THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TO WELL-BEING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE PROFESSIONAL NEEDS AND THE CHOICE OF THE FUTURE PROFESSION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS

O DIREITO DA CRIANÇA AO BEM-ESTAR NO CONTEXTO DAS NECESSIDADES PROFISSIONAIS E DA ESCOLHA DA FUTURA PROFISSÃO DE EDUCADORES DA INFÂNCIA

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Abstract: *The purpose of mix approach study was to investigate the most common reasons that young people have when deciding to choose their future profession in early childhood education (ECE) in our circumstances. It was conducted on a sample of 100 in-service teachers from the ECE institution in Banja Luka (Bosnia and Herzegovina). The qualitative baseline study yielded preliminary findings: the university program should encourage further personal growth and development of young people in the direction of their autonomy, creative thinking, ethics, reflection, and other qualities of lifelong learning. The quantitative survey includes several factors of the ECE profession in society, such as socio-economic, professional, personal factors, and study program factors, as well as the factors of transversal competencies important for ECE profession. The study implications link these factors with a holistic approach towards promoting child's rights on well-being, particularly the ability to achieve and develop potentials through physical, social and emotional well-being.*

Keywords: *University Education of Early Childhood (EC) Teachers. Preferences of Young People for the Profession. Children's Emotional. Social and Physical Well-being.*

Resumo: *O objetivo do estudo de abordagem mista foi investigar os motivos mais comuns que os jovens têm ao decidir escolher sua futura profissão na educação infantil em nossas circunstâncias. Foi realizado em uma amostra de 100 professores em serviço da instituição em Banja Luka (Bósnia e Herzegovina). O estudo qualitativo de linha de base produziu resultados preliminares: o programa universitário deve incentivar o crescimento e desenvolvimento pessoal dos jovens na direção de sua autonomia, pensamento criativo, ética, reflexão e outras qualidades de aprendizagem ao longo da vida. A pesquisa quantitativa inclui vários fatores da profissão de na sociedade, como fatores socioeconômicos, profissionais, pessoais e fatores do programa de estudos, bem como os fatores de competências transversais importantes para a profissão da educação universitária da primeira infância. As implicações do estudo vinculam esses fatores a uma abordagem holística para a promoção dos direitos da criança no bem-estar, particularmente a capacidade de alcançar e desenvolver potenciais por meio do bem-estar físico, social e emocional.*

Palavras-chave: *Professores da Educação Universitária da Primeira Infância. Preferências dos Jovens pela Profissão. Bem-estar Emocional, Social e Físico das Crianças.*

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The societal setting in which young people choose their future vocation in ECE and their initial education

With the rise in social awareness of the importance of early childhood education (ECE) in the development of individuals and society as a whole, the methods of effective initial teachers' education are also being questioned. The multidimensionality of the educational vocation reflects its complexity, which involves personal and social aspects, as well as the choice of career. "Personal professional development" (Eliot, 2007, p. x) entails the cultivation of a person's self-concept as a teacher and awakening awareness following their own professional needs. ECE institutions, on the other hand, are evolving into important social spaces, with both economic and labor forces, whose social shaping is influenced by societal values and teachers' constructions (Dalhberg et al., 1999), interactions and relationships established with children (Eliot, 2007), and others.

The explosive tide of information and communication technologies, multiculturalism, constant change, globalization, English as the dominant language, multilingualism, and changes in the environment all affecting the field of teacher education in European Union countries (ATEE / RDC19, 2001), which points to new dimensions of initial education of educators through the encouragement of transversal competencies (Čepić et al., 2015). Moreover, the demands placed on generations growing up in the information society include flexibility, creativity and originality, adaptability in the business environment, i.e. the ability and skills of continuous and constant building and "re-programming" of professional competencies in the direction of new challenges created in a workplace characterized by constant variability (Williams, 2005). In addition to general social changes, trends in replacing static conceptions of pedagogy (pedagogy of "transferring" knowledge and content to younger) with more dynamic conceptions oriented toward professionalization in general and pedagogical professionalization (Buchberger, Campos, Kallos, Stephenson, 2000, p. 39), are influencing the process of redefining the professional roles of teachers, and thus the education system.

Based on the Bologna Process principles, the concept of training future teachers at universities in the Republic of Srpska, the entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) that has jurisdiction over the functioning of its education system, was only recently established. At three universities with study programs for early childhood education, it is implemented using the 3 + 2 or 4 + 1 higher educational model. Bachelor's and master's degrees determine the qualifications of teachers in practice, and they raised the teachers' professionalism and the social status of a profession, that is with a lower social position (Pribišev Beleslin, 2014).

When it comes to the profession of ECE teachers, it is mostly determined by the constant care and concern for the physical, emotional, and social well-being of preschool children, but it is also dynamic and aims for continuous improvement in terms of assuring the quality of ECE processes. The perspective of children's rights, which aims to promote children's well-being from an early age, has recently been acknowledged as a separate principle in the legislation that governs the ECE in Bosnia and Herzegovina (APOSO, 2018). The Common core curriculum emphasizes the importance of well-being as a foundation of ECE in BiH, through three levels (APOSO, 2018): *the personal well-being of each child* (the emotional, social and educational dimension that provides the same rights for the child as an individual), *social well-being* through strengthening the ECE system capacities (aimed at building social capacity so that all children have equal access and participation in education process from the earliest age), and *systemic-institutional well-being* by improving the quality of curriculum and strengthening the ECE process in each kindergarten.

The system that educates future teachers should be based on the idea of enhancing professional autonomy and encouraging teachers to take a proactive role in coping with change and acting as change agents. Consisting not only of three or four years of academic education but continuing in-service training, the teachers' education should be "an open and dynamic system and part of a continuous process" (Buchberger et al., 2000, p. 4). A combination of different components is important, such as clear principles on which the enrollment of students who choose their vocation at the faculty is based, introduction to the professional culture of the educational institution, professional development during work, the extension of academic education, and

comprehensive research (Buchberger et all., 2000, p. 43).

Higher education institutions should develop study programs for ECE that will educate future teachers on a variety of assumptions to meet these challenges. To begin with, the most basic perspective of development is the fact that the best educational systems are built on the premise that the teachers are the bearers of the quality of the educational process and the curriculum's outcomes (Barber, Mourshed, 2007, according to New Zealand Government, 2010; Fukkink et al., 2019; Sahlberg, 2013). In this regard, various requirements imposed on teaching faculties stand out, and they refer to the processes of their initial and ongoing professional development, which serves as the foundation for establishing the necessary imperative condition for a child's right to well-being in ECE:

The initial input component (not just for future students, but also for the teaching staff through the professor and assistant selection at the university level) must be based on a clear, meaningful, and quality selection. The orderliness of this factor requires much broader social awareness and action. Therefore, faculties must have an unequivocal vision, initiative, and responsibility to identify students who will be sufficiently aware of the challenges they will face as future professionals in childcare from birth to birth to starting a school when development is determined by the empathic attitude and warm responses of adults towards young children.

Close ties between many fundamental, basic and specialized scientific domains are required for the development of a framework of professional competencies for future teachers, that is both dynamic and reflective on an individual and social level (Pribisev Beleslin & Vujic, 2012), including equal dimensions of knowledge, skills, and capacities, as well as the dimension of motivation, action, engagement and interaction (Illeris, 2006). Their development necessitates the interaction of pedagogical-psychological, but also, teaching methodological scientific fields, as well as those that "support" them in the formation of a complete teacher, such as natural, technical, social, and human sciences, arts, languages, and spirituality. The starting point of this mutual sharing is understanding the development, life, and learning characteristics of a preschool child (Sahlberg, 2013).

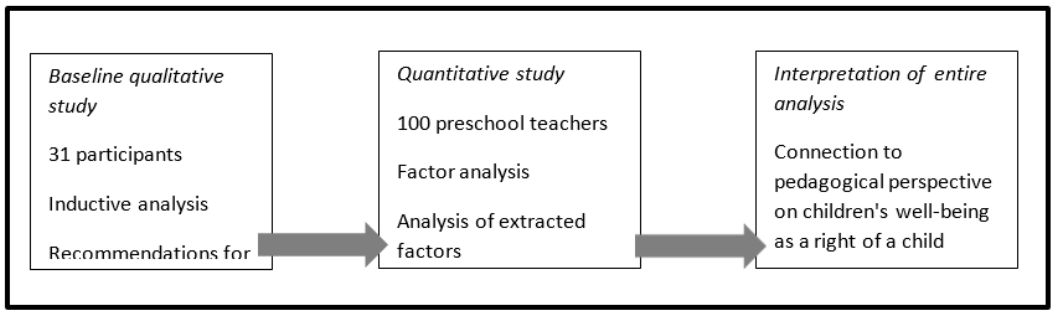
"Mutual respect of theory and practice", i.e., faculty teaching and practice in the direction of an improved comprehension of learning and professional development of students, i.e., methods to introduce them into the practice and profession they have chosen. This means, linking theory and practice towards higher education didactics and study program curriculum on the one hand, but also through mutual support of the academic research community and teachers collaborate in generating new ideas and models through fundamental, applied research and research of practitioners, on the other. Producing and gaining contextualized knowledge from practitioners, thus, becomes an integral, intrinsic part of the higher education syllabi and content studied by students.

In light of the foregoing, the study intention was aimed to investigate some of the most prevalent reasons and requirements that young people have towards the university study program when deciding on a future profession as an early childhood education teacher in our context, as well as to link them to the concept of children's well-being in early childhood.

Methodology

There were three sections to the mixed approach study (Figure 1) with sequential exploratory design (Creswell, 2009, p. 210). The purpose of the introductory study was to look into teachers' opinions and perceptions of the ECE profession in our context. The study's recommendations formed the basis for a quantitative study aimed at identifying factors that may influence the needs, requirements, and preferences that encourage young people to choose their career in the field of ECE profession (as ECE teachers). The selected factors and recommendations were interpreted through the pedagogical perspective of well-being as a basic children's right and a foundation of the preschool curriculum. Factors were connected with the future teachers' basic needs as bearers of ECE quality, taking into account stakeholders' perspectives, their lived experiences, and their attitudes generalized into factors for choosing the teachers' profession.

Figure 1. Sequences of studies within mixed method research.



Fonte: Based on Creswell, 2009

Baseline study

A qualitative study, interpretive in nature, was conducted in the academic year 2016/2017 within the *Erasmus + project Teacher Introducing competence-based preschool teacher education curricula in Bosnia and Herzegovina* (for more information http://teacher.unt.ba/) at the Independent University of Banja Luka, Faculty of Education (for a complete report http://teacher.unt.ba/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/1_REPORT-ON-STAKEHOLDER-ANALYSIS-fin.pdf). It comprised 20 ECE teachers from cities of the Republika Srpska (Banja Luka, Derventa, Bijeljina, Gradiška), as well as 6 pedagogues, and 5 representatives of educational authorities at the national and local levels of government. The following recommendations were identified through inductive analysis as to which direction the study programs for future ECE teachers should be focused.

First of all, "*the teacher must be versatile and committed to his social role*" (part of the answer, a representative of the education authority at the local level), and „*... the teacher should be a stable, intellectually gifted person, emotionally mature, with clearly defined attitudes, and, of course, professionally educated for the vocation she/he performs*"(part of the answer, pedagogue).

The following categories have been singled out in inductive analysis:

Orientation on further inner development and support students' build their personalities. One of the study program's broad objectives should be to nurture and develop the students' personalities by the model of a "good" teacher, which includes kindness, kindness, ethics, personal integrity, autonomy, creativity, critical thinking, communication fluency, self-reflection, and above all, empathy.

Immersion of theoretical in empirical-practical learning combines theoretical and practical knowledge. The study program should assist students in gaining a broad knowledge and understanding of the educational processes that occur in relationships with children, which should include preschool pedagogy, developmental psychology, early learning theories, and other fundamental systems of knowledge about childhood and children. Teaching methodology and narrower professional knowledge and skills for direct work with children should be based on a balance of theoretical and empirical learning, supported directly in the authentic environment of the preschool institution, and should be based on the perspective of listening to children and recognizing children's developmental and personal needs.

Working in teams requires certain skills. Teamwork, the crucial guideline for teachers' activities in preschool institutions, is one of the fundamental transversal abilities noted in the survey participants' responses. The development of this competency should aim to create a solid system of theoretical knowledge, contextualized experiences, and practical skills in which teachers find themselves, and should arise as a result of students' work in different work and professional environments and teams.

Lifelong learning requires transversal competencies. The study program for teachers' education should foster and further enhance awareness and understanding of the importance of continuous learning and self-development, as stressed by practitioners' responses.

The quantitative study

These guidelines were used to launch a new quantitative study to examine the factors that may influence high school graduates' choice of ECE teacher profession by high school graduates, i.e., to identify the most common reasons and requirements for the study that young people have when deciding and choosing their future profession in our conditions.

The research goal of this quantitative study of non-experimental, non-causal design, which used the scaling technique, was to evaluate the views of in-service teachers on the factors that may impact young people's decision to pursue a future career as ECE teachers. In this regard, the following *research tasks* have been highlighted:

1. Determine the expression of teachers' attitudes towards important indicators for the choice of faculty, such as professional factors, factors related to economic and social conditions in which the profession occurs, future students' personal factors, factors related to the conditions of studying a higher education program, and factors that more closely determine the transversal competencies required of future teachers.
2. Define which of the following factors, in the view of in-service teachers, have the largest and the smallest representation, in other words, determine the hierarchy of factors important to future profession choice.
3. Use factor analysis to see if the proposed factors stand out, that is, if they equally coincide as important in the answers of our respondents.

Three main *research hypotheses* have been established based on the mentioned tasks:

H1 We assume that the most positive pronounced teachers' attitudes will be those related to the subscale of *Personal factors* that are important while choosing a future profession (especially attitude „*The empathy and love of working with young children*"), but the attitudes that belong to the group of *Socio-economic factors* will be the less positive pronounce (especially attitudes that determine the social status of the profession, which are otherwise underrepresented and marginalized in our community.

H2 We expect teachers to have the highest mean value of agreement in the subscale that describes the *Professional factors* necessary for choosing a profession, which refers to the relationship between general, fundamental, and specific professional theoretical and practical knowledge, and the lowest mean value in the subscale of *Transversal competencies*, given their novelty in our professional community.

H3 We anticipate that the teachers' responses will emphasize the same factors that we identified as important for career choice: Socioeconomic, Personal, Professional, Study program factors, and Transversal competencies factors, implying, that factor analysis will not yield significant deviations from the proposed subscales.

The sample, which includes 100 teachers from the public preschool institution „Center for Preschool Education Banja Luka", was conveniently drawn from the population of teachers working in the system of preschool institutions of the Republika Srpska, which is in the academic 2015/2016 year totaled $N = 724$ (according to the Statistical Institute of the Republic of Srpska, 2016, p. 10).

The RPVas instrument, which was created specifically for this study, has satisfactory internal consistency and reliability ($\alpha = .87$). It contains 27 items in all, divided into five subscales: *Socio-Economic Factors*, *Professional Factors*, *Personal Factors*, *Study Program Factors*, and *Transversal Factors*. Teachers could use a five-point scale to express the level of agreement with the items in the Likert-type scale (1 - I don't agree at all, 2 - I disagree, 3 - I am unsure/indecisive, 4 - I agree, 5 - I absolutely agree).

The application of the program SPSS (for Windows) 20.0 was used to process all statistical data. Starting with the research goal and specific tasks, and according to specified hypotheses, the following statistical processing procedures were utilized: *descriptive statistical analyzes* of variable characteristics were presented through the following indicators (Arithmetic mean (*M*), Standard deviation (*SD*), Minimum - Minimum value of the variable (*Min.*), Maximum - Maximum value of the variable (*Max.*), Coefficient of asymmetry (Skewness) and flatness (Kurtosis); and *factor analysis*

to reduce the number of variables "in a way that retains (or explains) the bulk of the variance (variability) in the correlation structure" (Pallant, 2011, p. 183). Factor analysis is broken down into three steps: determining whether the data is suitable for factor analysis, extracting factors, rotating them, and interpreting the results.

Results of the quantitative study

The following is a summary of the quantitative study's findings. To prove or disprove three research hypotheses, the results of descriptive statistics will be presented concerning each attitude for which teachers had the opportunity to assess the degree of agreement on a five-point Likert-type scale. Then, subscales and selected factors will be presented as conditions that determine young people to choose the vocation of ECE teacher and higher education study program.

The first research task was to represent descriptive indicators for all attitudes that reflect the factors that influence young people's decision to pursue a career in ECE. Table 1 summarizes the presentation.

Table 1. Descriptive indicators of the factors that influence young people's decision to pursue a career in ECE.

Items	*Min.*	*Max.*	*M*	*Sd*	*Skew.*	*Kurt.*
Favorable position of the profession and status of ECE teachers in society.	1	5	2.51	1.16	.18	-1.2
Possibility for a person to get a job after graduation (ECE is a deficient occupation).	1	5	2.38	1.04	.65	-.24
Possibility of graduated person income, including the development of entrepreneurial spirit.	1	5	3.24	1.15	-.60	-.50
Good working conditions at the future job in the kindergarten (defined working hours, secured vacations and so).	1	5	3.35	1.08	-.49	-.89
The profession is dynamic, interesting, and requires the creativity of teachers.	2	5	**4.48**	.74	-1.65	2.89
The profession has ethical and social value for the community.	1	5	**4.43**	.72	-1.67	4.58
Empathy and love for the profession, especially, working with young children.	1	5	4.36	.93	-1.68	2.69
Ease of completing higher education and obtaining the diploma (title)	1	5	2.62	1.23	.33	-.80
This is a study program for undecided students who have not yet opted (for those who have no other choice, or for whom it does not matter).	1	5	2.00	1.17	.96	-.06
The study program is dynamic, modern, and creative.	1	5	3.29	.98	-.48	.02
The study program is balanced with the representation of general education (literacy, wider culture, information), with the narrower professional knowledge and development of professional competencies.	2	5	3.55	.80	-.28	-.37
The study program is balanced in terms of the relationship between theoretical and practical teaching, exercises, classes, exams, and practical work in kindergarten.	1	5	3.28	.96	-.17	-.39

Good conditions for studying provided by faculty (building, technologies, equipment, teaching and learning materials, competent teaching staff).	1	5	3.19	.88	.06	-.54
The study program offers basic methodological knowledge and skills to future teachers (academic writing, applied small-scale research, action research).	1	5	3.47	.87	-.42	.19
The study program offers a balanced range of pedagogical, psychological, and teaching methodological knowledge and skills.	2	5	3.72	.74	-.72	.50
The ECE profession enables individualization in further professional development.	1	5	3.87	.82	-.96	1.33
The study program enables further development of the mother tongue and literacy for the young person.	2	5	3.61	.86	-.58	-.34
The role of teachers is necessary for the development and education of future generations and thus, contributes to the development and progress of society as a whole.	2	5	**4.39**	.82	-1.38	1.43
The study program enables the development of health, healthy lifestyles, and physical development of students.	2	5	3.31	.87	-.00	-.78
Competencies for the use of foreign languages are further developed at the faculty.	1	5	3.05	.93	-.17	-.68
The study program enables further development of students' information and communication competencies (including IT competencies).	1	5	3.13	.87	-.35	-.03
The study program enables further development of mathematical and scientific competencies of the students.	1	5	3.18	.84	-.35	-.50
The study program provides competencies for life learning and learning how to learn.	1	5	3.42	.75	-.87	.89
The study program enables further development of social and civic competencies.	1	5	3.63	.67	-.98	1.82
The study program enables further development or initiative and entrepreneurship.	1	5	3.49	.79	-.51	.19
The study program fosters the cultural awareness and expression of the students.	2	5	3.62	.73	-.50	.05
The study program fosters creativity and critical thinking.	2	5	3.81	.73	-.62	.56

Fonte: Author.

Table 1 shows that the degree of agreement with several statements is between 3 and 4 (*undecided* to *I agree*), while the range of "grades" ranges from 1 to 5, although some items did not earn 1. The highest average grades (over 4) received statements related to the profession of ECE teachers: *The profession is dynamic, interesting, and requires creativity from teachers* (*M* = 4.48, *SD* = .74); *The profession has ethical and social value for the community* (*M* = 4.36, *SD* = .72); *The role of teachers is necessary for the development and education of future generations, and thus contributes to the development and progress of society as a whole* (*M* = 4.39; *SD* = .82).

Teachers stress the social component and relevance of their profession, which is beneficial to the social state of the ECE profession, keeping in mind the profession's position and prestige in society (primarily, institutional early childhood education and upbringing processes are not regarded as a more significant link in children's growth), and the ECE teachers' profession is commonly referred to as "aunts," a term that implies to "babysitting," which some scholars argue is not even a preschool program (see more Weikart, 1992).

The interesting result is seen by the item: *This is a study program for undecided students who have not yet opted (for those who have no other choice, or for whom it does not matter).* It received a very low average grade, although the dispersion of attitude is more pronounced than others (*M* = 2, *SD* = 1.17). It may be deduced that the respondents consider the study program for ECE teachers' education not suitable for those young people who do not have a clear vision of their professional development or who have no alternative options. Although, given the long-term poor selection of prospective students in our ECE context, such findings may suggest the teachers' belief that something needs to change in that regard, as evidenced by the ideas provided in the study's introductory section. It is similar to the item *Ease of completing higher education and obtaining the diploma (title)* (*M* = 2.62, *SD* = 1.23), which demonstrates the importance of protecting the profession in this manner, as well as the complexity and uniqueness of the study program, which entails far more than the acquisition of a theoretical corpus of knowledge and practical abilities. Furthermore, it is worth noting that assertions concerning the profession's positive social status are also rated poorly, as represented in items: *Favourable position of the profession and status of ECE teachers in society* (M = 2.51, SD = 1.16), and *Possibility for a person to get a job after graduation (ECE is deficient occupation)* (*M* = 2.38, *SD* = 1.04).

With the first hypothesis, we assumed that the most pronounced positive attitudes of teachers will be those belonging to the subscale of *Personal Factors* that are critical for choosing of ECE study program and that the least pronounced attitudes that belong to the group of socio-economic factors will be the least pronounced attitudes will be those belonging to the group of Socio-economic factor. The findings demonstrate that teachers gave the highest marks to those attitudes classified as *Professional Factors*, and the lowest marks to those classified as *Personal Factors*. As a result, we can dismiss our first hypothesis, and assert that teachers believe that the profession's favorable status, as well as its social and personal contributions to children's well-being before entering school, are good reasons for young people's decisions and choosing future profession and higher education study program.

The descriptive indicators for five subscales were generated to answer the second study task, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive indicators of factors when choosing the ECE profession.

Factors	*Min*	*Max*	*M*	*Sd*	*Skew.*	*Kurt.*
1. Socio-economic Factors	9	22	15.25	3.26	-.08	-.94
2. Profesional Factors	13	24	20.52	2.32	-.69	.37
3. Personal Factors	14	28	19.71	2.56	.45	.68
4. Study Program's Factors	9	30	20.50	3.90	-.16	-.14
5. Transversal Factors	7	24	16.40	3.26	-.38	-.06

Fonte: Author.

When looking at the descriptive indicators of individual subscales (factors) in Table 2, it can

be seen that the subscale *Professional Factors* has the highest average score (highest degree of agreement) (*M* = 20.52), while also having the lowest value of standard deviation (*SD* = 2.32) which indicates that the respondents' answers are densely concentrated around the average grade. The majority of the findings on the *Professional* Factors subscale are to the right of the mean, among the higher values as indicated by negative asymmetry values (Skewness = -. 69). The flattening coefficient indicates that the distribution is platycurtic, meaning that it is flatter than normal (Kurtosis = .37). *The Study Program Factors* are in the second position, with an average grade of *M* = 20.50 and a standard deviation of *SD* = 3.90. A higher standard deviation indicates that the values are scattered around the middle, as indicated by the coefficient of flatness (Kurtosis = -. 14), and the data distribution is platycurtic, i.e. flatter than typical. The average score for *Personal Factors* was *M* = 19.71, with a standard deviation of *SD* = 2.56. The asymmetry coefficient of .45 is positive, indicating that the majority of the responses are clustered to the left of the mean, among the smaller values.

The mean score of the *Transversal Factors* is *M* = 16.40, and the standard deviation *SD* = 3.26. The asymmetry and flatness coefficients indicate that there was a greater dispersion of values, but that it was concentrated to the right of the mean, among the larger values. The *Socio-economic Factors* had the lowest average *M* = 15.25 with *SD* = 3.26. The asymmetry and flatness coefficients indicate that there was wider dispersion of values, but that they were concentrated to the right of the mean value as in the previous example.

As a result, when considering and choosing their future profession as an ECE teacher, the most significant (hierarchically structured) are (in our conditions from the point of view of practitioners): (1) Professional Factors, (2) Factors of the study program, (3) Personal Factors, (4) Transversal Factors, and (5) Socio-economic Factors.

The second hypothesis predicted that teachers would have the highest mean value within the subscale that describes the professional factors required for choosing a profession, based on the importance of combining theoretical and practical knowledge as a good foundation for future teachers, which the results confirmed. This Factor has the highest mean value. Teachers, on the other hand, were expected to have the lowest degree of agreement in the subscale of Transversal Factors, given their novelty in our professional community, based on the same hypothesis. Because the data show a lower mean value, but not the lowest, this portion of the second hypothesis can be dismissed. Furthermore, it can be concluded that teachers are only now beginning to identify the transversal competence framework as a critical foundation for their profession. Of course, the low mean value of this factor shows that they should be "brought closer" to practice on a professional level. As a result, the second hypothesis, therefore, is partially accepted.

The final study task was to see if the distribution of previously selected factors matched the responses of the teachers. The items on the *RPVas* scaler were analyzed to extract the variables. The KMO (*Kaise–Mayer-Olkin Measure*) indicator is .732, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is statistically significant (*r* = .000), indicating that the conditions for factor analysis have been met. We wanted to see if new factors than those we started with could be extracted in this way. The analysis of the main components revealed the presence of 5 factors with characteristic values over 1. The five-factor solution explains a total of 60% of the variance, with the first factor explaining 27%; the other 11%; the third 8.6%; the fourth 7.2%, and the fifth 5.7%, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Factor analysis of the scaler items.

Factor	Factorial saturation	Coefficient of correlation variable factors	Part of the variance explained by a common factor
I factor – Transversal competence framework			
a) The study program enables further development of the student's information and communication competence.	.811	.843	.757

b) The study program enables further development of mathematical and scientific competence of the student.	.800	.797	.684
c) The study program enables the competencies of lifelong learning and learning how to learn.	.720	.774	.654
d) The study program enables further development of initiative and entrepreneurship.	.667	.699	.547
e) The study program enables the nurturing of cultural awareness and expression.	.583	.699	.643
f) The study program enables further development of social and civic competencies.	.532	.598	.510
g) Competences for the use of a foreign language are further developed at the faculty.	.475	.597	.589
h) The study program for future teachers enables further development of the mother tongue and literacy of a young person.	.386	.535	.450
II Factor- Socio-ecomonic status of the ECE profession			
a) Possibility of guaranteed personal income, including the development of entrepreneurial spirit.	.845	.844	.741
b) Favorable position of the profession and teachers in society.	.805	.818	.702
c) Opportunity for a person to be employed after graduation (educational vocation is a deficient occupation).	.702	.720	.671
d) Good working conditions at the future job in the kindergarten (defined working hours, secured vacations).	.821	.794	.725
III Factor – Stereotypes about ECE teachers' initial education			
a) This is a study for undecided students who have not yet opted (for those who have no other choice, or for whom it does not matter).	.727	.733	.576
b) Ease of completing studies and obtaining a diploma (title).	.696	.711	.591
IV Factor – Higher educational conditions for ECE teachers' initial education			
a) The profession is dynamic, and interesting, and requires the creativity of teachers.	.342	.368	.459
b) The study program is dynamic, modern, and creative.	.615	.703	.671
c) The study program is balanced with the representation of general education (literacy, wider culture, information), with narrower professional knowledge and building competencies of the profession.	.575	.622	.430
d) The study program is balanced in terms of the relationship between theoretical and practical teaching, exercises, classes, exams, and practical work in kindergarten.	.734	.729	.582
e) Good conditions for studying provided by the faculty (building, technologies, equipment, teaching and learning materials, competent teaching staff).	.801	.806	.666

f) The study program provides basic methodological knowledge and skills to future teachers (academic writing, design of applied, action research, research of practitioners).	.626	.676	.497
g) The study program offers a balanced range of pedagogical, psychological, and methodological knowledge and competencies.	.739	.755	.654
h) The study program enables the development of health, healthy lifestyles, and physical development of students.	.540	.538	.585
V Factor - Personal factors of the ECE profession			
a) The role of teachers is necessary for the development and education of future generations and thus contributes to the development and progress of society as a whole.	.481	.446	.474
b) The profession has ethical and social value for the community.	.840	.794	.705
c) The study program enables the nurturing of creativity and critical thinking.	.640	.749	.700
d) The profession of teachers enables individualization in professional development.	.475	.544	.349

Fonte: Author.

The analysis of the extracted factors shows the coincidence of four previously selected factors, with the visible difference that the items were different, more naturally distributed within the obtained factors, better describing them (Table 3). The following factors coincide (1) Transversal, (2) Socio-economic, (3) Factors of the study program and, (4) Personal factors. The new factor that was extracted (with two items) we called Stereotypes. In addition, it is noticeable that the items that were previously defined as Professional factors "blurred" among other factors, which is not surprising, as it is difficult to distinguish between individual factors.

The third hypothesis expected that the same factors that we identified as important for career choice would be identified and that the factor analysis would not reveal larger deviations from the proposed factors. We can accept such an assumption, stating that the answers of educators gave a better distribution of items and a description of each of the factors that affect the possible choice of profession among young people. The new extracted factor Stereotypes is equally important and requires additional clarification.

Discussion: Towards a holistic approach to child well-being in early childhood education

The purpose of the research provided in this article was to look into the necessity for a study program for future teachers' education to learn more about why young people choose this profession. Several consequences emerge when they are connected to an approach to education based on children's rights, where the well-being of children is considered imperative.

Namely, the findings of our study reveal that, in the opinion of experienced teachers, the criteria that are directly related to the specifics of the ECE profession are crucial when selecting it. The dimensions of the profession that speak of its social function stand out, and they can be linked to the "social well-being [that ECE possesses, *authors' note*] which strengthens the community to provide better conditions for the upbringing and education of preschool children" (Pribišev Beleslin & Bećirović, 2019, p. 119). Although a consistent definition of well-being is still being sought (Pollard & Lee, 2003), the authors point out that it may be regarded on a continuum ranging from personal, and children's aspects (physical, emotional, social, and psychological) to environmental domains.

This highlights the need for study programs to focus more on responsibility and for teachers to play a more active role in raising awareness of the values and importance of ECE for the development of society in general as well as the well-being of every child in early childhood in terms of good quality of life (Mashford-Scott, Church, & Tayler, 2012).

Furthermore, from the perspective of teachers, who place the factors of the profession and the factors of the study program in the first place, the hierarchy of factors according to the importance of the choice of profession indicates the message that the development of the profession is largely dependent on the quality of higher education, which they opt for. The uniqueness shown by this study is that these teachers acknowledge transversal competencies as the foundation of their profession, despite the rising importance of this theoretical-applied approach in the educational system (Care & Luo, 2016). The teachers' interpersonal competencies, which are both personal and professional, maybe singled since they entail cultivating the teacher's relationships with children and allowing interaction and engagement, as well as building on their socio-emotional and communicative abilities (Temple & Emmet, 2013). These competencies may substantially define the settings and the conditions of ECE provision that promote children's well-being in a holistic sense by determining the microclimate in ECE as the basis of process quality and quality of curriculum outcomes (Mashford-Scott, Church, & Tayler, 2012), including ways of learning, play, variety and richness of activities in which children build interests and meet their developmental and other needs.

The solitary new factor, on the other hand, appeared in our study and is worth carefully considering. Children who have been entrusted to teachers to take care of them in the most sensitive and vulnerable stage of their development, which occurs in early childhood and is a fully integrated process, including the reciprocity of all domains of well-being. One of the various definitions of the construct of well-being, which highlights its personal, social, and cultural dimensions, reflects the complexity of the phenomena of well-being, which teachers must comprehend throughout initial education because they will encounter it every day during practice stressed that "the ability to successfully, resiliently, and innovatively participate in the routines and activities deemed significant by a cultural community. Well-being is also the state of mind and feeling produced by participation in routines and activities" (Weisner, 1998, pp. 75–76, as cited in Pollard & Lee, 2003, p. 65).

Furthermore, the question of child well-being is a politically-oriented issue, as well as the issue of leadership and governing at many levels of decision-making (Mashford-Scott, Church, & Tayler, 2012). Although teachers will deal with the domain that affects the psychological and mental health, and physical and educational well-being of children, teachers must form a broader picture of the mutual interaction of all dimensions of well-being in the life, development, and education of young children, during professional development.

Conclusion

New challenges face modern study programs that prepare future ECE teachers. First and foremost, they must keep track of and promote the current global growth of the ECE profession, both in theory and practice. The most intensive preschool period of learning and development is also the most important investment space for human capital; therefore, there is a kind of "third boom of preschool" on the scene, which claims that investing in this segment is the best investment for the future of society (Cunha & Heckman, 2010; Tikly, 2011; Vargas Baron, 2012). The right to high-quality preschool education is a fundamental right of the children, based on the need to create the circumstance for a holistic approach to guaranteeing each child's well-being. This can confirm that early childhood is an authentic age in every human being's life and that the profession that shapes and supports the processes of growing up, development, and learning in early childhood is unique in comparison to other professions. Many nations realize the need of investing in the improvement of preschool education in all aspects, and one of the most essential connections in that process is undoubtedly the education of future instructors and understanding of the factors that influence their decision to choose this career path.

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