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CHILDREN’S PLAY *THE ECOLOGICAL STORY* IN FUNCTION OF ECOLOGICAL EDUCATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Abstract

Today, the importance of ecological education is often highlighted, although the current *National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education* doesn’t even mention it. Although ecological education is not mentioned in this baseline document, various activities in this direction are often carried out in our kindergartens. An example of this is the play *The Ecological Story* by the author Sanja Seferović-Bosak from her collection of plays *Maštarije: Igrokazi za djecu od 3 do 13 godina* (eng. Pipe Dreams: Plays for Children of 3-13 years). This paper describes the preparation and performance of this play in 2017 in the kindergarten *Radost* (eng. Joy) in Novska. The theoretical part of the paper considers the basic settings of ecological education in early and preschool age, with special reference to current practice in Croatian kindergartens. The empirical part of the paper describes the stages of preparation and performance

of the *play The Ecological Story*, with special reference to the compliance of this project with the requirements of the National Curriculum in terms of developing key competences for lifelong learning. The paper also contains an analysis of methodological procedures with particular reference to the preparation of musical numbers in the play.

■ **Key words:** children's dramatic creativity, music, ecological education, play

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to point out the welfare and importance of drama and music art with a theme of ecological education in kindergartens and to encourage educators to raise children's eco-awareness through plays with an ecological theme as a simple, interesting, useful and instructive way. The importance of raising ecological awareness, especially in children of preschool age, is great. There are various creative ways to approach the problems of pollution and environment preservation which are interesting for children. One of them is using children's plays where children portray various themes, sing songs, recite poems, show different children's games for which they diligently prepare for weeks with their educators, but also with their parents. By practicing for plays, children develop imagination, concentration, long-term memory, enrich their vocabulary and learn how to properly express themselves.

Children from the mixed group *Patkice* (eng. Ducks) in the *Radost Novska* kindergarten, portrayed the children's play *Ekološka priča* (eng. The Eco-Story) from a collection of plays *Maštarije: Igrakazi za djecu od 3 do 13 godina* (eng. Pipe Dreams: Plays for Children of 3-13 years), authored by Sanja Seferović – Bosak, at the final school play in 2017. The analysis of preparation and performance of this play can serve as an example of a successful conduction of ecological and civil education in kindergartens, an example of successful cooperation with the community and parents, as well as an example of successful implementation of musical elements into dramatic text.

This paper uses the case study analysis method in order to present the process of the creation of the play using photographs, descriptions, and analysis of methodical procedures. The play positively influenced the raising of children's ecological awareness. They joyfully took part in the play and were excited that they were participating in the creation of costumes completely made by recycling. A part of costume creation was done through a workshop with parents.

The National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education: a framework for ecological education in early and preschool age?

*The National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education*¹ (MZOS, 2014) is the basic document for the conducting of early and preschool education. The first four chapters of the curriculum list the starting points, principles, values,

1 In further text: *National Curriculum*.

and aims of the *National Curriculum* which were, according to the words of the Ministry, generated from “years of experience in developing educational practice and the curriculum of kindergartens in the Republic of Croatia and the reach of Croatian and international scientists in the area of theory of early and preschool education.” (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 5) Although numerous experts repeatedly claim that ecological education became necessary and represents a need for survival (for instance, Tatković, Diković and Štifanić, 2015; Jukić, 2011; Pejić Papak, 2008; Milat, 2006; Borić, 2001; Uzelac and Starčević, 1999), *The National Curriculum* does not even mention the notion of ecological education.

In the Starting Points chapter, the existing documents are stated, as well as examples of quality practice and scientific studies as the bases for the creation of a national curriculum. (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 8-9) In the Principles chapter, the value bases for the creation are listed: flexibility of the educational system in the kindergarten, partnership of the kindergarten with parents and the wider community, ensuring continuity in education and an openness for continuing studying and readiness to advance practice. (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 12-17) The basic values described in the *National Curriculum* are: knowledge, identity, humanism, and tolerance, responsibility, autonomy and creativeness. (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 19) When describing responsibility, among other things, the responsibility towards nature is mentioned: “Education should encourage active participation of children in social life and promote their responsibility towards the general social good, nature, and themselves and others.” (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 21) In the chapter dedicated to the aims, the encouraging and strengthening of eight basic competences for lifelong learning is highlighted (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 27):

1. Communication in the mother tongue,
2. Communication in foreign languages,
3. Mathematical competence and the basic natural sciences competences
4. Digital competence,
5. Learning how to learn,
6. Social and civil competence,
7. Initiative and entrepreneurship and
8. Cultural awareness and expression

Responsibility towards nature as one of the basic starting points of ecological education is mentioned only in the description of mathematical competence and the basic natural sciences competences: "Natural sciences competence is developed by encouraging the child to ask questions, explore, discover and conclude on the legalities in the world of nature and to apply that knowledge in everyday life. These competences also include understanding the changes caused by human action and the responsibility of an individual for them, as well as the preservation of nature and its resources." (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 28) The *National Curriculum* foresees that the curriculum of an individual kindergarten "represents an implementation i.e. a way to conduct the *National Curriculum for Early and Preschool Education* in an individual kindergarten with regard to its specialities." (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 32) In the further description of the contemporary way of understanding a child and the organization of the educational process of the kindergarten, the culture of the kindergarten, the characteristics of the kindergarten curriculum, planning and shaping the kindergarten curriculum and ensuring quality, the terms related to ecological education are not mentioned.

In the year 2016, the *Changes and Addendums of the National Curriculum for Early and Preschool education* were published, and they relate to the curriculum of preschool. In this addendum, ecological education is still not mentioned, and the one sentence which can be put into relation with ecological relation is the description of the role of the educator in shaping the preschool curriculum: "strengthening the dispositions of the children for a more careful observation of the phenomena in their environment, exploring, concluding, and responsible action." (*Izmjene i dopune nacionalnog kurikulumuma za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje*, 2016: 6)

Considering the unquestionable importance and interdisciplinary nature of ecological education, it would be logical to enlist it into the curriculums of inter-subject topics. Those topics, prescribed by the Ministry of Science and Education, are: Learning How to Learn, Entrepreneurship, Personal and Social Development, Health, Using Information and Communication Technology, Civil Education and Sustainable Development. Even though the term ecological education is not mentioned in the stated curriculums, the inter-subject topic Sustainable development deals, among other things, with this problem. Unfortunately, the stated topics should be conducted in the educational cycles starting with the first grade of primary school. The opinion of the authors is that ecological education should be conducted from the earliest age, therefore

in early and preschool education. According to Lipovac et al. (2017: 139): “In regards to the fact that preschool age enables the most efficient way of acquiring knowledge, it is desirable that every educator conducts their influence using ecological programs based on the values of a sustainable community for the purpose of developing ecological awareness in children. The educator should be in line with the trend of ecological developments and ecological trained themselves i.e. have ecological competences in order to respond to current ecological problems and challenges in their work.”

The practice of ecological education in institutions for early and preschool education

Even though the *National Curriculum* does not require conducting ecological education, practice shows that many kindergartens introduced elements of ecological education into their curriculums, and the importance of ecological education is recognized by the educators and parents of children of preschool age. (Popović, Bogut and Ament, 2017) Along with this, Cifrić claims that: “in Croatia, we have a rich tradition of ecological literacy, but we have been ignoring traditional knowledge for generations. We usually return to them in the sense of folklore in various plays and in media promotion, for instance ‘ecological nutrition’ or ‘ecological production.’” (Cifrić, 2009, according to Jukić, 2011) Along with this, it is a fact that many kindergartens are included in the Eco-School project which is being conducted in the Republic of Croatia by the *Lijepa naša* (eng. Our Beautiful)² association. We can, therefore, conclude that

2 On the official website of the association, there is a description of the Eco-School project: “International Eco-Schools (sic!) are a program designed to conduct the guidelines of education for the environment on the level of entire educational institutions (primary and secondary schools, kindergartens and student homes, schools for children with special needs and faculties). The national coordinator for Eco-Schools in the Republic of Croatia is the Lijepa Naša Association. The international Eco-School program was developed by the Foundation (sic!) for Environmental Education (FEE) as a response to the UN conference of 1992. The program officially started in 1994 in Denmark, Germany, Greece and Great Britain. Today, Eco-Schools are present in more than 59 countries of the world, linking more than 46 000 schools (sic!). Eco-schools are a program and system of rewards. Schools are rewarded with the Green Flag, with a sign of an Eco-school which can be put on the school building or shown in the lobby. Schools also gain a charter (certificate) of the FEE, a right to a logo (Eco-School sign) which will be put on memos, gain the possibility of media coverage in Croatia and the world etc. The aim of the program: implementing education for the environment into all segments of the educational system and the everyday life of students and workers in the Eco-school. Task: to educate young generations to be sensitive to the questions of the environment and to enable them to make decisions on the development of the society in the future. The Eco-school

ecological education is permanently present in our society from early childhood.

The ecological content will only make sense to a child and help it realize the meaning of natural changes and processes in everyday, natural situations. In order for a preschool institution to be able to develop competences for realizing changes in children, it is important to know and respect certain methodical paths which will help them in the successful realization of developmental goals and tasks in the area of cognitive development and knowing the content of ecological terms. The kindergarten, as an educational-ecological centre should fulfil requirements such as:

- Creative dissemination of individual topics by the educator,
- Possibility of organising the educational process in nature,
- Identifying local problems which enable children to take part in solving them,
- Developing a scheme of thought which would enable the children to find and notice a link between certain terms,
- Defining a plan of action and application of environmental policy, focused on waste management, caring for the environment, supporting a healthy lifestyle, saving energy, cooperating with the parents and the local community,
- Initiating changes on a local level.

The educator should, in an indirect way, with a methodically correct path, teach children and help them gain an insight into the process of ecological education. Authors with contemporary views on children psychology and preschool pedagogy highlighted the importance of validating the life experience of children. This means that an educator should use situations and events from everyday life which are significant for ecological education and are connected to the experience of a child.

status: a system of rewarding on a local, national, and international level, which is a speciality of this recognizable and quality model of education. Schools which fulfil the set criteria and which promote care for the environment as a permanent value and way of life gain a charter on their status as an International Eco-school and a Green Flag with the Eco-school sign. This prestigious international recognition is awarded for two years. After that, a status renewal ensues" (<https://www.eko.lijepa-nasa.hr/eko-skole/sto-su-ekoskole>).

Planning in projects is one of the methodical recommendations in the work of educators in developing children's ecological awareness. There are two steps in designing an ecological program i.e. the curriculum of a preschool institution:

1. Defining the aims of the project
2. Designing a program of activity for the educator and the children

By cooperating with the parents and the local community, a preschool institution can achieve much in developing a preschool institution as an ecological unit. (Lipovac et al., 2017) There are various ways in which we can enrich work on ecological activities in a kindergarten through projects and cooperation with parents and the local community, for instance: founding children's eco groups (Picture 1), recycling paper for drawings, sorting waste into specific containers, carrying leftover food after each snack into the composter, growing plants and animals in the kindergarten backyard, making a bug hotel, making a garden and an herb garden, organising eco pop-quizzes, organising ecological plays, making toys from used packaging, making and reading eco-picture books etc.



Picture 1. Little ecologists – the eco group in the *Radost Novska* kindergarten (Picture taken by: E. Ždralović)

“An educator should, in his work, start from the basic aim of ecological education and that is, in the end: to develop an ecologically literate individual capable of making ecological decisions which are equally appropriate to the quality of life of a man and the quality of his environment.” (Lipovac et al, 2017:147)

Children's plays and performances in early and preschool education

A very common form of project activities in institutions for early and preschool education are the applications and realizations of various plays and performances. In those, the most important role is played by the recitals and drama and music forms of expression.

Recitals

According to Vigato and Dundović (2003.):

Recitals have become an irreplaceable content of a play and, therefore, appear in them as a special act of a larger programmatic unit, but, even though it is rare, a recital can also become the carrier of the entire program. Reciting is considered to be the simplest form of working with children, which is the reason are plays are abundant in recitals. Sometimes the program is filled up with recitals which need to be learned quickly, which requires the recital group to work in intense intervals. In mixed plays, the decency of the performance, the thematic-stylistic unity of recitals and a harmonious composition which should not be ruined by the diversity of the areas from which program is composed are important. Therefore, it is important to select songs which can be performed in front of a large auditorium in an open space or in non-acoustic halls. A larger part of lyrical poetry are monologue liberations of personal preoccupations and such intimate emotions require special concentration, shorter spatial distance, a smaller number of listeners and complete silence. Programs are most frequently performed in the school hallway which is in no way appropriate for such presentations. Reciters perform more or less successfully and they need silence in order to use the words to contribute to, firstly, themselves, and then the audience, but they most often fail to do so because they are not interpreted in adequate spaces. Therefore, reciting should perhaps be reduced to a minimum in mixed programs.

Drama expression

A very important component in the education of a child is dramatic expression. It completes each child performance. Different terms are used when talking about a children's dramatic expression: children's play, class performance, and if there are puppets on stage along with the little actors, then it is a puppetry play. (Vigato and Dundović, 2003) The most frequent version of drama education is the play. (Nemeth-Jajić and Dvornik, 2008) It contains the word "play" and relate to both, children's play and theatre acting play, which explains why storytelling through playing makes a children's play one of the most acceptable artistic expression. (Diklić, Težak and Zlatar 1996 according to Verdonik and Štiglić 2015) Plays are based on roleplaying (symbolic play), a favourite for children. (Nemeth-Jajić i Dvornik, 2008) "Playing transforms into actuality and mask into reality. A child in play (an actor in a role) found himself, the true essence of his nature, which would never come out in life forced upon by reality." (Lotman, 1976 according to Vigato and Dundović, 2003:294) Through such spontaneously created children's play, speech naturally develops. Through a play, which is an artistically formed dialogue situation, children accept the invitation call to play, which makes this kind of literature handy for encouraging speech expression and their creative abilities. (Nemeth-Jajić and Dvornik, 2008) Joža Skok, in his text: *Žanrovske odrednice dječjeg igrokaza* (eng. Genre determinations of a children's play) defines a children's play as the third literary genre of children's literature, along with children's prose and poetry. Those genre determinations of a children's play are also used today. (Skok, 1985 according to Verdonik and Štiglić, 2015) Children's plays, according to their formal characteristic, belong to a category of small drama forms where one-acts dominate and the plot is conditioned according to the possibilities of perception by the child audience. (Verdonik and Štiglić, 2015) When selecting a text for a play, we have to be careful if it is appropriate for their age and children's affinities. "The attention span of children is pretty short so the duration of a children's play is reduced to an optimal time of around 10 minutes, which is one of the reasons that a children's play cannot be the carrier of an entire program we call the school play." (Vigato and Dundović; 2003: 295) Skok (1985 according to Verdonik and Štiglić, 2015) divides children's plays into: puppetry plays, fairy tale play (stage fairy tale), fantastic play, humorous play and action play as the basic drama-scene forms of this genre, which is based on an optimistic and authentic children's vision of life. Conditioned by the characteristics of contemporary media in which they appear, children's radio and television acts show us the new acoustic and visual

possibilities of a play. Skok includes the script of a children's feature film into the framework of children's drama types and, apart from the genre determinations of children's play, he also mentions a children's musical, music games, operettas, as well as children's operas dominated by music as a means of expression, and the drama connection is the framework composition of a plot and story. The most frequent characters in children's plays are boys and girls, but sometimes they are animals or objects taking on human characteristics (Picture 2).



Picture 2. A play called *Djed i repa* (eng. Grandpa and turnip) (Picture taken by: E. Ždralović)

In puppetry plays, along with the aforementioned, the most frequent characters are supernatural creatures. In such texts, the fantastic happenings and fairy tale nature of the text are highlighted. In another kind of a play, children's playing, dreams, events, and everything close to them is happening in a realistic way is shown in order for the children-actors to be able to master demanding actions without difficulties. Especially interesting are the plays which develop the plot in a humorous way. Children find children operettas or musicals interesting today, which contain various forms of expression, such as acting, dancing, reciting, and rhythmic. (Prpić, 1986 according to Verdonik and Štiglić, 2015)

Musical expression

“From the end of the last century, scientists have been dealing with studying and proving the advantages of early musical education of children.” (Popović, Popović and Bogut, 2017: 676) Musical education, even relatively short, brings about deep consequences to the functional and anatomic organization of the brain for children and adults, and even animals. Also, musical activities connect cognitive and motor functions of the brain. Along with all of this, scientists also proved a connection between early music education and an increase in the ability to read and write. Children who practice music have better pronunciation when speaking and reading because it encourages the development of hearing, which means that phonological abilities are developed as well as the musical ones. Music can help in education of dyslexic children. (Popović, 2015) Children can musically express themselves in different ways. Apart from the most frequent way, which is singing, there are instrument playing, rhymes, music games rhythm and dance.

Movement is one of the first communication connections with the world. (Vigato and Dundović, 2003) When we add text to musical games that include fingers cracking, applauding, banging different body parts etc., we gain an extra-musical dimension. (Popović, Popović and Bogut, 2017) Dance is primordial among all the arts that a person engages in, and it is received directly from nature. Rhythm affirms a feeling of community and, therefore, has a social value. (Vigato and Dundović, 2003) Children expertly acquire dance moves and are glad to perform them (Picture 3).



Picture 3. A dancing routine of the group Štrumpfovi (eng. Smurfs) on the theme of Africa (photograph taken by: Ž. Crnojević)

“In primary schools, rhythmic and dancing, as a standalone program or a part of a mixed play, are performed on occasion and working with children is not continuous. Such performances are reduced to the impersonation of the choreographer/teacher, and children are not given the possibility to freely express themselves.” (Vigato and Dundović, 2003: 295)

Choir singing is the most frequent form of musical expression in children's plays. With such a performance, nobody is highlighted as an individual and all children can be involved (Picture 4). “In a choir, one should aspire to develop the musical abilities of students and, ultimately, develop love towards choir singing.” (Šulentić Begić, 2010, according to Šulentić Begić and Vranješević, 2013: 3) The most important assumption which is the basis of choir expression is that non-musical children are very rare and that musical hearing can be developed. (Šulentić Begić and Vranješević, 2013)



Picture 4. A joint song at the end of the play by the children of the *Radost* Novska kindergarten (Photograph taken by: Ž Crnojević)

It is very important to select the proper repertoire, because children will not gladly sing songs they don't like, which can distance them from singing. Children should be taught that the facial expression during singing shows the character of the song and, because the songs are mostly cheerful, their faces and eyes should express joy (Šulentić Begić, 2010, according to Šulentić Begić and Vranješević, 2013). We can also add that music is a very good medium we can use to reach children, but also the audience. By practicing musical pieces for children's plays, we encourage all types of intelligence and a love for music.

Case study: *Ekološka priča* (eng. The eco-Story)

Methods and course of research

The case study method, according to Matijević, can be "considered a serious empirical research." (Matijević, 2017: 124) In a special chapter of the book *Novi*

pristupi metodologiji istraživanja odgoja (eng. New Approaches to Research Methodology in Education), he explores the case study method and concludes: "In the shown method (and selected cases), observing and studying a person or phenomenon is natural and nonobtrusive and the observed phenomenon is attempted to be viewed holistically. Everything is happening with a tight connection of the researcher with the viewed phenomenon and studied subjects." (Matijević, 2017: 125) Due to the particularity of the researched phenomenon, we used the case study method as our method of research. We analysed the course of preparation and performance of *Ekološka priča* in the *Radost* Kindergarten in 2017. Željka Crnojević, one of the authors of the paper, worked as an assistant to a child with difficulties that year and experienced the preparation and performance of this project first-hand. Apart from the analysis of the very course of preparation and the performance of the project, we analysed the synchronicity of this project with the demands of the *National Curriculum* (MZOS, 2014) and the principles of contemporary learning processes, with a special review of the musical elements.

Preparation and performance of the play

The play *Ekološka priča* by Sanja Seferović-Bosak is found in a collection of plays *Maštarije – Igrokazi za djecu od 3 – 13 godina (2002)*. It is intended for students from 1st to 5th grade and the older kindergarten group of children. The play was prepared by the older mixed group called *Patkice* in the *Radost* kindergarten in 2017. The kindergarten itself gained the Eco-school status that year so the group, as did many others, performed various ecological activities and projects. The educators thought that it would be nice to stage the play *Ekološka priča* and perform it in the final school play at the end of the pedagogical year. After the agreement, they started the realization. The aim was to involve the children as much as possible, and listen to their ideas, opinions, attitudes and wishes, as well. The theme was an ecological one, so the educators decided to make costumes from old cardboard i.e. they recycled. Useless pieces of cardboard, with a lot of effort and good will, became cans of popular beverages, clouds, cigarettes, a plant, the planet Earth, and the blue, yellow and grey garbage container. The parents took part in the creation as well, and coloured all the future costumes during a workshop (Pictures 5-11).



Picture 5. Making the costumes
(Photographed by: M. Veble)



Picture 6. Making Earth using a Pilates ball
(Photographed by: M. Veble)



Picture 7. Parents workshop (Photographed by: M. Veble)



Picture 8. Parents workshop (Photographed by: M. Veble)



Picture 9. Costume creation: can, Earth, containers (Photographed by: M. Veble)



Picture 10. The process of making the can (Photographed by: M. Veble)



Picture 11. The finished can costume (Photographed by: M. Veble)

The original text did not contain enough characters in order for the educators to be able to include all the children, so they edited it by adding several new characters. Originally, the play had twelve characters (the judge, Earth, cans, yellow, green, and blue container, two cigarettes, a factory, two flowers, and a boy), and the edited one had 18 characters (the judge, Earth, three cans, yellow, green, and blue container, two cigarettes, a factory, four flowers, a body, and two clouds). In order to create costumes and practice the play, the children and the educators invested around a month of their time. They practiced the lines in the living room and a week before the performance, they went to the cinema hall each day with their educators, where the performance ended up happening (Picture 12).



Picture 12. A rehearsal in the cinema hall (Photographed by - Ž. Crnojević)

The plot of the play is: due to an increasing pollution of our planet, the polluters (factory, cigarettes, cans) are found in a courtroom with clouds, flowers, the planet Earth and garbage containers. The judge wants to hear both sides. The characters discuss and everyone gives their argument. The second part of the play is a musical one, in which the characters, in front of the jurors (garbage containers), bear witness by singing an appropriate piece of text to the matrix of our famous popular songs. After both sides presented their case, the judge recommends that everyone should decide according to their own conscience. A boy comes out to the scene and concludes that it is important to preserve our environment and to keep planet Earth clean. As a conclusion, everyone sings the song together *Ovo nam je škola* (eng. This is a lesson to us) on the song matrix by Zlatan Stipišić Gibonni *Ovo mi je škola* (eng. This is a lesson to me) and, in the end, they sing a happy song with an ecological content called *Planeta Zemlja* (eng. Planet Earth), originally performed by: Đuro, Bajaga, Tifa, Žera, Loša, Tanja Ribić, Mario-Ario, Davor Gobac, Darko Ostojć Ogi, Dado Džihan, Zlaja Ivanišević and others, with the project author Zlatko Ivanišević– Zlaja.

The children and the educators presented their multi-week effort at the final school play, at the end of the pedagogical year, which they organized along with the educational groups Štrumpfovi (eng. Smurfs) who presented themselves with a play *Plesna haljina žutog maslačka* (eng. Dancing dress of the yellow dandelion), a recital *Našim prvašićima* (eng. To our first graders) and a dance *Samo Tvoja ljubav, Bože* (eng. Only Your love, God) and the group *Pčelice* (eng. Bees) who staged the plays *Pčelica Maja* (eng. Maja, the Bee), *Kreda i ploča* (eng. Chalk and Board) and a puppetry play *Čista Zemlja* (eng. Clean Earth). The *Patkice* also performed a recital of *Planete* (eng. The Planets). At the end of the play, the children from all three groups sang the song arranged for the group *Klinci s Ribnjaka* (eng. Kids from Ribnjak) called *Mi smo taj svijet* (from eng. *We are the world*) by the author Michael Jackson and Lionel Ritchie, and the audience in a packed hall met them with a thunderous applause after every performance. The entire program, especially the *Ekološka priča*, left a great impression on the entire audience.

Discussion

Cooperation with parents and project learning

The workshop in which the parents aided in creating costumes was useful on multiple levels: the parents got to know each other and connected better, they took part in the work of the kindergarten and the educational process of their children. At the same time, they had a chance to educate themselves on certain aspects of ecology, especially environment protection and in an immediate way: by recycling old cardboard. Such types of activities are highlighted as desirable in the *National Curriculum* (MZOS, 2014) because they help to have a better connection of the kindergarten and the parents and the local community. Apart from preparing materials for costumes, the parents also took part in the preparation of the play by practicing it at home with their children and, in that way, achieved the second dimension of a relationship with their children in a familial environment.

Similar activities which could be performed with parents within the frame of the ecological education are, for instance, going for a tour around a factory (to inform children on how to prevent pollution, are they using filters, how dangerous is the smoke that is being produced etc.) or a flower planting workshop with the parents.

Contemporary authors frequently highlight the project approach to learning and activity organization for the educational institutions as being desirable, for instance Matijević (2008) and Munjiza, Peko and Sablić (2007). The most important elements in project learning are definitely experience learning and developing multiple competences within one topic. The preparation of children's plays and performances is definitely a useful form of project learning because the experience of preparing and practicing content for the play demands an effort spanning multiple weeks, sometimes even months. The children, after they perform the play or show, feel the satisfaction of a successfully completed project. This project had multiple educational dimensions: the children developed most of the eight competences for lifelong learning defined in the *National Curriculum: Communication in the native tongue, Mathematical competence and the basic natural sciences competence, Digital competence, Learning how to learn, Social and civil competence, Initiative and entrepreneurship and Cultural awareness and expression.* (*Nacionalni kurikulum*, 2014: 27)

Similar activities of the project approach to ecological education which could be conducted with children are different workshops, plantings, recycling, but also drama-music workshops. For instance, Perić Kraljik and Popović (2017a) and Perić Kraljik and Popović (2017b) organised visits to a recycling yard.

The importance and analysis of the music used in the play

Music had a cohesive role in the preparation of this play: it made the course of the plot more dynamic and the use of musical quotes by popular local songs created in the last few decades made the play more interesting for multiple generations.

For the purpose of the play, the lyrics of appropriate topics were written to the melodies of famous songs. That is how the popular song *Ljubav za sve* (eng. *Love for all*), originally performed by Sandi Cenov, became *Smeće za sve* (eng. *Garbage for all*); *Ja sam vlak* (eng. *I am a train*) (Nina Badrić and Emilija Kokić) became *Mi smo napast što truže zemlju ovu* (eng. *We are the menace polluting this earth*); *Frida* (Psihomodo pop) became *Nad nama su šikljali dimovi* (eng. *Gases spouted above us*), *Suze biserne* (eng. *Tears of pearl*) (Magazin) became *Ne gadite me* (eng. *Do not pollute me*), *Žene i muškarci* (eng. *Men and women*) (Buldožer) became *Smeće je smeće* (eng. *Trash is trash*), *Poštujte naše znakove* (eng. *Respect our signs*) (MUP) became *Čuvajte nas, pazite nas, jer smeća svud je okolo* (eng. *Take care of us because trash is all around*), *Ovo mi je škola* (eng. *This is a lesson*

to me) (Gibonni) became *Ovo nam je škola. Naučili smo danas nešto mi*³(eng. *This is a lesson to us. We learned something today*). The praxis of quoting famous melodies and adding new lines can be considered an intervention of the author into the very composition, and in history it was considered a *hommage* to the original authors and we can look at it that way in this case, as well. The fact that the songs which were used were not originally written for children is irrelevant because the “grown” nature of the songs is not shown in the melody, but the lines (which were, in this case, changed, so it is of appropriate content). If we take a look at the age of used songs, we can see that they speak to the generation of the parents of today because they were made at the time when they were teenagers. The exception to this rule are the songs *Žene i muškarci* and *Ljubav za sve*, which are older, but in this case are evergreens speaking to all generations.

The final song, *Planeta Zemlja* is also a cover, but it is a part of a larger educational project. The author of the entire project called *Planeta Zemlja* (eng. Planet Earth) is Zlatko Ivanišević – Zlaja, and the program consists of sixteen educational songs adapted to children of preschool and school ages. The songs are covers of major global hit songs, which deal with various topics interesting for the children with new lyrics: friendship, peace, justice, goodness, hygiene, love, music, geographical terms, legendary characters, mythology, animals. The main characters, boys called Dado and Zlaja, tell short, instructive, and funny stories with every song, and they deal with topics which are important for their healthy and happy childhood in a unique and child-friendly way. In the *Planeta Zemlja* song, there are many musical guests from the local scene (Đuro, Bajaga, Tifa, Žera, Loša, Tanja Ribić, Mario-Ario, Davor Gobac, Darko Ostojić Ogi, Dado Džihan, Zlaja Ivanišević), which makes it attractive for a wider audience.

Conclusion

With this paper, we have shown the welfare and importance of dramatic and music art using a theme of ecological education in kindergartens through children’s plays. The paper used a case study analysis method in order to shed light on the process of creating a play using photographs, descriptions and methodical procedures analysis. The children from the kindergarten in Novska staged a play called *Ekološk priča* (eng. *The Eco-Story*) from a collection of plays *Maštarije: Igrokazi za djecu od 3 do 13 godina* (eng. *Pipe Dreams: Plays for*

3 The texts of all the covers, along with the data on the original authors gathered on the websites of the Croatian Composer Society (hrv. ZAMP) are found in the Appendix.

Children from 3 to 13 years) by the author Sanja Seferović – Bosak, at the final school play of 2017. With an analysis of the preparation and performance of this play, we have shown that this is a representative example of a successful conducting of ecological education in institutions for early and preschool education, an example of successful cooperation with the community and parents, as well as an example of successful implementation of musical elements into a dramatic text.

However, the greatest confirmation that the educators did great work with this play were the proud and radiant faces of the children while they were wearing their costumes and acting and singing on scene, as well as the captivated audience.

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Appendix: Lyrics of popular songs used in *The Ecological Story* children's play

Smeće za sve (original: Ljubav za sve, glazba: Petar Iljić Čajkovski; tekst i aranžman: Hrvoje Stupar)

Smeće za sve, smeće za sve,

Smeće je sve što ostaje.

Plastike, a i stakla nikada ne nestaje. 2X

I ruglo to Zemljice naše bit ćemo sada mi,

Jer iz nas, nek se zna, uvijek će se jest, pit.

Mi smo napast što truje zemlju ovu (original: Ja sam vlak, glazba: Miro Buljan; tekst: Stevo Cvikić)

Mi smo napast što truje zemlju ovu,

I teško ćete nas se riješiti.

A kad pluća vam u komi budu, 2X

Mi vas nećemo tad tješiti. O,o-ne,nee! O,o-jee!

„Nad nama su šikljali dimovi” (original: Frida; glazba i tekst: Davor Slamnig)

Tvornica pjeva na glazbu „Frida“ Psihomodo pop

Nad nama su šikljali dimovi – onečišćivanje!

Zrak je sada nečist i crn. 2X

U nama su pucali filteri – onečišćivanje!

Al' ljudi nisu marili. – oo- nee!

„Ne gadite me” (original: Suze biserne; glazba: Tonči Huljić; tekst: Vjekoslava Huljić; aranžman: Stjepan Stipica Kalogjera)

Ne gadite me, ne, ne, oo ne, ne gadite me,

Jer ja sam vam sve, baš sve, oo sve, jer ja sam vam sve.

Ne gadite mora, šume i moje cvijeće. 2X

Ljubavi im dajte vi, i izbacite sad smeće.

„Smeće je smeće” (original: Žene i muškarci; glazba: Boris Bele, Davor Slamnig, Borut Činč; tekst: Boris Bele; aranžman: Boris Bele, Davor Slamnig, Borut Činč)

Smeće je smeće, smeće je bajno.

Smeće su teme, nema dileme. 2X

Smeće je inspiracija – naša generacija.

„Čuvajte nas, pazite nas, jer smeća svud je okolo” (original: Čudna šuma; glazba: Zdravko Šljivac; tekst: Ivan Kuliš)

Čuvajte nas, pazite nas, jer smeća svud je okolo.

Čistog zraka premalo je, a živjeti svi trebamo.

Zemlja naša boluje nam, od silnog dima guši se.

Djeco draga, pazite kamo sve to smeće bacate.

Tad je otpad svoj na svom...

Spremnici su raznih boja, ne budite lijeni vi.

Siva kanta stara već je, neće gutat smeće sve.

Plava papir prima sav, žuta plastikom se hrani.

Zelena je staklu dom, tad je otpad svoj na svom.

„Ovo nam je škola. Naučili smo danas nešto mi.” (original: Ovo mi je škola; glazba i tekst: Zlatan Stipišić)

Ovo nam je škola. Naučili smo danas nešto mi.

I nema više bola zbog smeća što ga Zemlja podnosi.

I svaka ljubav nova što prirodi je dajete vi,

Činit će je sretnom, sigurni smo mi.

Nek ovo bude škola.....

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DJEČJI IGROKAZ *EKOLOŠKA PRIČA* U FUNKCIJI EKOLOŠKOG ODGOJA DJECE PREDŠKOLSKE DOBI

Sažetak

U današnje vrijeme često se naglašava važnost ekološkog odgoja i obrazovanja iako sadašnji *Nacionalni kurikulum za rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje* nigdje ne spominje ekološki odgoj i obrazovanje. Unatoč tome što se ekološki odgoj i obrazovanje ne spominju u temeljnom dokumentu, različite aktivnosti u tom smjeru često se provode u našim dječjim vrtićima. Primjer toga je i igrokaz *Ekološka priča* autorice Sanje Seferović-Bosak iz zbirke igrokaza *Maštarije: Igrokazi za djecu od 3 do 13 godina*. Ovaj rad opisuje pripremu i izvedbu tog igrokaza 2017. godine u Dječjem vrtiću *Radost* u Novskoj. Teoretski dio rada razmatra temeljne postavke ekološkog odgoja u ranoj i predškolskoj dobi, s posebnim osvrtom na trenutačnu praksu u hrvatskim vrtićima. U empirijskom

dijelu rada opisane su etape pripreme i izvedbe igrokaza *Ekološka priča* s posebnim osvrtom na usklađenost ovog projekta sa zahtjevima *Nacionalnog kurikuluma* u smislu razvoja ključnih kompetencija za cjeloživotno učenje. Rad sadrži i analizu metodičkih postupaka s naročitim osvrtom na pripremu glazbenih brojeva u igrokazu.

■ **Ključne riječi:** dječje dramsko stvaralaštvo, glazba, ekološki odgoj, igrokaz