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PROJECT NUMBER - 2016-1-IT02-KA201-024294

EDUGATE - Multilingual teaching in early childhood education and care

O1 Training Contexts and Needs Map

1. Professional background of the teachers/educators.

The questionnaire was given to 165 educators/teachers; years of professional experience, educational level, professional role are reported in the following tables.

Most of the teachers/educators that took part to the current survey showed more than 10 years of experience (54%), whereas only 21% of them have been working in the school for less than 5 years. The percentage of junior/senior workers was divided as follows across countries:

years of experience in preschool	Fini zavod Radece, delo za mlade	Goteborgs Universitet	Urząd Gminy Krasne	Comune di Piacenza	Zakładni skola a materska skola Angel, v. Praze 12	Rigas Domes Izglitibas Kulturas un Sporta departements	Average Percentage
less than 5 years	20%	20%	20%	3%	47%	15%	21%
between 5 and 10 years	20%	20%	10%	23%	40%	35%	25%
more than 10 years	60%	60%	70%	73%	13%	50%	54%
total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Overall most of the teachers had an high school diploma (55%) whereas the remaining held a Bachelor or University degree. Note that while in Poland and Latvia there were more teachers with a diploma, in the other countries most of the teachers hold an university degree.

Educational level	Fini zavod Radece, delo za mlade	Goteborgs Universitet	Urząd Gminy Krasne	Comune di Piacenza	Zakładni skola a materska skola Angel, v. Praze 12	Rigas Domes Izglitibas Kulturas un Sporta departements	Average Percentage
High school diploma	20%		100%	45%	17%	90%	55%
Bachelor degree	80%	70%	0	53%	83%	10%	45%
Nursery nurses		30%					
total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

Professional Role	Fini zavod Radece, delo za mlade	Goeteborgs Universitet	Urząd Gminy Krasne	Comune di Piacenza	Zakladni skola a materska skola Angel, v. Praze 12	Rigas Domes Izglitibas Kulturas un Sporta departements	Average Percentage
educator 0-3	23%	0	9%	45%	0	0	13%
teacher 3-6/preschool	67%	61%	91%	55%	77%	100%	75%
teacher assistant 3-6	7%	0	0	0	23%	0	5%
teacher assistant 0-3	3%	39%	0	0	0	0	7%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	

2. Linguistic background of the teachers/educators.

Educators have different linguistic backgrounds. Most of them speak more than 2 or 3 languages beyond their native language. For instance, in many countries teachers are able to speak up to 3 or 4 languages at different levels; in Slovenia: Croatian, English, French, German, Italian; in Gothenburg: Arabic, Bosnian, English, Finish, Persian, Somali, Spanish; in Krasne: English, French, German, Spanish; in Piacenza: English, French, German, Spanish; in Praga: English, French, German, Russian, Spanish; in Riga: English, German, Russian.

The educators that speak one or more languages at a proficient level use these languages every day to communicate with children and parents.

In Gothenburg some teachers talk and teach the mother tongues of the immigrant children such as Persian, Somali, Bosnian, Arabic.

3. Presence of Bilingual children in the classroom by country

From the analysis of the open questions, listing the mother tongues that the foreign children speak, the following data emerged:

in Piacenza the migration phenomenon is increasing, with children coming mostly from the Balkans, Latin-america and Northern Africa. Overall, there are 22 languages spoken in the classes. Sometimes difficulties in communication are encountered with parents that hardly speak Italian. In some cases older brothers are used to communicate with families.

In Sweden twenty-six languages are spoken, the majority being African, middle-eastern, balcanic, russian and oriental areas. Sweden indeed receives many newly arrived refugees that do not speak the majority language of the country. Educators say they have the need to access a resource archive in order to learn from experience and find an operating methodology. They claim that multilingualism has to become a patrimony so that the knowledge and comprehension of the children can be developed.

The other partners usually welcome families that come from bordering countries, such as Czech Republic, Lettonia, Slovenia. There is no immigration in Poland.

Since language and cultural differences create problems, especially with parents that speak a different language, teachers often make use of strategies such as speaking slowly, using a simple language, writing using Google Translator.

4. View about second language learning in early childhood.

Most teachers (74%) value learning an L2 starting from early infancy: knowing more than one language encourages the discovery of the self, the other and of the world.

Early infancy is a period favourable to learning languages because the child's mind is open and sensible. Language is at the base of cognitive development. Teachers report that the advantages are praecocious cognitive development and a better ability in problem solving. Children are fast learners and learn foreign languages similarly to their mother tongue.

Those teachers who value multilingualism claim that it promotes socialization and the capacity to "feel at home" in a multicultural society, to access more information and to have more job opportunities.

Only 22% of the educators attributes a moderate value to bilingualism because if the L2 is not used in every day life it is not useful and will be forgotten. Furthermore children might initially have communication confusion.

Some teachers mention also parents who prefer to expose their younger children to only one language, the host country language, because their children who were exposed to two languages manifested language difficulties.

5. View about delay in language acquisition and cognitive development.

Teachers say that there is a connection between communication skills and cognitive development but the majority of the sample (58% in total with the exception of Gothenborg that did not answer) believes that only in a few cases there is a significant relationship between a cognitive delay and difficulties in the linguistic competence.

The relationship also depends on the disability level and if it is a birth or acquired difficulty. In some cases (stuttering, for example) the language difficulty does not affect intelligence.

Sometimes problems with language are correlated with the environment (non stimulating; poor; inadequate) or with traumas.

Language disorders are more frequent but, in general, most of the teachers agree on the fact that they are rarely connected with a mental retardation. In preschool (3-6 years old) if children have difficulty in articulating phonemes they have to be observed because their learning could be slowed down in the future.

Only 32% of the teachers think that mental disabilities influence the ability to learn and develop language. In addition, they claim that language problems interfere with learning, understanding and communicating with the environment.

6. Educational methods.

Educators say that they pay attention to the communication in everyday activities. They use monitoring instruments to record the verbal production of the children while playing such as taking notes, video-taping, descriptive scales and team work.

They also use a variety of didactic activities such as: songs, rhymes, stories and pictures.

Different strategies are used: negotiation, working on texts, role-playing, visual narratives.

They also use technological devices: Ipad, digital tools, multilingual apps.

In order to facilitate learning the majority language the educators ask cultural mediators for help. For instance, in Gothenborg there are educators that speak the same mother tongue as the newly arrived children.

7. Educational needs.

From the analysis of the open questions, countries with the highest number of foreign families (Gothenborg and Piacenza) manifest difficulties in everyday communication

because parents seem more interested in information concerning care activities (meals, sleep...) while educators would also like to talk about other pedagogical issues and about the development of the child.

Different habits are present because of socio-cultural and anthropological differences like alimentation, clothing, the way spontaneous play is intended, the participation to school activities.

These differences require a specific formation of the teachers in the following areas:

- intercultural communication
- valorization of mother tongues
- adaptation strategies to the new environment for the new arrivals that do not speak the majority language

The educators express the need to focus the curriculum in early infancy on learning a foreign language by emphasizing the following aspects:

- daily language classes for all children;
- training in didactic theories of psychological-cognitive development and linguistic competence.



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O1 Training Contexts and Needs Map

A) Summary of parents replies speaking a majority language and interested in a bilingual program for their children.

Number of surveys :

there was a total of 15 surveys in Comune di Piacenza (Italy), 95 in Urząd Gminy Krasne (Poland), 30 in RĪGAS DOMES IZGLĪTĪBAS KULTURAS UN SPORTA DEPARTAMENTS (Latvia), 15 in Zakladni skola a materska skola ANGEI vPraze 12(CZ), and 15 in Fini zavoad Radece, delo za mlade,(Slovenia).

1. Educational and professional background of mother/father interviewed

Overall the educational background of the parents who took part to the survey showed a middle to high educational attainment. **81%** of the n.164 mothers interviewed and **66%** of the n.161 fathers interviewed have an Higher Educational Level. Remarkably 100% of mothers/fathers in Prague have a University degree. Regarding their professional role, **30%** of the n.107 mothers that answered to this question, qualified themselves as Professionals (a category that includes intellectual and high level scientific professions); only in Poland, the **2%** of mothers are unemployed. As for fathers' professional role, **44%** of the 108 fathers that specified their profession are Technicians and Associate Professionals. The remaining parents are Service and sales workers (26%), Office Workers (20%), Managers (7%). Again, only in Poland, the **2%** of the fathers are unemployed.

2. Linguistic Background of mothers and fathers interviewed

98% of the 170 mothers interviewed speak the majority language of their country as native language, only the **2%** speak another language as Native Language (henceforth NL). While **97%** of the fathers interviewed speak the majority language of their country as NL, only the **3%** speak another language.

83 % of the n.170 families interviewed are able to speak at least one Foreign Language (henceforth FL), beyond their mother tongue, in particular English.

3. Opinions of parents about learning a Foreign Language at an early age

Parents show two positions: on the one hand they claim the importance of consolidating a NL before learning a FL (**47%**); on the other, **49%** of parents think that it is not necessary.

According to parents supporting the latter position, children can simultaneously learn different languages, because they have a great memory: their mind is so receptive and flexible that it immediately acquires new words. Additionally, they learn easier through playing. Furthermore, they think that knowing a foreign language brings new experiences, friendships, job prospects and the possibility to learn about different cultures.

Those parents who believe it is more important to consolidate the L1, before being exposed to an L2 (mostly from Poland, Latvia and Slovenia), claim that a mother tongue is the most important language that children should use, because the children need to communicate with parents and other relatives firstly.

Only a negligible percentage of parents are worried that it might not be good to mix languages: they fear that an early exposure to more than one language can create confusion without allowing children to learn any language well.

When parents are asked to express the advantages or disadvantages about learning a FL at an early age, most of them **(91%) list only the possible benefits**: children can have better assimilation/learning abilities, faster and more durable learning and more facility in switching from one language to another, knowledge of basic grammar rules, spelling and picking up the accent. Furthermore they think that the children will have more opportunities for their future life. They will be able to: communicate with more people, open their mind to different cultures and to a multicultural society, travel abroad and to be able to read in different languages. They will have a broader vision of the world and have more possibilities in their job career.

However, **9%** of the 87 parents who provided a detailed answer about this topic, expresses again their fear that **children in a bilingual classroom might have a delay** in speaking properly and showing confusion in using words. This might cause communication errors and problems due to additional words to remember. Furthermore, some parents believe that learning more than one language is not suitable for children with developmental problems.

4. How a parent can promote a bilingual development for his/ her child

We highlight the average percentage of all partners for each item proposal: most of the parents (nearly 58%) believe that the easiest way to promote the bilingual development of their child is to let him/her watch videos in a FL, followed by enrolling the child in a bilingual school (52%), subsequently by promoting integration with children who are native and reading to the child in a FL (both of them about the 46%), then traveling abroad (42%) and finally speaking in the FL they wish their child to learn (28%), taking part to language camps and playing computer games in a FL (12% and 9% respectively).

5. Approaches toward a bilingual program in the kindergarten

On average, parents are overall favorable towards a bilingual program in the kindergarten **(93%)**; in particular there were 100% of positive responses in Italy and Czech Republic. In Italy, Latvia and Czech Republic, families believe the bilingual program should start before 3 years of age, while in Poland and Slovenia after 3 years of age.

B) Summary of Questionnaire Replies for Foreign Parents.

Number of surveys :

There was a total of 15 surveys in Comune di Piacenza (Italy), 4 in Urząd Gminy Krasne (Poland), 100 Goetheborgs Universitet (in Sweden).

1. Educational background of parents interviewed

29% of a total of 129 parents interviewed, have a Higher Educational Level (29% in Italy too) while **21%** have a Secondary Education (67% in Italy and only 25% in Poland). We could not compare the professions because not all partners gave such information.

2. Linguistic Background of mothers and fathers interviewed

Below the average percentage of the languages spoken by the foreign parents are listed: Balcanic languages: 22%, English: 11%, Spanish: 10% , Arabic: 8%, German: 4%, less than 3%: Russian, Asiatic languages, Somali, Kurdi and Polish. We also see that 29% of parents speak the majority language of their own country as Native language, probably because in Sweden and Poland there are many mixed families, while in the Italian sample only 3% of foreign parents speak the majority language as NL. Note for instance that in the Italian Sample there were 7 different Native Languages.

3. Linguistic Habits of the foreign parents

Overall 75% of the 119 parents interviewed **often** speak to the children in their NL. When considering only Italy and Poland (excluding Sweden), 41% of the parents declared to speak **often** to their child in the host country language.

Furthermore, we highlight that a total of **33%** parents interviewed stated to read to their child in their own NL (only 2% in the Italian sample), while **37%** to read to their child in the Host Country Language (40% of the Italian sample). **A total for 41 %** of parents let their child watch videos in NL, whereas the **62%** prefer them to watch a video in the host country language (henceforth HCL).

4. The opinion of parents about the learning a Second Language other than own NL at an early age

We highlight that a total of **57%** of parents believe that it is important to consolidate their own NL before learning another language. In particular, the data is distributed as follows: **75% POLAND; 57% SWEDEN; 40% ITALY** (whereas **53% of them** think that is not necessary to consolidate NL before being exposed to another language).

However, note that at the question: "*Do you think that strengthening the host country language can have negative effects on the child's learning of his/her mother tongue?*": 83% of parents replies NO.

5. How a parent can promote a bilingual development for his/ her child

We highlight the average percentage of all partners for each item proposal: most of the parents highlighted the fact that speaking the native language at home represent the best way to promote the bilingual development of their child (50%); followed by promoting integration with children of the host country (25%) and by reading to the child in the native language (22%). Finally the 20% support that it is important to speak the host country language at home and let children watch videos in HCL (15%).

In sum we observed that some foreign families wish to raise bilingual children, giving them the possibility to learn their own native language as well as the host country language.

However, a considerable group of them is worried that a precocious exposure to two languages could affect the process of general language development and in a wider perspective, their cognitive development. Therefore, we believe that it should be an important aim of the current project to provide correct information about bilingual development in particular to those parents that appear to be less informed about this issue.