solidarity, good communication, positive competitiveness and employee motivation contribute to it as well. The latter is maintained through good workplace relations, autonomy, responsibility, performance, and successful work results, with the possibility of promotion, professional growth, including work knowledge, diversity, interest in and

the ability to use the knowledge (Lipičnik, 1998). All this, however, is influenced by the communication style and the leadership style. The kindergarten climate thus stands for the relationships between educators and the management, between educators, between children and educators, between children, between kindergartens and the environment, and as such, it also has a significant impact on the evaluation and self-evaluation of educators, and thus on improving their professional performance, and consequently, on improving the kindergarten education quality (Devjak, 2016; Devjak & Berčnik 2017; Ivanko & Stare, 2007).

4 Research

4.1 Research Purpose and Objectives

The empirical research examined the frequency and areas of self-evaluation of Slovenian kindergarten teachers, their assessment of their qualification to carry out self-evaluation, their perception of the kindergarten climate, and the connection between their perception of the kindergarten climate and the self-evaluation frequency, as well as their participation in research work. The core research questions were as follows:

- R1: How do the educators evaluate the climate in the kindergarten in which they work?
- R2: How often are the educators involved in research work?
- R3: Who, in the opinion of the pre-school teachers, should carry out self-evaluation in kindergarten?
- R4: How often do the educators conduct self-evaluations, and which areas of their work do they evaluate most often?
- R5: What is the relationship between how the educators evaluate the kindergarten climate and how often they are involved in research work?
- R6: What is the relationship between how the educators evaluate the kindergarten climate and how often they conduct self-evaluation?
- R7: How do the educators evaluate their ability to conduct self-evaluation?
- R8: What is the relationship between the educators' self-assessment of their knowledge of statistics, methodology, and self-evaluation?
- R9: What is the relationship between the educators' assessment of their ability to conduct self-evaluation, the frequency of self-evaluation, and research work?

4.2 Research Method

The descriptive and causal non-experimental research methods were applied. The research was based on the quantitative research paradigm.

4.3 Sample

The research was conducted on a representative sample of pre-school teachers, employed in Slovenian kindergartens. 398 pre-school teachers, employed in 89 kindergartens all over Slovenia, of whom 96.7% were female and 3.3% were male, filled in the questionnaire. The average age of the pre-school teachers was 39.47 years (with a standard deviation of 10.02 years). On average, they had 17.19 years of work experience (a standard deviation of 11.55 years). Approximately one-third of the respondents completed secondary school education (31.6%), more than a quarter of them held a university degree (28.8%), more than one-fifth of them completed higher professional education (22.0%), and less than one-fifth of them completed higher education (17.6%).

4.4 Data Collection

The data were collected with a questionnaire constructed for pre-school teachers, based on the analysis of the literature on empirical research, self-evaluation and the professional growth of pedagogical workers (e.g. Teacher Researcher and Cross-Curricular Links, more by Krek and Vogrinc, 2007).

Six questionnaires were submitted to the kindergartens. The kindergarten head teachers were asked to distribute the questionnaires to the teachers in alphabetical order. In the paper, the data collected using two scales will be presented on the following issues: How often pre-school teachers conduct self-evaluation of individual areas (rating scale 1), how pre-school teachers view the kindergarten climate (the Likert-type scale, rating scale 2), and some closed questions. The rating scales are based on Cronbach's alpha with sufficient reliability (RS 1: $\alpha = 0.88$, RS 2 $\alpha = 0.82$) and validity (the first factor accounts for 40.35% variance on RS 1, and 49.22% variance on RS 2).

4.5 Data Processing

The data from the questionnaires were processed using the descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The statistical procedures employed were as follows: frequency distribution (f , $f\%$) of the attributive variables; the basic descriptive statistics of the numerical variables (mean, median, standard deviation); the Pearson correlation coefficient; the chi-square test; the Kullback 2 \hat{I} test (since the condition of the theoretical frequencies for the chi-square test was not fulfilled); factor analysis to test the instrument validity (% of the explained variance with the first factor); and Cronbach's alpha as a measure of instrument reliability. The data are presented in a tabular form.

The percentages are calculated for individual issues, depending on the number of respondents who answered a particular question (i.e. valid answers).

5 Results and Interpretation

5.1 How do educators evaluate the climate in the kindergarten in which they work?

The first question was dedicated to the assessment of the kindergarten climate by the respondents. The educators addressed eight statements, six of which referred to the collaboration between educators (“I think my kindergarten co-workers accept my ideas, tips, etc.”; “The educator who would like to get involved in a project can count on the moral support of his/her co-workers”; “The educators in our kindergarten collaborate well”; “The educators in our kindergarten help each other”; “The professional success of educators in our kindergarten is appreciated”; “The educator involved in projects in our kindergarten is misunderstood by his/her co-workers”). However, two statements referred to the collaboration of the pre-school teachers with the head teachers (“The educator who would like to introduce a novelty in our kindergarten can count on the moral support of the head teacher”; “The head teacher of our kindergarten is receptive of the pre-school teachers’ initiatives”).

Table 1. Educators’ responses to the statements as regards the kindergarten climate

	<i>I completely disagree</i>		<i>I disagree</i>		<i>I cannot decide</i>		<i>I agree</i>		<i>I completely agree</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>
I think my kindergarten co-workers accept my ideas, tips, etc.	3	0.8	8	2.1	72	18.5	249	63.8	58	14.9
The educator who would like to get involved in a project can count on the moral support of his/her co-workers.	4	1.0	17	4.3	57	14.5	227	57.9	87	22.2
The educator who would like to introduce a novelty in our kindergarten can count on the moral support of the head teacher.	4	1.0	12	3.1	67	17.1	182	46.4	127	32.4
The head teacher of our kindergarten is receptive of the pre-school teachers’ initiatives.	2	0.5	8	2.0	49	12.5	178	45.3	156	39.7
The educators in our kindergarten collaborate well.	1	0.3	15	3.8	35	8.9	218	55.6	123	31.4
The educators in our kindergarten help each other.	0	0.0	12	3.0	33	8.4	216	54.8	133	33.8
The professional success of educators in our kindergarten is appreciated.	3	0.8	21	5.4	76	19.4	197	50.3	95	24.2
The educator involved in projects in our kindergarten is misunderstood by his/her co-workers.	131	33.5	144	36.8	54	13.8	41	10.5	1	5.4

From the presented data, it can be inferred that the majority of the educators consider the climate in the Slovenian kindergartens very positive, as 88.6% of the surveyed educators completely agreed or agreed with the statement "The educators in our kindergarten help each other."

More than four-fifths of the surveyed educators also completely agreed or agreed that the educators in their kindergarten collaborated well (87.0%), that the head teacher of their kindergarten was receptive of the pre-school teachers' initiatives (85.0%), and that the educator who would like to participate in the project could count on the moral support of his/her co-workers (80.1%).

About three-quarters of the respondents completely agreed or agreed with the statement that co-workers in their kindergarten accepted their ideas, tips, etc. (78.7%), that the educators who would like to introduce a novelty in their kindergarten could count on the moral support of the head teacher (78.8%), and that the professional success of the educators in their kindergarten was appreciated (74.5%). 70.3% of the respondents disagreed or completely disagreed with the statement that the educators involved in the projects in their kindergarten were misunderstood by their co-workers.

Almost a fifth of the surveyed educators were undecided about the following statements: "The educator's professional performance is valued in our collective" (19.4%); "I think that our kindergarten co-workers accept my ideas, tips, etc." (18.5%), and "The educator who would like to introduce a novelty in our kindergarten can count on the moral support of the head teacher" (17.1%).

Less than a tenth of the respondents completely disagreed or disagreed that the educator's professional performance in their collective was appreciated (24% or 6.2%), and that the educator who would like to get involved in the project could count on the moral support of his/her co-workers in their kindergarten (21% or 5.3%).

Slightly less than a fifth of the respondents (42% or 15.9%) completely agreed or agreed with the statement that the educators involved in the projects were misunderstood by their kindergarten co-workers. The organization climate reflects an individual's experience of a kindergarten atmosphere as a relationship between what people expect and what they actually get. When employees within the organization understand each other, are satisfied with their work and salaries, they form good relationships, resulting in a positive climate; on the other hand, when there is dissatisfaction, low productivity and conflicts in the organization, the relationships between the employees are negative, influencing the entire organization (Ivančič, 2007; Ivanko & Stare, 2007; Lipičnik, 1998).

From the results presented, we can conclude that the majority of the educators are satisfied with the prevalent kindergarten climate, both as regards the collaboration with the educators and with the head teachers. Somewhat questionable, however, is the support offered by the co-workers to the educators' involvement in research work; therefore, we examined the frequency of the educators' involvement in research work; we were particularly interested in the frequency of the self-evaluation carried out by the educators, and in the relationship between the frequency of the self-evaluation and the manner in which the educators evaluated the kindergarten climate.

5.2 *Involvement in Research Work and Conducted Self-Evaluation in Kindergarten*

Firstly, we were interested in the involvement of the educators in research work.

Table 2. Educators' responses to how often they engage in research work

<i>How often do you engage in research work?</i>	<i>Very often</i>		<i>Often</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Rarely</i>		<i>Never</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%	f	f%
Educators	16	4.1	111	28.5	158	40.6	84	21.6	20	5.1	389	100.0

Most of the surveyed educators (40.6%) responded that they sometimes did research work, a third of them (32.6%) answered that they did research work very often or often, and just over a quarter of the respondents (26.7%) said they rarely or never conducted research work. The educators who responded that they did research work considered their participation in various research projects (e.g. in collaboration with the Faculty, and the Institute of Education of the Republic of Slovenia) or in big research teams and not necessarily the conducting of autonomous research, as only a quarter of the respondents (25.8%) affirmed that they had already conducted research. On the other hand, three quarters of the educators (74.2%) said they had had no research experience so far.

The research work of pedagogical workers, especially self-evaluation research, can be understood as an attempt to link teaching and research, so that they are no longer two separate tasks, but are developing into interrelated and complementary activities (Cole & Knowles, 2004). The Organization and Financing of Education Act (in Slovenian ZOFVI 2008, Article 49), adopted in 2008, provides for quality assessment through self-evaluation, and the drawing up of an annual report on self-evaluation of the school and kindergarten.

Since the idea that pre-school teachers should also conduct research, specifically self-evaluation research, is a rather novel one in Slovenia, and since there is much evidence that self-evaluation research can significantly contribute to improving the quality of work in pre-school institutions, we decided to analyse the current situation in this field (the self-evaluation frequency). We were further interested in who, in the opinion of the pre-school teachers, should conduct self-evaluation in kindergarten.

When asked who should evaluate educational work, a great majority of the pre-school teachers (90.5%) responded that pre-school teachers should assess whether they had achieved the set goals. 4.6% of the respondents believed that the work of the pre-school teacher should be evaluated by the respective kindergarten head teacher. Ten pre-school teachers (2.6%) believed that an external evaluation expert (e.g. from the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia) should evaluate the work of the pre-school teacher, while nine surveyed pre-school teachers (2.3%) responded that this should be done by some other pre-school teacher, e.g. a co-worker from the same kindergarten. It is important to realize that by systematically collecting data through an evaluation of his/her work, an educator can evaluate the extent to which specific goals

have been achieved, thereby encouraging himself/herself to change the work processes and to adapt them to changes and different needs (Devjak & Berčnik 2017; Marjanovič Umek, 2002; 2011).

Table 3. Pre-School Teachers' Responses to their Self-Evaluation Frequency

<i>How often do you carry out self-evaluation?</i>	<i>Very often</i>		<i>Often</i>		<i>Sometimes</i>		<i>Rarely</i>		<i>Total</i>	
	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>	<i>f</i>	<i>f%</i>
Pre-school teachers	72	18.2	241	60.9	75	18.9	8	2.0	396	100.0

When asked how often pre-school teachers carry out self-evaluation, almost four-fifths of the pre-school teachers (79.1 %) answered that they carried out self-evaluation very often or often, slightly less than a fifth (18.9%) of the respondents answered that they sometimes carried out self-evaluation, whereas only 2% of the respondents attested to rarely carrying out self-evaluation. None of the respondents replied that they did not carry out self-evaluation. As mentioned in the theoretical part, self-evaluation, understood as systematic, structured and continuous attention given to the quality of their work, should be carried out by the internal quality control educators (Babič, 2011; Devjak & Berčnik 2017).

We were further interested in how often the pre-school teachers carried out self-evaluation in individual areas of work with children. The respondents evaluated the frequency of the self-evaluation in individual areas, whereby grade 5 indicated that they carried out self-evaluation in the respective field very often, whereas grade 1 indicated that they did not carry out self-evaluation in the respective area. The pre-school teachers most often checked how children complied with the rules ($\bar{x} = 4.40$), how the child was socially included in the group ($\bar{x} = 4.38$), the state of the child's welfare ($\bar{x} = 4.35$), and how the curriculum was being implemented ($\bar{x} = 4.35$). The pre-school teachers least often determined the child's dispositions for learning, his/her academic achievements and knowledge ($\bar{x} = 3.22$), the child's health and the quality of his/her life ($\bar{x} = 3.75$), as well as his/her cognitive development ($\bar{x} = 3.82$). Self-evaluation should be a part of the day-to-day tasks of educators, a part of their professional development, and thus an integral part of kindergarten life which covers all the main aspects of kindergarten work that are important for educators, children and parents (Macbeath, 2006).

5.3 Relationship between Kindergarten Climate Perception, Frequency of Research Work and Conducting Self-Evaluation

Afterwards, we were interested in the relationship between the manner in which the educators evaluated the kindergarten climate and the frequency of their involvement in research work, and of self-evaluation. To this end, we introduced a new "Climate" variable and added up the responses of the surveyed educators to the eight statements presented in Table 1, with the answers to the statement "The educator involved in projects in our kindergarten was misunderstood by his/her co-workers" being contrary to the previous ones (the answer "I completely agree" was scored with 1 point and the answer

“I completely disagree” with 5 points). It was possible to score between 8 and 40 points, and the results ranged from 15 to 40 scored points (the average score was 32.25 points, whereas the standard deviation was 4.41 points). According to the data distribution, we divided the respondents into two groups in line with their kindergarten climate perception (given the relatively high results, we called them “a very stimulating climate” and “an encouraging climate”), and we took a median of 32 points as the limit.

Firstly, the data are presented on whether or not the educators who rated the kindergarten climate higher were more likely to be involved in research work, followed by an analysis of the relationship between climate perception and the frequency of conducting self-evaluation.

Table 4. Relationship between climate perception and the frequency of involvement in research work

Climate	Very often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %
Encouraging	6	3.1	52	26.7	78	40.0	46	23.6	13	6.7	195	100.0
Very stimulating	8	4.5	57	32.2	74	41.8	33	18.6	5	2.8	177	100.0
Total	14	3.8	109	29.3	152	40.9	79	21.2	18	4.8	372	100.0

There were no statistically significant differences between the responses of the educators who rated the kindergarten climate higher and those who rated the kindergarten climate lower ($\chi^2 = 5.457$, $df = 4$, $\alpha = 0.244$). Nevertheless, a specific trend can be inferred from the data presented, namely that the educators who perceived the kindergarten climate as very stimulating responded that they did research work more often (36.7% said that they were very often or often engaged in research work) and sometimes (41.8%), whereas the greater proportion of the educators who had less favourable perceptions of the kindergarten climate responded that they rarely or never did research work (30.3% of the educators perceived the kindergarten climate as stimulating, and 21.4% of the kindergarten teachers perceived the climate as very stimulating).

Table 5. Relationship between the kindergarten climate perception and the self-evaluation frequency

Climate	Very often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Total	
	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %
Encouraging	35	17.6	118	59.3	42	21.1	4	2.0	199	100.0
Very stimulating	32	17.8	115	63.9	29	16.1	4	2.2	180	100.0
Total	67	17.7	233	61.5	71	18.7	8	2.1	379	100.0

There were no statistically significant differences between the responses of the educators who rated the kindergarten climate higher and those who rated the kinder-

garten climate lower, considering their self-evaluation frequency ($2\hat{I} = 1.614$, $df = 3$, $\alpha = 0.656$). Most educators (79.2%), regardless of how they rated the kindergarten climate, said that they very often or often conducted self-evaluation in kindergarten, but more respondents who perceived the kindergarten climate as very stimulating conducted self-evaluation in kindergarten (81.7% of the respondents said that they very often or often conducted self-evaluation) than those who rated the kindergarten climate somewhat lower (76.9% of the respondents said that they very often or often conducted self-evaluation).

5.4 Relationship between the Educators' Self-Assessment of Self-Evaluation Knowledge and the Self-Evaluation Frequency and Research Work

In order for educators to be able to explore their practice and to subject their work to the reviews and discussions of their co-workers or even the wider professional public (by reporting and publishing the results of their research), they need to be qualified to conduct research and reflect on their own practice. Niemi and Jakku-Sihvonen (2006) report that in Finland the education programmes for educators have been focusing on the development of professionalism based on the culture of research for several decades now. The education of pre-school teachers and teachers is based on the belief that educators should be familiar with the latest research into education, teaching and learning, that they need to be able to apply the research results to practice in a meaningful way, and that they should be appropriately academically and professionally trained to conduct research.

How do pre-school teachers evaluate their knowledge to conduct self-evaluation?

Almost half of the surveyed pre-school teachers (45.6%) evaluated their knowledge of how to perform self-evaluation as medium, whereas less than a quarter of them (23.8%) evaluated their knowledge thereof as very poor or poor. Almost one-third of the pre-school teachers (30.7%) evaluated their knowledge in this field as good or very good. On average, the pre-school teachers rated their knowledge of performing self-evaluation as very high, even though less than a third (29.7%) of the respondents answered that during their undergraduate studies self-evaluation had been addressed in one subject only. They acquired further self-evaluation knowledge in the framework of continuous professional training, as almost half of the surveyed pre-school teachers (43.6%) responded that they had attended supplementary education programmes (seminars, workshops, lectures) on self-evaluation. Educators are faced with various professional challenges when they have to form proper interactions and learning situations, based on their knowledge of early learning and child development. The educators' professional competence comprises theoretical and experiential knowledge. By systematically collecting data on his/her work, the educator can check the progress of achieving specific goals, thereby encouraging himself/herself to change work processes and adapt them to the needs of children, parents, the local and wider social environment (Valenčič Zuljan & Blanuša Trošelj, 2014, p. 44).

On a five-point rating scale (the value of five points denotes wide knowledge, whereas the value of one point denotes slight knowledge), the educators rated, in addition to their self-evaluation knowledge, their knowledge of statistics and methodology. We were

interested in the relationship between the educators' self-assessment of their knowledge of statistics, their methodological knowledge and their self-evaluation knowledge. The Pearson correlation coefficient showed a statistically significant positive medium correlation between the self-evaluation knowledge and the statistics knowledge ($r = 0.40$, $\alpha = 0.000$), and between the self-evaluation knowledge and the methodology knowledge ($r = 0.50$, $\alpha = 0.000$). The educators who rated their knowledge of statistics and methodology as high also rated their knowledge of self-evaluation as high.

The correlation between the self-assessment of the knowledge of statistics and the methodology knowledge is statistically significant, strong and positive. ($r = 0.73$, $\alpha = 0.000$). The educators who scored more points for their statistical knowledge, also rated their methodological knowledge statistically significantly higher.

In continuation, we were interested in whether the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as higher also more often performed self-evaluation and were more often involved in research work.

Table 6. How often do educators who assess their knowledge of self-evaluation differently perform self-evaluation?

Knowledge	Very often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Total	
	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %
Poor	11	12.4	41	46.1	34	38.2	3	3.4	89	100.0
Medium	23	13.5	114	67.1	28	16.5	5	2.9	170	100.0
Well	36	31.6	70	61.4	8	7.0	0	0.0	114	100.0
Total	70	18.8	225	60.3	70	18.8	8	2.1	373	100.0

Statistically significant differences regarding the estimate of their self-evaluation knowledge were shown between the responses of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as higher and those who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as lower ($2\hat{I} = 48.909$, $df = 6$, $\alpha = 0.000$). The educators who scored higher on their self-evaluation knowledge were also more likely to perform self-evaluation. Slightly more than half of the educators (58.5%) who assessed their self-evaluation knowledge as poor, responded that they very often and often conducted self-evaluation, the same as four-fifths of the educators (80.6%) who assessed their self-evaluation knowledge as medium and as many as 93.0% of educators, who assessed their self-evaluation knowledge as good. On the other hand, more than two-fifths of the educators (41.6%) who assessed their self-evaluation knowledge as poor responded that they sometimes or rarely performed self-evaluation, while only 7.0% of the educators who assessed their self-evaluation knowledge as good answered the same. It should be pointed out that none of the surveyed educators, regardless of their assessment of their self-evaluation knowledge, responded that they did not perform self-evaluation. It is the specific needs of the kindergarten that should encourage self-evaluation. The self-evaluation process carried out in the course of the programme enables us to analyse the quality of the work of professionals, and its sensibly evaluated results serve as guidelines for further programme development (Babič, 2011; Možina, 2002).

We were also interested in the relationship between the educators' self-assessment of their self-evaluation knowledge and the frequency of their involvement in research work.

Table 7. How often are the educators who assess their knowledge of self-evaluation differently involved in research work?

Knowledge	Very often		Often		Sometimes		Rarely		Never		Total	
	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %	<i>f</i>	<i>f</i> %
Poor	1	1.1	10	11.5	34	39.1	31	35.6	11	12.6	87	100.0
Medium	2	1.2	47	28.1	76	45.5	37	22.2	5	3.0	167	100.0
Good	13	11.5	48	42.5	41	36.3	9	8.0	2	1.8	113	100.0
Total	16	4.4	105	28.6	151	41.1	77	21.0	18	4.9	367	100.0

Statistically significant differences regarding the frequency of involvement in research work were shown between the responses of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as higher and those who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as lower ($\chi^2 = 69.414$, $df = 8$, $\alpha = 0.000$). Just a little over a tenth of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as poor (12.6%), nearly one-third of the pre-school teachers who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as medium (29.3%) and just a little over half of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as good (54.0%) responded that they were very often or often involved in research. Almost half of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as poor (48.2%), a quarter of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as medium (25.2%), and only a tenth of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as good (9.8%) answered that they rarely or never did research work. According to the presented data, the educators who believed to possess more self-evaluation knowledge responded that they were also more likely to engage in research work.

6 Conclusion

Every educational institution has a responsibility to create a collaborative climate and reach a consensus on common beliefs and values, and on its vision and mission, with which every member of the group can identify. It is essential for every educational staff member to be aware of his/her responsibility or role in the process of comprehensive quality assurance, and for educational institutions to identify the research and especially self-evaluation as fundamental elements in ensuring the quality of education. We assumed that a proper climate for research and self-evaluation would be the one fostering mutual assistance, support and collaboration between the institution's employees, in which professional performance would be valued, ideas, advice, etc. from individuals well accepted by the collective, and the educators who would like to take part in a project or introduce a specific work innovation could count on the moral support of the

head teacher and their co-workers, etc. From the empirical research data, it can be inferred that the majority of the educators considered the Slovenian kindergarten climate very positive. When they were asked how frequently they examined their pedagogical practice, most of the surveyed educators (40.6%) responded that they sometimes did research work, a third of them (32.6%) responded that they very often or often did research work, although some of them considered their participation in various research projects or in big research groups and not necessarily the conducting of autonomous research.

Quality assessment and assurance in the field of Slovenian education has been formalized by the Organization and Financing of Education Act, which provides for the quality assessment and assurance of schools and kindergartens, also through self-evaluation. Thus, self-evaluation is gaining in importance in the process of education quality assessment and assurance. When asked who should evaluate educational work, the great majority of the pre-school teachers in the survey (90.5%) responded that pre-school teachers should assess themselves whether they had achieved the set goals. Almost four-fifths of the pre-school teachers (79.1%) responded that they very often or often carried out self-evaluation. They most often checked how children complied with the rules ($\bar{x} = 4.40$), how the child was socially included in the group ($\bar{x} = 4.38$), the state of the child's welfare ($\bar{x} = 4.35$) and how the curriculum was being implemented ($\bar{x} = 4.35$).

When considering the conditions for conducting research and self-evaluation, we need to focus not only on the kindergarten climate but also on the education of the research staff. It is crucial for the educational staff involved in research to obtain at least the basic methodological knowledge in the scope of their formal studies (undergraduate and postgraduate), in order to be able to carry out research and self-evaluation. Later on, they should have the opportunity to complement and upgrade their knowledge in the scope of ongoing education and training programmes for education professionals. On average, the pre-school teachers rated their knowledge of performing self-evaluation as very high, even though less than a third (29.7%) of the respondents answered that during their undergraduate studies self-evaluation had been addressed in one subject only. Self-evaluation knowledge was further acquired in the framework of continuous professional training, as almost half of the surveyed pre-school teachers (43.6%) responded that they had attended supplementary education programmes (seminars, workshops, lectures) on self-evaluation. A statistically significant positive correlation between the self-evaluation knowledge and the statistics knowledge, and between the self-evaluation knowledge and the methodology knowledge was established. The educators who assessed their knowledge of statistics and methodology as high also assessed their self-evaluation knowledge as high. The correlation between the self-assessment of the knowledge of statistics and the knowledge of methodology is the strongest ($r = 0.73$, $\alpha = 0.000$). The educators who scored more on their knowledge of statistics also had a statistically significantly higher rating on their methodology knowledge. We subsequently studied the relationship between the educators' self-assessment of their self-evaluation knowledge and the self-evaluation frequency and research work. Statistically significant differences regarding the estimate of their knowledge of self-evaluation were shown between the responses of the educators who rated their self-evaluation skills as higher and those who rated their self-evaluation skills as lower. The educators who scored higher on their self-evaluation knowledge were also more likely

to perform self-evaluation. Statistically significant differences regarding the frequency of their research work were shown between the responses of the educators who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as higher and those who rated their self-evaluation knowledge as lower. The educators who assessed that they had more self-evaluation knowledge responded that they were also more likely to engage in research work.

Self-evaluation can become an important element of quality assurance in kindergarten; however, a proper atmosphere should be created to carry it out. The essence of the climate which can assure quality lies in the kindergarten striving to improve its work as a permanent expert activity and a part of the day-to-day tasks of educators.

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Pomen pozitivne klime za izvajanje samoevalvacije v vrtcu

Ob spoštovanju človekovih pravic ter avtonomiji in pravičnosti spada kakovost med splošna načela vzgoje in izobraževanja v Republiki Sloveniji, pravica do kakovostnega izobraževanja pa je ena izmed temeljnih pravic. Zagotavljanje dostopne in visokokakovostne predšolske vzgoje, ki je prvi korak v šolskem sistemu, je tako nujen pogoj, da omogočimo otroku duševni in telesni razvoj, razvoj njegove individualnosti, zmanjšamo osip v rednem šolanju in tveganja za revščino in socialno izključenost ter da otrok spozna okolje, v katerem živi (Bela knjiga, 2011; Jager, 2013). V tem kontekstu se znotraj kakovostnega vrtca poudarja potreba po visoko usposobljenem kadru, saj je dokazano, da višje kot je strokovno osebje v vrtcu usposobljeno, višja je kakovost storitev, ki jo vrtec lahko ponuja.

Dober vrtec je tako pojmovan kot skupnost otrok in vzgojiteljev ter staršev, ki delajo za skupen cilj (razvoj in rast posameznikov, da bodo v prihodnosti pripomogli z vsem svojim potencialom k blaginji družbe), vse skupaj pa povezujejo v celoto skupne vrednote in prepričanja. Dober vrtec vodi človek z vizijo in empatijo, dober vrtec ima vzgojitelje, ki jim je vzgoja in učenje otrok poslanstvo, izziv, so razmišljajoči praktiki, se ne obnašajo kot edina avtoriteta in vir informacij, temveč so posredniki med otrokom in znanjem ter vsakemu izmed njih omogočajo in zagotavljajo optimalne možnosti osebnostnega razvoja. Dober vrtec pripravlja otroke za kakovostno življenje in delo, v njem delajo vsi tako, ne zato, ker to morajo, temveč zato, ker tako sami želijo (Sentočnik, 1999; Marjanovič Umek, 2002; Sheridan in sod., 2009; Jager, 2013). Ob tem pa se je še treba zavedati, da je predšolska vzgoja, čeprav je del celotnega šolskega sistema, specifična z vidika delovanja vrtca kot institucije ter organizacije življenja v vrtcu, saj je vpeta v lokalno skupnost, daje podporo kakovosti življenja v družinah, specifična pa je tudi vidika ciljev, vsebin in metod dela.

Področje predšolske vzgoje potrebuje stalno načrtno strokovno in znanstveno delo, ki bo prispevalo k ohranjanju dosežene in razvijanju višje ravni kakovosti delovanja vrtcev. S pomočjo evalvacije, ki je opredeljena kot sistematično zbiranje podatkov o nekem pojavu oziroma kot proces, s katerim preverjamo, v kolikšni meri so določeni cilji doseženi, spodbujamo nenehno spreminjanje procesov dela in prilagajanje le-tega potrebam otrok, staršev, lokalnega okolja ... Z evalvacijo pridobimo podatke o učin-

kovitosti dela, na osnovi katerih načrtujemo nadaljnje delovanje (Marjanovič Umek, 2002; 2011). Koncept zagotavljanja kakovosti v vzgojno-izobraževalni ustanovi se je po besedah Medveša (2000) razvijal premosorazmerno s pojmovanjem avtonomije vzgojno-izobraževalnih ustanov. V procesih krepitve avtonomije se je tako odgovornost za posamezna vprašanja organizacije in vsebine dela preselila iz zunanje, šolske inšpekcije na krajevne skupnosti in ustanove same. Za izvajanje notranjega nadzora kakovosti lastnega delovanja ter izboljšanje programa se tako izvaja samoevalvacija kot sistematična, strukturirana in nenehna pozornost, ki jo vzgojno-izobraževalne institucije namenjajo kakovosti svojega dela. Z večanjem avtonomije vzgojitelja se večja tudi njegova odgovornost za kakovostno izvajanje pedagoške prakse, na podlagi česar sta kritična refleksija in samoevalviranje postala pomembna dejavnika zagotavljanja kakovosti vzgojno-izobraževalne ustanove. Samoevalviranje, katerega prednosti so boljše poznavanje in razumevanje lastnega pedagoškega dela, možnost sprotnega odstranjevanja ugotovljenih pomanjkljivosti ter hitrejša priprava sprememb, je tako del vsakodnevnih nalog vzgojiteljev in kot tako del njihovega profesionalnega razvoja (prav tam).

Kompetenten profesionalec pa se pri svoji kritični refleksiji ne usmerja zgolj na metode poučevanja, ampak tudi na odnose, vrednote, stališča, vedenja, prepričanja, ki so tudi del organizacijske kulture vrtca. Organizacijska kultura vrtca je vzorec prepričanj in vrednot, ki jih člani neke organizacije razvijejo v daljšem času in se izražajo v materialnih simbolih in vedenjih. Gre torej za skupek vrednot, sprejetih s strani zaposlenih v vrtcu, način izvajanja dejavnosti, način vodenja, odnos vodstva do zaposlenih in uporabnikov storitev – staršev, načine reševanja konfliktov, komunikacijo ipd. Kaže se posredno v tem, kaj počnemo in kako, kakšni so odnosi v organizaciji. Vsi ti dejavniki so prikriti, velikokrat se jih niti ne zavedamo, čeprav pomembno (so)oblikujejo življenje v organizaciji.

Pojem organizacijske kulture se intenzivno uporablja šele v zadnjem desetletju, ko smo prišli do spoznanja, da razmerij pri vodenju organizacije, reakcije zaposlenih na dogajanje v organizaciji in okolju ne določajo zgolj racionalni elementi, temveč tudi simboli (obredi, prepričanja, ideologija ...) (prim. Ferjan, 2005; Černetič, 2007; Mihalič, 2007). Sestavni del organizacijske kulture je klima, ki odraža posameznikovo doživljanje organizacijske kulture in se čuti v vzdušju v vrtcu kot skladnost med tistim, kar ljudje pričakujejo, in tistim, kar dejansko dobijo. Klima v vrtcu je odnos med otroki, med otroki in vzgojitelji, med vzgojitelji, med vzgojitelji in vodstvom, med vrtcem in okoljem. Z merjenjem klime ugotavljamo vzroke in posledice vedenja ljudi v organizaciji (Ivanko in Stare, 2007; Devjak, 2016). Klima v vrtcu torej vpliva tudi na izvajanje evalvacije in samoevalvacije vzgojiteljev ter s tem na izboljšanje njihovega profesionalnega delovanja. Vzgojiteljevo profesionalno delo mora namreč temeljiti na teoretičnem znanju in raziskovalnem delu, kjer si kot pripadnik profesije prizadeva za dobrobit klientov, pri tem pa se zaveda, da ima pravico do avtonomne presoje brez zunanjega vmešavanja. Samoevalviranje, s katerim lahko vzgojitelj izboljša svoje profesionalno delovanje in razmišljanje, lahko torej upravičeno pojmuje kot enega izmed pomembnih dejavnikov vzgojiteljevega profesionalnega razvoja, ki povratno vpliva na uspešno opravljanje njegove vloge v vrtcu.

V empirični raziskavi nas je zanimalo področje samoevalvacije vzgojiteljev predšolskih otrok v slovenskih vrtcih, in sicer njihova ocena lastnih samoevalvacijskih spretnosti, njihovo dožemanje klime v vrtcu in odnos med klimo v vrtcu ter zaznavanjem in

pogostostjo izvajanja samoevalvacije ter raziskovalnega dela. Raziskava je bila izvedena na reprezentativnem vzorcu vzgojiteljev predšolskih otrok, zaposlenih v slovenskih vrtcih. Vprašalnik je izpolnilo 398 vzgojiteljev predšolskih otrok, zaposlenih v 89 vrtcih iz vse Slovenije, od tega 96,7 % žensk in 3,3 % moških. Povprečna starost predšolskih vzgojiteljev je bila 39,47 leta, v povprečju so imeli 17,19 leta delovnih izkušenj, približno tretjina jih ima končano srednješolsko izobrazbo (31,6 %), več kot četrтина pa jih ima univerzitetno izobrazbo (28,8 %).

Najprej nas je zanimalo, kako vzgojitelji ocenjujejo klimo v vrtcu. Iz predstavljenih rezultatov sklepamo, da je večina vzgojiteljev zadovoljna s klimo, ki vlada v vrtcih, tako s sodelovanjem z vzgojitelji kot tudi z ravnatelji. Nekoliko vprašljiva pa je bila podpora sodelavcev, kadar se vzgojitelji vključujejo v raziskovalno delo, zato smo v nadaljevanju preučili, kako pogosto se vzgojitelji vključujejo v raziskovalno delo, še posebej pa nas je zanimalo, kako pogosto vzgojitelji izvajajo samoevalvacijo in kakšen je odnos med pogostostjo samoevalvacije in oceno klime v vrtcu. Večina anketirancev (40,6 %) je odgovorila, da včasih opravljajo raziskovalno delo, kar lahko razumemo kot poskus povezovanja poučevanja in raziskovanja, ki se razvijata v medsebojno povezani in dopolnjujoči se dejavnosti.

Ker je v Sloveniji ideja, da bi vzgojitelji predšolskih otrok morali izvajati tudi raziskave, razmeroma nova in ker obstaja veliko dokazov, da lahko samoevalvacijsko raziskovanje bistveno pripomore k izboljšanju kakovosti dela v predšolskih ustanovah, smo se odločili analizirati trenutno stanje na tem področju (pogostost samoevalvacije). Skoraj štiri petine anketirancev (79,1 %) so odgovorile, da izvajajo samoevalvacijo zelo pogosto ali pogosto. Najpogosteje preverijo, kako otroci upoštevajo pravila ($\bar{x} = 4,40$) in kako je otrok vključen v skupino, najredkeje pa preverjajo otrokovo naklonjenost učenju, njegovim učnim dosežkom in znanju ($\bar{x} = 3,22$) ter otrokovo zdravje in kakovost njegovega življenja ($\bar{x} = 3,75$). V nadaljevanju nas je zanimalo tudi razmerje med tem, kako vzgojitelji ocenjujejo klimo v vrtcu in kako pogosto se vključujejo v raziskovalno delo in samoevalvacijo. Med odzivi vzgojiteljev, ki so klimo v vrtcu ocenili višje, in tistimi, ki so klimo v vrtcu ocenili nižje, ni bilo statistično pomembnih razlik ($\chi^2 = 5.457$, $df = 4$, $\alpha = 0.244$). Ravno tako ni bilo statistično pomembnih razlik med odzivi vzgojiteljev, ki so klimo v vrtcu ocenili višje, in tistimi, ki so klimo v vrtcu ocenili nižje glede na to, kako pogosto izvajajo samoevalvacijo ($2I = 1.614$, $df = 3$, $\alpha = 0.656$). Statistično pomembne razlike glede ocene znanja o samoevalvaciji so se pojavile med odgovori vzgojiteljev, ki so svoje samoevalvacijsko znanje ocenili višje, in tistimi, ki so svoje samoevalvacijsko znanje ocenili nižje ($2I = 48,909$, $df = 6$, $\alpha = 0,000$). Vzgojitelji, ki na samoevalvacijskem znanju dosežejo višje ocene, izkazujejo tudi večjo verjetnost za izvajanje samoevalvacije. Statistično pomembne razlike pa so se pojavile tudi glede tega, kako pogosto vzgojitelji opravljajo raziskovalno delo, in sicer med odgovori vzgojiteljev, ki so svoje samoevalvacijsko znanje ocenili višje, in tistimi, ki so svoje samoevalvacijsko znanje ocenili nižje ($\chi^2 = 69.414$, $df = 8$, $\alpha = 0.000$).

Vsaka vzgojno-izobraževalna ustanova je odgovorna za razvijanje skupne klime in doseganje soglasja o skupnih prepričanjih in vrednotah ter o viziji in poslanstvu vzgojno-izobraževalne ustanove, s katero se lahko poistoveti vsak član skupine. Ključnega pomena je, da se vsak član zaveda svoje odgovornosti ali vloge v procesu celovitega zagotavljanja kakovosti, pri čemer sta raziskovanje in zlasti samoevalvacija temeljna dejavnika zagotavljanja kakovosti. Ugotovili smo, da lahko samoevalvacija postane

pomemben dejavnik zagotavljanja kakovosti v vrtcu, potrebno pa je ustvariti primerno vrtčevsko klimo.

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