Quality assurance through A self-evaluation of early childhood and preschool education institutions

methodology, results, experience, challenges

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Meeting of the Transatlantic Forum on Inclusive Years on Evaluation (TFIYEY)
“Evaluation Issues in Early Childhood: Choices and Implications for Diverse Populations”
Amsterdam, The Netherlands: June 30th – July 2nd, 2014
Quality assurance through self-evaluation process in Croatian education system

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A self-evaluation model for early childhood and preschool educational institutions:

- process of development
- basic elements
- model implementation

General conclusion and guidelines

Discussion: questions, comments, exchange of experiences
Croatia

- area: 56 542 km²
- population 4,28 mil

**Croatian educational system**

- Educational institutions:
  - 715 kindergartens
  - 851 elementary schools
  - 440 secondary schools

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, First release; year:LI ; No.8.1.8.
Early childhood and preschool educational institutions

**Kindergartens founders:**
- 5 Republic of Croatia
- 482 Local government and self-government units
- 192 Other domestic legal entities and natural persons (private)
- 29 Religious communities

**Kindergartens personnel:**
- 10,785 kindergarten teachers
- 622 medical staff
- 382 pedagogues
- 487 psychologists, special education teachers
- 813 administrative staff
- 4,784 other staff

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics, First release; year:LI; No.8.1.8.

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Quality assurance is one of the key educational issues.

For efficient implementation of the quality assurance model it is necessary to provide several conditions:

- the need for quality assurance
- the legal framework and
- institutional support.
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The model of Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions

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✓ public institution (operative since 2006) responsible for conducting external evaluation exams in Croatian educational system (founded 2004)

✓ Key objectives:
  - to establish a system of standardized evaluation of knowledge and skills – competencies
  - to establish a system for improving the quality of education
Self-evaluation process

✓ The process of self-evaluation is one of the most important tools to ensure and promote quality in education.

✓ Self-evaluation is a relatively complex system of procedures and instruments, quantitative and qualitative assessment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Age</th>
<th>Croatia Educational system</th>
<th>NCEEE external evaluation /self-evaluation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 years - ...</td>
<td>HIGHER EDUCATION</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 years – 18 years</td>
<td>SECONDARY EDUCATION Gymnasiums &amp; Vocational high schools (Three to Four-year )</td>
<td>state matura (2009.-...) national exams (2006.-...) school self-evaluation (2006.-...)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 years – 15 years</td>
<td>ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (Eight-year )</td>
<td>national exams (2008.-...) school self-evaluation (2008.-...)</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 months – 6 years</td>
<td>EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PRESCHOOL EDUCATION (Six –year)</td>
<td>ECEC self-evaluation (2012./2013.)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions

model development
THE JUSTIFICATION OF THE MODEL DEVELOPMENT

- a need for the systematic approach to improving quality at all educational levels
- a legal framework which prescribes self-evaluation for early education institutions
- recognizing the importance of early education (a critical period for the development and growth of a child)
- awareness of the contradiction between the results of scientific studies and theoretical models on one side, and their implementation in practice on the other
- the protection of quality regarding every child, which means that every child has the right to quality care and a good start
- equal early education conditions for every child
- raising the awareness of key participants in early education about quality standards
- raising the quality of practitioners' work
- setting a self-evaluation framework
- making comparisons at micro and macro levels
- bringing home the fact that quality is obligatory and requires continuous work.
DEFINITION OF QUALITY

taking into account contemporary views on preschool educational institution, this model defines quality early and preschool educational institution as

the institution that promotes the growth and development of each child, parent, employee and community in which it exists
KEY AREAS OF QUALITY

- strategy
- organisational leadership
- culture
- spatial, material and technical working conditions
- sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety
- curriculum and the education process
- human resources
- collaboration with the local and broader community
- the monitoring and evaluation process
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KEY STAKEHOLDERS

parents

principals

governing council

preschool teachers

the expert team

administrative, technical and other staff

CHILD

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ABOUT QUALITY ASSURANCE TEAM

- key stakeholders of the self-evaluation process at the institution level.

The team structure

- institution's principal,
- preschool board members (governing council)
- preschool teachers,
- expert assistants,
- administrative-technical and support staff,
- parents,
- local community.
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implementation & results
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SELF-EVALUATION CYCLES

2011./2012. (pilot project) 14 ECEC institutions

2012./2013. (national level: 1st Cycle) 60 ECEC institutions

(national level: 2nd Cycle) 41 ECEC institutions

2013./2014. (national level: 3rd Cycle) 21 ECEC institutions
DATA COLLECTION / QUESTIONNAIRES

✓ Questionnaires were designed for each group of stakeholders.
✓ Questionnaires follow the default areas of quality and comprise related quality indicators for each area.
✓ The implementation of questionnaire was trusted upon the Quality assurance team as a key stakeholder in the self-evaluation process at the institution level.
The National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (NCEEE) was in charge to analyze results and prepare feedback at the institution level.

ANALYSIS AND FEEDBACK
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The model of Self-Evaluation of Early Childhood and Preschool Education Institutions

PARTICIPANTS

- PRINCIPALS (N=122)
- GOVERNING COUNCIL (N=498)
- PRESCHOOL TEACHERS (N=2949)
- THE EXPERT TEAM (N=267)
- ADMINISTRATIVE, TECHNICAL AND OTHER STAFF (N=1595)
- PARENTS (N=6895)

N=12326
**Analysis and Feedback**

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<th>Područje</th>
<th>Grupa</th>
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N = 12,326

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ANALYSIS AND FEEDBACK

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DATA COLLECTION / DOCUMENTATION

When reflecting on the quality of each area of quality, the following can be useful sources of information:

✓ book of pedagogical documentation of the education group
✓ annual report
✓ annual programme and plan
✓ statute of the institution
✓ photos, videos and other documentation of the education process
✓ children’s individual files
✓ other sources.
DATA ANALYSIS / REFLECTION/ SELF-EVALUATION

the self-evaluation form includes:

✓ general information about the institution
✓ the specificities of the institution
✓ an analysis of key areas of quality
  ✓ questionnaire results with regard to other areas of quality, to particular structures, to the average of other institutions
  ✓ information from the documentation
  ✓ data collected during professional discussions
  ✓ what is successful and what requires improvement.
ANALYSIS AND FEEDBACK

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1. strategy</th>
<th>2. organisation leadership</th>
<th>3. culture</th>
<th>4. spatial, material and technical working conditions</th>
<th>5. sanitary and hygienic working conditions and safety</th>
<th>6. curriculum and the education process</th>
<th>7. human resources</th>
<th>8. collaboration with the local and broader community</th>
<th>9. the monitoring and evaluation process</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>individual</td>
<td>6.14</td>
<td>6.17</td>
<td>5.98</td>
<td>5.56</td>
<td>6.04</td>
<td>6.03</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>6.02</td>
<td>6.31</td>
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<tr>
<td>team</td>
<td>5.386</td>
<td>5.614</td>
<td>5.42</td>
<td>4.804</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>5.55</td>
<td>5.45</td>
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DATA ANALYSIS / REFLECTION / SELF-EVALUATION

The self-evaluation form includes:

- CREDA analysis (SWOT analysis adapted to the self-evaluation requirements of education institutions)
  - What are the things our early education institution is proud of?
  - What are the difficulties which the institution encounters on a daily basis?
  - What are the unused resources?
  - Obstacles (elements which inhibit the improvement of the institution)
  - What can we do to be even better?
  - Who can assist us in improving?
  - How good is our institution?
DATA ANALYSIS / REFLECTION / SELF-EVALUATION

the self-evaluation form includes:

- development plan of the early education institution
  - priority areas for improvement
  - development goals
  - methods and activities
  - resources
  - final date
  - measurable indicators of success
  - individuals responsible for conducting the activities
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PRIORITY AREAS IN DEVELOPMENT PLAN
(n=57; 2012./2013.)

1. STRATEGY
9.8%

2. ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP
8.2%

3. CULTURE
27.9%

4. SPATIAL, MATERIAL AND TECHNICAL WORKING CONDITIONS
24.6%

5. SANITARY AND HYGIENIC WORKING CONDITIONS AND SAFETY
6.6%

6. CURRICULUM AND THE EDUCATION PROCESS
14.8%

7. HUMAN RESOURCES
13.1%

8. COLLABORATION WITH THE LOCAL AND BROADER COMMUNITY
45.9%

9. THE MONITORING AND EVALUATION PROCESS
21.3%
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### Quality Assurance Team Feedback

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Satisfaction</th>
<th>Contribution</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Team Perception of Task Difficulty</td>
<td>5.37</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td>5.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Satisfaction with Completion of the Self-Evaluation Process</td>
<td>5.66</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Perceived Contribution of the Self-Evaluation Process for the Improvement of Institutional Quality Assurance in General</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
✓ Practical model-checking and it’s implementation on the national level has proven to be comprehensive, systematic and flexible.

✓ Model is applicable in different preschool education institutions, notwithstanding the founder, size and organizational structure.

✓ The model provides a self-evaluation framework within which creativity and independence of each institution is being encouraged.

✓ The model does not collide with other quality assurance processes.
The model of Self-Evaluation of ECEC Institutions:

✓ Is relying on the evidence of longitudinal studies which support strong correlation between child well being and high quality ECEC settings, especially for children with disadvantaged background

✓ Supports ECEC institutions:
  ✓ in maintaining high awareness among ECEC key stakeholders of diversity and uniqueness
  ✓ in providing high quality settings and educational processes to recognize and support child needs, especially regarding to different learning styles, unique developmental needs, and unique background
  ✓ in building strong partnership with parents, strengthening their parental competencies
  ✓ in establishing tight mutual collaboration with local community

✓ Relies on the idea that inclusion can not be imposed from outside but has to be nurtured from inside - from each individual through the educational process to the institutional and system level - and all in order to recognize and meet each child’s needs and needs of the local community.
We experienced self-evaluation as an opportunity to improve the quality of our work: the work of individuals and the entire kindergarten. During the process, we perceived our strong and weak points. The feedback from the Centre enabled us to flesh out how we see ourselves. We are thankful for the excellent instruments and constant support in the process. Even though the process is unified and equal for all, we like the possibility to decide what we want to do with the results and how to create the development plan of the institution. The entire process enabled us to deal with ourselves, our role in the kindergarten and to talk and agree a lot more. The diversity of the quality assurance team strengthened mutual understanding and the sense of belonging among the participants.

*Experiences of early childhood and preschool education institutions*
Thank you!

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The Handbook is available at:
http://dokumenti.ncvvo.hr/Samovrjednovanje/Tiskano/handbook_for_the_self_evaluation.pdf