

LEARNING IN KINDERGARTEN AND IN PRIMARY EDUCATION: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCIES FROM TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

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The approach of lifelong learning (LLL) fundamentally renewed the concept of learning in 21st century education. Faced with this new paradigm, several international and national documents regulate teaching and learning in the approach of LLL (United Nations, 2015; European Commission, 2001; Hungarian National Core Curriculum, 2012; National Core Programme of Kindergarten Education, 2012; EMMI, 2012). As a role model, a teacher's own attitudes and views about learning have a strong effect on pupils' performance and engagement in LLL, too (Lerkkanen, 2012; Sági, 2011). Therefore, it is important to consider how they think about learning in order to understand better the strategies they use to improve children's competencies regarding LLL.

The aim of this study was to examine and compare kindergarten and primary teachers' (N=98) views about learning in kindergarten and in primary school, using a qualitative associative method. In the first part of an online questionnaire, participants had to write three words coming to their minds about (1) learning in kindergarten and (2) learning in primary school. For data analysis, I used the Verges' associative method (Sándor, 2009; Verges, 1994). Using the inductive approach of qualitative data analysis, (A) differences and (B) similarities of teachers' views about pre-school and primary school learning were identified.

The data was further analysed with respect to the following: diversity (D), rarity index (Ri), average rank (Ar) and frequency (f). The results showed that teachers' general views differ in many areas on this topic. The associations were more diverse about learning in primary school (D=0,55) than in kindergarten (D=0,367). Similar differences showed up in the rarity index (Ri_k=0,05, Ri_p=0,18). Comparing the associations in the Verges association matrix, we can see that there are some similar items in the four quarters, such as 'play' or 'learning from experience' in the central core, and many other similar items in the peripherals (14 items matching in the whole sample).

Associations (36 about kindergarten and 54 about primary school learning) were categorized on three dimensions: a) emotional: positive or negative; b) pedagogical: methodological or content; c) attitudes: affective, cognitive or conative. Results showed that educators' associations are more negative about learning in school (f=45, Ar=2,8) than in kindergarten (f=6, Ar=2,35). Regarding learning in kindergarten, educators mentioned contents of learning with higher average rank (1,99), however, among their associations about school, cognitive components of learning had the highest average rank (1,8).

Besides many similarities between the opinions about learning in kindergarten and school (the importance of play, experience and building on one's curiosity), some differences prove the need to pay special attention to the issues of differentiating learning in formal education.

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