

Summary of the analysis of the local focus groups in LITHUANIA (name of the country)

1. Short introduction: some data (context, how many focus groups, how many participants, characteristics of the groups etc.)

We had four focus groups – two in each ECEC center. It was the same amount of participants in each focus group – 6 participants. In both ECEC centers we had only female teachers and in both ECEC centers we had one father and five mothers. All teachers had university education, except one of them. Teachers work experience in the center from 1 to 14 years, average – 4,6 years. Average age of teachers in one center – 27 years; in another – 36 years. All parents had university education, except one of them. Average age of parents – 35 years. Age of their children in ECEC center from 2 to 5 years.

2. Summary of the points of view of parents and teachers concerning the following points¹:

2.1. Favorite place

Majority of parents said that they like the most the playing rooms. "I like to see children working at the tables, when they are doing something purposefully." "I like that classroom looks like home. There is no spirit of such an institution – everything like at home." The half of the parents openly said that they never asked their children about the place they like in their preschool.

Majority of teachers said that they like the most their classroom "My classroom, because I arranged my classroom myself. I tried to develop activity centers thinking about children's needs. They know where to find materials, feel safe and it helps to unfold their creativity. Children like places where they find more toys, games."

2.2. Inside playing space and entrance

The presence of cozy spaces as well as spaces in the classrooms in which children can play/be alone are important to meet children's need for privacy, withdrawal and intimacy.

Continuity home – preschool is very important as it helps children faster develop their knowledge and skills; toys from home give them feeling of safety and comfort.

It is important to incorporate varied, plentiful, natural materials that stimulate children to explore, play and learn. Parents would like to see bigger difference in materials, less activities with very strict templates, more cognitive games and possibilities to stimulate creativity and possibility for children to express themselves.

¹ Please write a summary of the main findings. To better explain your analysis, insert also some of the direct quotes of teachers and parents from the focus groups

2.3. Routine moments (hygiene, eating, sleeping)

Teachers didn't say that there are some problems for children using WC, but some parents said: "My son doesn't like to go to the toilet in the preschool. It looks that he doesn't feel comfortable."

There are some contradictions in opinions of parents and teachers speaking about autonomy and interactions during routine moments.

Parent: "My first impression was that everything was brought, everything was carried away by teachers. I think children can do a lot by themselves. Everyone can take the dishes, no matter how old they are. Bring spoons, forks – everyone can." Teacher: "Each day children have different responsibilities: to distribute food, put plates, clean tables, etc."

Parent: "One of the stages of the job interview is the business lunch, when You need to talk and eat at the same time. Should this come from childhood some kind of skill? I never thought about it. But may be." Teacher: "We try to eat in silence."

2.4. Spaces for adults

Parents as well as teachers would like to have a space for meetings. Teacher: "It would be good to have a space for parents to meet, or to wait until their child is finishing something."

Parent: "I talked to the director and he said that we can establish the "Parent club" where parents can come, discuss different problems, share their experiences, but if we'll face the problem, that we will not be able to solve, we will invite competent people to help us. But parents need to show initiative."

Teachers: "We have space, but don't have time for meetings". The problem can be solved on the level of managers.

2.5. Outdoor spaces

Learning environment outside the classroom and outside the preschool can be used better for activities that encourage exploration, experimentation, and creativity. As everything that can be learned and taught indoors can be done outdoors.

Parents: "I would like for children to have all day activities outside." "Each family has different policy speaking about going out with "bad" weather." "Would be good to be outside all day and work hard outside like they do in the classroom." "Our yard is very small, but very often teachers take children somewhere to the town, they visit different places and in the evening children tell us where they been, what they saw. Lots of impressions."

Teacher: "If You go out with "bad" weather, it is OK, but if child get sick it is bad."

2.6. Ideal space

Physically safe environment is important, but psychologically safe and stimulating environment even more influences children's development. Parents clearly understand and expect that in the preschool the most important is that their children can learn how to communicate, share, take responsibilities, and respect different points of view.

Parents: "A perfect preschool should probably be able to take into account the individual needs of the child and encourage him/her to discover something new, to learn, to reveal themselves." "Freedom for creativity, feeling of community, more self-reliance, at the same time, teach more responsibility, discipline."

Teachers: "For me the perfect school is where the child has a good relationship with the teacher, where his friends accept him as he is, where he can do things he likes, not what he has to do. "

"The ideal space is where perfect teachers work. If a teacher is dedicated to the job, it can really make that place magical. The most important for children is to feel safe and loved."

"Freedom – to have a choice – to sleep or not, to eat or not. Enough space. "

3. Conclusions (*which important points connected to space and education? Which possible support needed for practitioners/teachers?*)

There is a communication gap between educators and parents. There are problems which can be solved on the level of managers. Educators should better involve family members in shared decision making about their children's learning as well as concerning children's learning environment, invite to work together in order to provide suitable spaces for child development.