

The Teacher's Role in the Implementation of New Preschool Curriculum in Albania

MSc. Aurela Zisi

Curriculum Specialist, "Institute of Educational Development", Tirana, Albania

E-mail address: aurelazisi@yahoo.com

Abstract Childhood education is a very important period, in which are made a lot of studies and researches for many years. The contribute of researchers and educational specialists has its important influence on increasing of the quality of teaching of 3-6 years old children, in making a good and reflective curriculum, based on in the children interest and their ability for creativity and exploring the world, on methods and learning strategies, on the preparation of the teachers in pre service system, in the University, and their professional development in service system. If we refer the official data of Albania Ministry of education and Science, 2011, about 61% of children in the first class have been in preschool education, even though, in Albania the preschool years are not part of obligatory system of education. "The preschool teacher's standards" is an important document which has influenced on the quality of teaching and learning on preschool education. Learning in this stage has a lot of contradictions, because the dynamism is alternate with calm and rest time, the work with whole class should be alternated with the group work and individual work. This is not easy in the cases of classes with more than 30-35 children, or in the mix group, in which are children from 3-6 years old. This presentation will give answer these important questions: How much the Albanian teachers know how preschool children develop and learn; how much they are able to plan and to implement new curriculum in a multicultural environment; how well they choose the right methods and learning strategies; are they enable to balance child-initiated learning and teacher-directed learning; are they well prepared to use technology in the classroom, to manage new and unexpected situations, to collaborate with other teachers, parents etc.

Key words: Teacher, standards, early childhood, preschool/ kindergarten education, curriculum.

Childhood education is a very important period, in which are made a lot of studies and researches for many years. The contribute of international researchers and educational specialists has its important influence on increasing of the quality of teaching of 3-6 years old children, on making a good and reflective curriculum, based on in the children interest and their ability for creativity and exploring the world, on methods and learning strategies, on the preparation of the teachers in pre service system, in the University, and their professional development in service system.

In Albania, the preschool education is not part of obligatory system of education at the pre university system. Even though, if we refer the official data of Albanian Ministry of Education and Science, 2011, about 61% of children in the first class have been in preschool education.

During the last 10 years, are made very important changes and reforms on the Albanian preschool curriculum. So far, the *content standards* have been developed (2002), *standards of achievement* (2004) and the *programs* of pre-school education for 3-4, 4-5, 5-6 age groups, were developed in 2007.

The review of educational strategy (2006) aiming to include the preschool education in the preuniversity educational system as the first ring of the chain, and to involve all children of age 5-6 in the preparatory year aged (2009). Since 2009, near the schools of basic education are opened about 400 preparatory classes, on urban and rural areas.

At 2009, the Institute of Training and Curriculum, (Today Is Institute of Education Development), prepared the standards of preschool teachers. The standards include the characteristics, knowledge and professional skills that every preschool teacher should have. They direct the planning of curriculum by the teachers, teaching and learning strategies, active methods and daily practices in preschool education.

Each standard describe its competencies and indicators. They indicate the preparation of student-teacher at the University, professional development in service system and the professional growth and carrier. These standards are:

- Teacher Professional development;
- Understanding the nature of growth, development and the styles of learning of preschoolers;
- Planning and implementation of curriculum;
- Diversity and learning environment;
- Safety and healthy development of children;
- Teaching, technology and active learning methods;
- Assessment;
- Collaboration with other teachers, parents and community members.

All of standards are much related with each other. Each of them is very important because take on consideration one aspect of life and activity of preschool education. The third teacher's standard is "Planning and implementation of curriculum". The teacher should:

- Know the goals of preschool curriculum;
- Know the content of core areas of preschool programs for children from 3-6 years old;
- Plan a curriculum related with the age development, psychologist, interest and need of preschoolers;
- Know the concepts, ideas, terms and the key competencies that the preschooler should master;
- Develop with the children project, thematic lessons, integrated within them each content area;
- Support children enthusiasm, curiosity, the desire to know the environment;
- Plan the educative and instructional activity based on integrated curriculum approach;
- Accept the fact that the children learn and construct their meaning by using multiply intelligences.

But, what is curriculum?

Curriculum is a framework for organizing our approach to teaching and learning, the goals that we have toward preschoolers. The new Curriculum encompasses the state priorities, the direction for children learning, development and behavior, the resources and materials that teachers select on teaching and the continuous assessment of children's progress.

The Curriculum of our preschool education has clear aims, goals, objectives and learning results. It is focused *on the content* of that the young children has to profit by the attending the school and *on the things* that they will be able to do from age 3-6. It takes on the consideration the citizenship values, communication and relationships in a multicultural society and the children rights for a quality education.

The aim of our curriculum is to provide a strong foundation from which children grow and become active participants in life-long learning. It is age-appropriate and compatible with learners' development level. By participating in the preschool program, children develop confidence in themselves and their ability to learn, demonstrate curiosity, make simple researches in their environment, acquire a level of communicative competence, acquire social skills and abilities which enable them to relate to other children and to adults, to develop their own potentials.

The curriculum emphasizes developmentally appropriate practice for young children. It is organized through an integrated approach. Our curriculum has six core content learning areas: Language development, Mathematic development, Scientific development, Social sciences, Creative and visual arts, Physical and health development. Each of them has the some sub-areas, which help the development of children and the achievement of core competencies for this educational level including literacy, numeracy, early learning, life skills, health and hygiene practices.

The implementation of curriculum is depended from the professional experiences of the teachers. A curriculum can be well written, but its results are related from the quality of implementation. The teacher's role on the planned and implemented curriculum is very important. They should know the elements of the curriculum content, such as: learning objectives, learning content, teaching methods, materials and resources, assessments etc.

Learning objectives identify the knowledge, attitudes and skills that will be developed through educational activities to promote the cognitive, social, emotional and physical development of preschool children. Learning content refers to subject or development areas such as Language, Math, Science, Social studies, Arts, Physical and health education.

Teaching methods refer to the strategy and approach chosen for, and used in, the presentation of learning content to encourage the acquisition of knowledge and skills in all preschool learners. Didactic and instructional materials refer to workbooks, literature, toys, albums, supplementary study materials, equipment, and other teaching and learning materials.

Assessment refers to the measurement of what has been learned in the form of knowledge, attitudes and skills from the learning content covered.

All these elements are reflected on the year-long curriculum plans, monthly, weekly and daily curriculum plans. The planned curriculum and spontaneous curriculum is very much like our lives. The two kinds of curriculum planned and spontaneous, can comfortably work together in the way we teach the children.

Every year the albanian teachers plan different themes, such as: the school, friendship, family, all about me, farm, zoo, dinosaurs, birds, insect, fish, animals, plants, community, professions, food, our country, seasons, sports, vacancies, the right of children, transport, my body etc.

During the implementation of the theme the teacher integrates the knowledge and skills from six core content learning areas. After that the teacher organizes an interactive and participatory teaching, ensuring that all children are involved in it. Young children learn through play. Their learning is based on active play and interaction, to build skills and

relationships with peers, teachers and other adults.

Such activities engage children in the learning process and promote their development. Every day, the children may involve in group work, peer or individual work, project work, role play, using of manipulative materials, construction play, hands on experiential play; making observation, playing drama, coloring modeling and application activities, writing, reading, telling stories or describing events, indoor and outdoor games, videos watching.

The teachers design experiences, instruction and learning processes to meet the developmental needs of all children, including those with disabilities, by promoting inclusiveness and reducing barriers to learning. They should also provide opportunities for children to acquire the knowledge, processes, skills, abilities and values. So, teaching methods should be appropriate to the age, developmental level, language, culture, capacities of children and their community.

Lastly we can say that new curriculum and responsible teachers make possible that preschool children are healthy developed on socio-emotional area, on physical and intellectual area. They are able to:

- Recognize and feel satisfied that their participation and contribution to classroom activities is valuable from the others;
- Engage in various activities with initiative and confidence;
- Be sensitive to the feelings and rights of others;
- Begin to accept responsibility for their behavior;
- Be aware of their emotions and try to solve their problems when such exist;
- Develop logical thinking skills;
- Participate in activities which will increase understanding of sensory stimuli;
- Participate in activities which encourage the care of and respect for their bodies;
- Participate in activities designed to improve motor skills;
- Develop a positive attitude toward learning;
- Express interest in future learning experiences;
- Build upon previous experiences in such a way as to broaden their understanding of a particular concept or to acquire a new one;
- Develop the ability to listen in order to understand the meaning and intent of others;
- Use language to bring meaning to what they observe, feel, think, hear, taste and smell;
- Participate in activities which encourage self-expression;
- Develop awareness that print and symbols in their environment convey meaning;
- Show an interest in participating in the exploration of the patterns, sounds and rhymes of language during listening, singing and speaking activities;
- Invent fantasy worlds through contact with manipulative and tactile materials.

Conclusion

To be a good teacher is very difficult. For every one is a long way. But the most important mission of teacher is to support the continuous growth and learning of young children by:

- Encouraging them to learn about themselves and their world through the various senses.
- Encouraging them to make choices and take decisions based upon the available materials, good activities and time. So, the children understand the purpose of learning and grow into independent learners.
- Accepting and respecting different ideas from theirs.
- Developing activities based on their interest and needs.
- Participating in different kinds of plays for the purpose of extending them.
- Teaching them to respect support and encourage each other.
- Teaching them to live peacefully in a multicultural society.
- Teaching them how to be lifelong learners.
- Helping them to discover the world, the complex environment and their community.

Within the planned curriculum, the teacher can seize the moment to introduce the curriculum emerged from the children interest or curiosity, or from an interesting event that happen on the class.

Bibliography

Standardet e përmbajtjes në arsimin parashkollor. (2001). Tiranë: ISP

Standardet e arritjes në arsimin parashkollor. (2002). Tiranë: ISP

Programet e arsimit parashkollor për fëmijët 3-4, 4-5 dhe 5-6 vjeç. (2007). Tiranë: IKS

Inspektimi dhe vlerësimi i brendshëm i kopshtit. (2011) Tiranë: IKAP

Selmani, L., Zisi, A. (2006). Konceptimi dhe organizimi i veprimtarisë mësimore-edukative në arsimin parashkollor. Tiranë: GEER. 63-74.