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THE IMPACT OF COLLEGIAL COOPERATION OF PRE-SCHOOL TEACHERS ON PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANIZATION

Abstract: The article discusses the impact of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers on professional development of individuals as well as entire organizations aiming to learning community. The authors consider professional development of pre-school teachers as a process of *“significant and life-long learning experiential learning in which individuals realize their concepts and change their practice. The process includes individual’s personality, professional and social dimension and means development towards critical, independent and responsible decision-making and managing”* (ValenčičZuljan, 1999; 2001, 2008). According to the authors, pre-school teachers are professionals who possess sets of competencies that have been developed throughout the process of collegial cooperation and learning at different levels. The empirical part of the article presents the results of qualitative and quantitative research obtained on the sample of pre-school teachers and their assistants employed in public kindergartens in Slovenia. The authors emphasize impacts and forms of collegial cooperation within the kindergarten where pre-school teachers work. Estimations of impacts of interpersonal collegial cooperation in the kindergarten, the most desired forms of cooperation among teachers, knowledge and skills obtained with such cooperation and the effects on their professional development as well as factors that promote or hinder diverse forms of cooperation are presented.

Key words: pre-school teacher, professional development, collegial cooperation.

1 Professional development of pre-school teachers

Contemporary social conditions represent new professional challenges for educators. They are expected to act qualitatively at several levels, they should know how to work with children and their parents, colleagues and entire social environment; thus pre-school teachers are daily confronted with learning challenges and professional development. Professional development of pre-school teachers is defined as *significant and life-long learning experiential learning in which individuals realize their concepts and change their practice. The process includes individual’s personality, professional and social dimension and*

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means development towards critical, independent and responsible decision-making and managing (Valenčič Zuljan, 1999; 2011, 2008).

Professional development of pre-school teachers depends, in addition to adequate training they received during studies also on new expert learning at all levels of professional activities of pre-school teachers with special emphasize on exchange of experiences and opinions. Quality collegial cooperation can represent a valuable motivation for innovations and reflective changes of teachers' practice resulting in professional development of pre-school teachers. Therefore, student pre-school teachers should be aware of importance of professional development and reflective approach. Motivated workers who experience the importance of interpersonal cooperation for professional learning during the study would eagerly disseminate their experiences to colleagues outside their own kindergarten inspite of full workday and help to develop their kindergarten as an environment with positive climate and culture for professional development.

Professional development can be discussed in the narrow and broad sense. Tehart (1997, as cited in Valenčič Zuljan, 2001) emphasized that wider professional development of educators started with entry into the educational process and ends with retirement or leaving the profession. On the other hand, professional development of educators is limited with critical periods in which an individual really develops and advances. In some cases, educators do not advance for years, thus, it is important to distinguish between seniority and experiences, quantity and quality, etc.

Studying the professional development of teachers, we come across different approaches. Some researchers study phases of professional development and structures of so-called phase models (Fuller, 1969; Kagan, 1992; Katz, 1972; Berliner, 1992); others are interested in factors of development, while some others in forms and models of professional learning (Scheckley & Allen, 1991; Kolb, 1991).

Lian G. Katz (1972) studied professional development of pre-school teachers in the seventies of 20th century. She described the following four-phase time-based professional development of pre-school teachers:

1st phase: Survival. This is the first year of pre-school teacher's employment. In this year, a pre-school teacher just looks forward to surviving. Here are some most important dilemmas. Can I survive a day not losing a child? Will I be able to work the whole life? Will colleagues accept me? In this phase of survival, a pre-school teacher needs a lot of support, understanding, stimulations and directions. More experienced pre-school teachers, head teachers and mentors can help and guide beginners.

2nd phase: Consolidation. At the end of the first year of employment, pre-school teachers find out that they can survive in the group of children. In the second phase of professional development, pre-school teachers pay attention to children with exceptional behaviour. Pre-school teachers wonder how to help a shy child or a child that does not want to learn. In this phase, a pre-school teacher needs mentor's help. The mentor monitors teacher's actions, later they discuss the problem, pre-school teacher's experiences and they together find a solution. It is important that pre-school teachers

exchange experiences and ideas with more experienced colleagues and discuss their feelings that emerge from working with a group of children.

3rd phase: Renewal. Pre-school teachers often become tired of the routine after three or four years of work. They begin to wonder about new materials for work, new techniques, ideas, etc. During this phase of professional development, pre-school teachers want to collaborate with colleagues on regional and national level in formal and informal situations. They are interested in experiences of other pre-school teachers, conferences, interesting articles, expert films. Teachers are ready to record their own work and analyse the records in details. Pre-school teachers also look forward to visiting other departments, attend or organize workshops and learn about different programmes and projects. According to the author of the four-phase model, the third phase is important for pre-school teacher's professional development, hence it represents the most active period in which most pre-school teachers intensively develop their skills, techniques and methods of work.

4th phase: Maturity. Some pre-school teachers reach the 4th phase in the third year of their professional work, while others need five or more years. The pre-school teacher in the fourth phase of professional development and with rich experiences wonders if his occupation is a profession, if he as a pre-school teacher can change the society, and if his decisions and work have any effects on others. In this phase of professional development, pre-school teachers need opportunities to attend conferences and seminars. Pre-school teachers can professionally develop and advance from phase to phase only if they reflect their own experiences, i.e. they should enlighten them from various point of views and comprehend them entirely and, above all, exchange experiences and views with other pre-school teachers (Katz, 1972).

The above linear phase models of professional development reveal many questions. Are beginners such a homogenous group that the same principles of initial operation are valid for them? How and how much is professional development influenced by working environment, mentors...? Does the quality of environment have the same impact on all individuals, and do all individuals attain the highest degree of expertness, etc.? (Valenčič Zuljan, Blanuša Trošelj, 2014). Some authors (Sheridan et al., 2009 p. 7) criticized phase models of professional development on one hand but on the other they follow them describing professional development of pre-school teachers over more levels.

We should be aware that formation of a model means generalization and schematization of essence because its main objective is to simplify basic factors and their relation within the research problem (Valenčič Zuljan, 2008, 2012). Most of the models try to follow time dimension, consequently the quantitative approach is more stressed, for example length of service (Fuller, 1965 as cited in Kagan, 1992), while the quality of experiences that represents the basis of true decision-making and predicting of professional development is left apart.

The main objective of research is deep, complex and thoughtful knowledge of professional development. The research on professional development of pre-school teachers that describes development of professional competences and clears the roots of successful professional operation and learning (course, stimulation, obstacles, overcome

of obstacles) helps us to understand professional growth of pre-school teachers (ValenčičZuljan, BlanušaTrošelj, 2014).

We agree with critics of linear phase models of professional development that it is impossible to predict linear course of development that would be equal for all and would follow the same sequence owing to individual differences and differences of working environments and other personal factors. We think that professional learning means advancement in outlined directions according to outlined steps, which justifies the use of models of professional development to some extent. The study of expert literature on professional development of pre-school teachers and teachers leads us to conclusion that integrity and synthesis of specific phases of professional development are mostly met by branched-phase models (Sammons et al., 2007). These models somehow follow the sequence of steps from beginning to expertness and at the same time examine various factors and conditions of quality learning, taking into account specifics of environment and individuals in formation of multidirectional branch model of professional development.

2 The impact of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers on professional development

Professional development of educators is subjected to cooperation with others; hence, educators are not left to themselves (ValenčičZuljan, 2001). NAEYC (1993) reports on nine directions of efficient professional development of pre-school teachers and highlights that professional development of pre-school teachers is efficient when it emerges from interactive approach that motivates participants to learn one from the other. Fullan and Hargreaves (2000 as cited in ValenčičZuljan, 2001 p. 133) emphasize the importance of interactive professionalism, meetings and teachers' work in small groups in which pedagogical staff plan and test learning process, estimate its plus their own efficiency, and solve different expert problems. Interactivity means giving and accepting advice and help, along with contributions of individuals and groups to make such interaction the part of every day school climate.

Kohonen names educational institutions collegial communities (as cited in RutarIlc, 2006, p. 15) that set up area of confidence, supports and interpersonal exchange of opinions, ideas and experiences. He thinks that it is important to develop open and critical attitudes of pedagogical staff to their professional work, considering themselves as lifelong learners who reflect upon their own practice and develop new self-comprehension in real situations over reflection of critical past events. RutarIlc (2006) thinks that development of collegial community creates more space for individual growth in comparison to individual self-care. Even more, cooperation and exchange of opinions and experiences with colleagues denote self-awareness of educators as people and professionals, they learn to cooperate in different interactive processes, they comprehend group dynamics, analyse group processes and wonder about their own concepts, attitudes, strategies and practices (RutarIlc, 2006, p. 14).

Studies confirm that concepts (knowledge, learning, profession...) of pedagogical staff stand for an important segment of their professional equipment seeing that concepts

affect person's recognition, thinking and handling (Valenčič Zuljan, 1999; 2007; 2008). *"We understand concept as a personal, implicit construct formed in an individual's personal history as a kind of sediment of his / her experiences and lessons learned from them, functioning like compasses in an individual's life, which is demonstrated in qualitatively different ways of understanding, interpreting and acting in different individuals"* (Valenčič Zuljan, 2007).

Valenčič Zuljan and Blanuša Trošelj (2014) find out in their research on concepts of pre-school teachers' professional development that in pre-school teachers the lowest category of concepts of professional development prevails when non differentiated, simple concepts that do not show considerations of own learning process and its purpose are shown. The concepts, which indicate a certain degree of consideration of process of individual learning and consequences of individual's professional change for his own teaching practice, have the lowest share. The knowledge of concepts represents the starting point of quality adult education. The authors emphasize that quality professional learning of learners from the first group requires more defined importance of certain education and professional learning for an individual so that each individual can feel the sense and long-term meaning. Certainly, not only explanation of contents of education is meant, but also formation of cognitive conflict in accordance to cognitive and constructive approaches, consequently learners can recognize the gap between their current knowledge and views on one hand, and knowledge and attitudes that are necessary for solving diverse professional situations on the other. Situations of cognitive conflict that are adapted to individuals and to solving, substantially depends on knowing learners' concepts (Valenčič Zuljan, 2007). Professional development of pre-school teacher within formal education or in-service fulfilment of everyday professional tasks within institution depends on reflection of basic knowledge of quality learning in children, of pre-school teacher role, of needed knowledge and skills and their development, etc. Reflection can occur in different situations like mentoring to trainee, collegial mentoring or managers' class observations. The most important fact is promotion of such climate that stimulates interpersonal learning of all members of community. Senge (1994, p. 6) points out to team work and team learning as important compounds of learning organization, seeing that knowledge of a group is greater than knowledge of an individual; furthermore, knowledge that is transferred into practice and to co-workers attributes to the functioning of entire organization and to development of programmes within the organization (Senge, 1990 as cited in Silins, Zaris and Mulford, 2002, p. 25).

Polak (2012) emphasizes that teams in kindergartens are not solely individuals that act together. Teams are group of people that operate homogeneously, and are integrated with the aim of achieving common objectives that cannot be qualitatively achieved by a lone expert worker in the kindergarten. Teamwork in the kindergarten embodies collaborative learning, common planning and interpersonal relations, open communication and sincere exchange of opinions. However, communication is the foundation of teamwork and includes speech, listening and feedback. It enables interpersonal social interaction within team and relations of team with environment (with children, colleagues, management, etc.), and therefore enables feedback on team's work (Polak, 2012).

3 Definition of research problem and methodology

The aim of the research is to identify and analyse factors of collegial cooperation and professional learning of pre-school teachers. We are interested in experiences of interpersonal cooperation, desires for professional progression, self-estimation of professional efficiency (areas of eventual problems at expert work), innovations, in addition to changed working models, language skills and communication skills, knowledge of information and communication technology, managerial supports in relation to impacts such as service length, frequency of collegial cooperation, etc. We will investigate which forms of cooperation are most desired among pre-school teachers and how pre-school teachers estimate the knowledge they obtain over different forms of collegial cooperation. We would like to present their experiences obtained in international projects and their attitudes towards professional learning over the international cooperation of pedagogical staff.

In the research, we used descriptive and causal-nonexperimental educational research method. In the sample, we included pre-school teachers and their assistants who worked in 34 public kindergartens in different regions of Slovenia in the first or second age department. Seventy pre-school teachers were included into sample; three were male, along with 33 assistants to pre-school teachers, four of them being male. The largest part of included pre-school teachers and their assistants (44.7 %) did not have a title but they finished secondary school (41.7 %) or high school (48.5 %). Most of pre-school teachers and their assistants had 15 years of service and worked in the first or second age department. The sample was considered as an ad hoc sample. Data were generalized on a hypothetical basic group that was represented by all pre-school teachers and their assistants in the public kindergartens in Slovenia and were similar to pre-school teachers in our sample. Data were collected in May 2013. A questionnaire was composed for the research purposes.

For questions that concern interdependency, chi-square was calculated. In the questions where conditions for chi-square calculation were not fulfilled we calculated Kullback's χ^2 divergence and mentioned it in the interpretation. Data were processed by SPSS (14.0) software package.

4 Results and interpretation

4.1 Impacts that promote and hinder collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers in the kindergarten where they work

The collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers within the kindergarten is affected by numerous factors. We were of interest how pre-school teachers estimated the impact of head teacher, leader of department and colleagues, as well as their own impacts from the point of view of promotion of collegial cooperation. We wanted to find out if they considered the stated impacts as impetus or obstacles to collegial cooperation within their kindergarten.

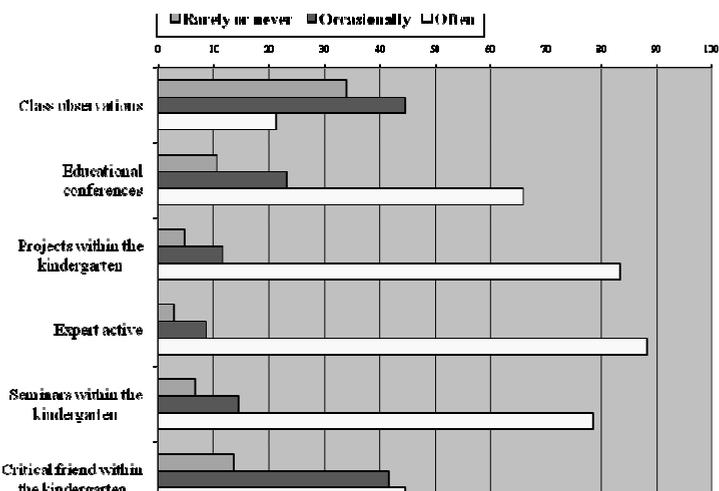
IMPACTS OF COLLABORATION	WITHIN THE KINDERGARTEN			
	OBSTACLE		IMPETUS	
	f	f (%)	f	f (%)
Head teacher	13	12.5	90	86.5
Department leader	18	17.3	85	81.7
Colleagues	11	10.6	92	88.5
Own need or desire	9	8.7	94	90.4

Table 1: The structure of impacts that promote or hinder the collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers within the kindergarten where they work (N=103)

We expose that participants estimate all four impacts as positive, i.e. as promoting. According to 86.5 % of participants, head teacher promotes collegial cooperation within the kindergarten. Similar results are obtained for department leaders whose support for collegial cooperation in the kindergarten is noticed by 82 % of pre-school teachers. Colleagues represent an impetus for collegial cooperation for 89 % of pre-school teachers. It is interesting that the largest share belongs to "own need or desire", 90 % of participants think that they cooperate with colleagues in the kindergarten because of their own desire and backup.

4.2 Prevailing forms of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers within the kindergarten where they work

The second research question deals with the forms of collegial cooperation that prevail among pre-school teachers within Slovenian kindergartens. We supposed that pre-school teachers collaborated with their colleagues at educational conferences and expert actives. Due to too low frequencies the five set scale of frequency of implementation or forms of collegial cooperation was merged into three groups: 1 = never and 2 = rarely into the group rarely and never, respectively; 3 into occasionally, and 4 = often and 5 = very often into the group often.



Graph 1: Forms of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers within the kindergarten referring to the frequency of implementation (N=103)

The achieved results show that a high share of participants (from 60 % to 90 %) often implement or participate in the following forms of collegial cooperation within their kindergarten: team cooperation in expert actives within the kindergarten (88 %); participation in seminars organized by kindergarten where they work (79 %); implementation and leading of projects within the kindergarten (83 %), and participation at educational conferences within the kindergarten (66 %). Nearly half of the pre-school teachers (45 %) often exchange information with critical friends, i.e. their colleagues; 22 % participants often get manager's class observations. It can be noticed that some forms of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers within the kindergarten are performed only occasionally and rarely or never. Hence, manager's class observations are performed occasionally according to 44 % of pre-school teachers and rarely or never according to 34 % of pre-school teachers. Occasional information exchange with critical friends within the kindergarten is reported by 41 % of pre-school teachers while 59 % of participants do not use this form of information exchange. We would like to focus on educational conferences, which are a form of cooperation among pre-school teachers within the kindergarten according to 23 % participants while other 11 % of pre-school teachers report that this form of cooperation is rarely or never performed in the kindergarten.

4.2 The impact of forms of collegial cooperation in the kindergarten on professional development of pre-school teachers

The first research question displays that for most of pre-school teachers their own need or desire represents an important impact that stimulates collegial cooperation within the kindergarten. The emergence of need or desire depends on pre-school teachers' feelings about cooperation. Further, we want to find out how pre-school teachers estimate the effects of some forms of collegial cooperation on their work in the department, along

with learning, reasoning and professional development. We ask pre-school teachers to estimate how each of the forms of collegial cooperation on 3-set scale affects their professional development. Mark 1 means an unimportant impact, 2 an important impact

Forms of collegial cooperation	Impact on professional development						Total
	Unimportant		Important		Very important		
	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	
Colleagues' class observations within the kindergarten	8	7,8	26	65,0	28	27,2	103
Manager's class observations	10	9,7	57	55,3	36	35,0	103
Educational conferences in the kindergarten	4	3,9	48	46,6	51	49,5	103
Participation in the projects within the kindergarten	0	0	58	33,0	69	67,0	103
Teamwork in the expert active	3	2,9	56	17,5	82	79,6	103
Seminars within the kindergarten	1	1,0	31	30,1	71	68,9	103
Feedback from critical friends among colleagues	3	2,9	35	34,0	65	63,1	103
Total Skupaj	29	28,2	352	281,5	402	390,3	

and 3 a very important impact on pre-school teachers' professional development.

Table 2: Estimations of some forms of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers on their professional development within the kindergarten where they work

The obtained results show that most of participating pre-school teachers (79.6 %) find teamwork in the expert active as a very important factor of their professional development. Comparing our results with the results of the research on the impact of various factors on teachers' professional development that included a sample of teachers and head teachers from primary schools in Republic of Slovenia we can notice similar results. Teachers estimated teamwork in the expert active on the 5-set scale as very important for their professional development (Valenčič Zuljan, Klander and Sešek, 2009). Seminars in the kindergarten are very important for professional development for 68.9 % of pre-school teachers and 67 % of pre-school teachers estimate the participation in the projects within the kindergarten as very important. For 63.1 % of pre-school teachers feedback from critical friends is very important while nearly half of the participants (49.5 %) think that educational conferences within the kindergarten are very important. An important impact on pre-school teachers' professional development has colleagues' class observations in the kindergarten (65 %), while for 55.3 % of pre-school teachers manager's class observations are also important. Comparing our results with the results obtained in the research on teachers, we notice that manager's class observations and educational conferences have no impacts on professional development of participating teachers.

Participation in the projects and colleagues' class observations have very important impact on pre-school teachers as well as on teachers (Valenčič Zuljan, Klander and Sešek, 2009).

4.3 The impact of some forms of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers within the kindergarten where they work on their professional development referring to service length

This research question is oriented to the estimations of pre-school teachers with different service length of some forms of collegial cooperation within the kindergarten where they work. We formed three groups on the base of service length, namely the group of pre-school teachers with 5 or less years of service, the group of pre-school teachers with 6 to 15 years of service and pre-school teachers with more than 16 years of service.

Service	5 years and less			6 – 15 years			16 years and more			Results $\chi^2/21$									
	Unimportant pomembno	Important	Very important	Unimportant	Important	Very important	Unimportant	Important	Very important										
Forms of collegial cooperation in the kindergarten	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	f	f (%)	Results $\chi^2/21$				
Colleagues' class observations within the kindergarten	4	8,5	29	62,7	14	30,8	3	7,9	24	63,2	11	28,9	1	5,6	14	77,7	3	16,7	21 = 1,69 P = 0,79
Manager's class observations	5	10,6	20	42,6	22	46,8	2	5,3	24	63,2	12	31,6	3	16,7	13	72,2	2	11,1	21 = 10,29 P = 0,04
Educational conferences in the kindergarten	2	4,2	19	40,4	26	55,4	1	2,6	17	44,7	20	52,7	1	5,6	12	66,7	5	27,8	21 = 4,53 P = 0,34
Participation in the projects within the kindergarten	0	0,0	14	29,8	33	70,2	0	0,0	13	34,2	25	65,8	0	0,0	7	38,9	11	61,1	$\chi^2 =$ 0,53 P = 0,77
Teamwork in the expert active	1	2,1	9	19,2	37	78,7	1	2,6	6	15,8	31	81,6	1	5,6	3	16,7	14	77,7	21 = 0,64 P =
Seminars within the kindergarten	0	0,0	12	25,5	35	74,5	1	2,6	12	31,6	25	65,8	0	0,0	7	38,9	11	61,1	21 = 3,12 P =
Feedback from critical friends among colleagues	1	2,1	19	40,4	27	57,4	2	5,3	9	23,7	27	71,0	0	0,0	7	38,9	11	61,1	21 = 4,35 P = 0,36

*g=4

Table 3: Estimations of some forms of collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers within the kindergarten where they work on their professional development referring to service length (N=103)

Pre-school teachers' answers to the question about the estimation of the impact of some forms of collegial cooperation within the kindergarten where they work on their professional development with regard to their service showed as follows. Participants in the research that are **5 years or less** in service estimate teamwork in the expert active as very important for their professional development (78.7 %); following by seminars within the kindergarten (74.5 %), participation in the projects within the kindergarten (70.2 %); feedback from critical friends among colleagues (57.4 %) and educational conferences within the kindergarten (55.4 %). An important effect on professional development for 62.7 % of participants with 5 years and less of service has colleagues' class observations within the kindergarten, while nearly half of the pre-school teachers (42.6 %) think that manager's class observations have also an important impact. Most of pre-school teachers that are in service from **6 to 15 years** think that teamwork in the expert active has a very important impact on their professional development (81.6 %), following by feedback from critical friends among colleagues (71.0 %), participation in the projects within the kindergarten (65.8 %), seminars within the kindergarten (65.8 %), and educational conferences within the kindergarten (52.7 %). More than half of the participants with 6 to 15 years of service estimate manager's class observations as important for their professional development (63.2 %) following by colleagues' class observations within the kindergarten (63.2 %). Pre-school teachers with **16 years and more** of service think that teamwork in the expert active is very important for their professional development (77.7 %), following by seminars within the kindergarten (61.1 %), participations in the projects within the kindergarten (61.1 %) and feedback from critical friends among colleagues (61.1 %). 77.7 % of participants with 16 years and more of service estimate colleagues' class observations within the kindergarten as important; 72.2 % of pre-school teachers estimate as important manager's class observations, and 66.7 % of pre-school teachers find important educational conferences within the kindergarten. Impacts of some forms of collegial cooperation on professional development of pre-school teachers with regard to their years of service are not statistically significant in most of the forms of collegial cooperation, which is shown in the table where χ^2 -values are calculated or in the cases where all conditions of Kullback's divergence are not fulfilled. In manager's class observations ($2l = 10.29$; $g = 4$; $P = 0.04$) in our research among pre-school teachers with different years of service statistically significant differences are shown concerning estimations of mentioned forms of collegial cooperation within the kindergarten where they work on their professional development. In all other forms of collegial cooperation, these differences are not statistically significant. Research show that pre-school teachers with 15 years and less of service find manager's class observations more important for their professional development in comparison to pre-school teachers with 16 years and more of service. Head teacher's class observations have very important impact on pre-school teachers' professional development for 46.8 % of pre-school teachers with 5 years and less of service, for 31.6 % of pre-school teachers with 6 to 15 years of service and only for 11.1 % of pre-school teachers with 16 years and more of service. Concerning the obtained results we are of the opinion that some educators do not find managers' class observations and feedback helpful for their learning and evaluation of own work as well as motivation for further professional development. Manager's class observations might induce fear and concern in pre-school teachers, because they worry about their presentation and feedback, which is even more

evident in pre-school teachers with more years of service. It is very important that head teachers plan their class observations properly and that class observations become an important element of lifelong pre-school teachers' professional development as well as of kindergarten as a learning community, in which knowledge and skills are developed through attending and directing pre-school teachers' work from the beginning to the end of their service.

5 Conclusion

In the kindergarten, different forms of cooperation of pre-school teachers are very important because new knowledge, experiences and competent models are introduced for all employees. When pre-school teachers disseminate their experiences in their departments along with problems, ideas and innovations they can develop personally and professionally, which further on enables development of the staff and kindergarten as a learning community. Interpersonal learning or learning from each other does not mean that we just gain the knowledge but also that we are the source of knowledge for others. Collegial cooperation enables information exchange among employees and discovery of covered knowledge that individuals possess and can be transferred as good practice among pre-school teachers in the kindergartens all over the country. Cooperation cannot be limited to colleagues within an institution; even more, pedagogical staff are constantly facing with new roles that require more connections and cooperation with other institutions and cross-border mobility of educators. Intensive cooperation among participants, process of exchange and comments on ideas bring new solutions and inspirations resulting in new knowledge.

Pre-school teachers can achieve mutual aims with interpersonal cooperation and support. Each member can imply his knowledge and abilities and learn from colleagues things he does not know. Most important are ideas, motivation, interpersonal help and solving of problems that emerge from work of an individual and institution in various forms of interpersonal cooperation. Our research shows that pre-school teachers most often experience collegial cooperation within the kindergartens where they work in expert actives, projects that are in progress in their kindergartens, seminars that are organized by their kindergarten and educational conferences. Colleagues' class observations as well as managers' are rare. All other forms of collegial cooperation are rarely or never performed. Results are not surprising; nevertheless, we are of the opinion that managers should stimulate diverse forms of collegial cooperation and thus disseminate new knowledge and innovations, which will certainly help to use the potentials, exchange of experiences and ideas for educational work and continuous professional development of employees. The stimulation of collegial cooperation requires profound study of impacts that promote or hinder the mentioned cooperation among pre-school teachers. Bearing in mind the fact that decision about collegial cooperation depends on individual and his desire or motivation, the support of colleagues and managers should ensue. Our research shows that most of pre-school teachers are motivated for cooperation with colleagues within the kindergarten where they work and they do wish to cooperate. The analysis of the results indicates

that colleagues, head teachers and department leaders motivate pre-school teachers for such cooperation. We are aware that obtained results are demonstrations of personal estimations and events of participating pre-school teachers and their own motivation and support of colleagues for cooperation. Individual's encounter of support has an important influence on decision about participating in various forms of education, collegial activities, innovation projects, class observations, etc. Teachers' attitudes towards various forms of education or cooperation depend on usefulness and novelties for their teaching practice and consequently significantly affect their decision about collegial cooperation. Our results of manager's class observations reveal that estimations of forms of education and cooperation are affected by length of service besides teacher's experiences, climate and culture of organization and method of management of kindergarten. It has been demonstrated that pre-school teachers with shorter service estimate the impact of experiences that are gained in class observations on their professional development as more important than pre-school teachers with longer period of service. Our research also show that most of pre-school teachers estimate teamwork in expert actives, feedback from critical friends among colleagues, participation in seminars within the kindergarten, participation in projects within the kindergarten and participation at educational conferences as very important for their professional development.

The analysis of received responses implies that formal as well as non-formal forms of collegial cooperation among employed pre-school teachers in Slovenian kindergartens are desired forms of cooperation. The mentioned forms of cooperation ought to be stimulated in future in larger extent at regional, national and international level. Collegial cooperation of pre-school teachers as an important impact of professional development of pre-school teachers could prosper in Slovenian kindergartens if pre-school teachers on one side and managers on the other create such culture in which collegial cooperation is a desired form of lifelong learning and thus kindergarten could develop into a learning organization.

Biographical note:

Milena Valenčič Zuljan earned a PhD in pedagogy at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, in 1999. She works as a full professor in didactics at the Faculty of Education, Univeristy of Ljubljana. She runs various teacher development seminars and publishes research articles dealing with teachers' professional development, factors influencing teacher innovation, mentoring, student and teacher conceptions of instruction, learner activity in instruction, the cognitive-constructivist model of instruction and action research.

Sabina Krajnc graduated pedagogy and history at the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana, in 2009. In 2014 she ended second cycle master study programme of preschool education at the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana. She works as a teacher at primary school where she teaches children with special needs. At the Faculty of Education, University of Ljubljana she works as assistant professor in didactic where she runs seminar exercises for students.