

# LEARNING IN AN ORGANIZATION AS A STRATEGY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION POLICY IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

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## **Abstract**

The quality of education/training and the development of human resources are closely interrelated priorities of the education policy, the implementation of which plays a predominant role in the structure of the strategic management of educational institutions. The article deals with the problem of preschool education teachers' learning in an organization in the context of the implementation of the strategic aims of education. The essence and importance of learning in an organization has been theoretically substantiated, referring to the data of the research the advantages of preschool education teachers' learning in an organization, as well as the most effective ways of learning, its importance for the quality of education, particular fields of the activity of the institution.

**Keywords:** *preschool education teacher, learning in an organization, implementation of the education policy.*

## **The relevance of the problem**

Strategic documents of education reflecting the contents of the education policy define the priorities, attitudes and principles of the development of the system of education and the organizations of separate sectors of education, concentrates attention and efforts of the educational community on the essential changes in the field of education, focusing on the expectations of the country, the tendencies of the education policy of the world and the European Union and the tendencies of the situation of its implementation (Gumuliauskienė, 2014).

The quality of education and the development of human resources are closely interrelated priorities of the education policy. Their implementation plays a predominant role in the structure of the strategic management of educational institutions. The implementation of the goals of the education policy is related to adequate and effective decisions, the sum total of purposeful actions. Every educational organization while implementing its purpose, national aims of education, forms the strategy of its organization that reflects the philosophy

of the activity of the organization, conditions its behaviour now and in prospect, act as a guide while taking decisions, gives an unanimous direction to actions while striving for the aims of the organization. It is related to the type of an educational organization, its internal and external context, the sum total of priorities, principles, values, determining the measures and actions, on which the community of the organization agreed, committed to implement them, or is enabled or directed to implement them in order to achieve the aims of the organization and to affect the behaviour of the organization and individuals to the desired direction. “To have policy means to have rational arguments showing the understanding of the problem and giving the ways of solving it” (Parsons, 2001).

Modern educational organizations acting in a dynamic environment that encourages a constant change face an increasing necessity and responsibility to provide high-quality services, to remain competitive, to retain their status and exceptionality, to implement effective changes in organizational culture, management, development of human resources. According to Stoll and Louis (2007), the teachers’ community is the main factor forming the policy and practice of the organization.

Total quality theories refer to the attitude that to achieve certain accomplishments is possible only because of people, i.e. the main role is played by employees (Collard, 1992). Good quality of education depends on teacher’s abilities, the knowledge he/she obtains and his/her wish to develop (Barnett, 1992). It is evident that the quality of the activity of a preschool educational institution also mostly depends on high-quality activity of teachers, their ability to constantly learn and develop their competences, therefore the processes of constant learning become inevitable as a factor conditioning the development of an individual and an organization, the professionalism of an employee.

The evolution of education and training systems into a lifelong process has been considered for decades as a priority strategy of the creation of the future of Europe that is actualized on the level of national education policy, from various aspects conceptualized in interdisciplinary research, in different scope and quality implemented in educational practice. Learning that is necessary to preserve, multiply and produce knowledge is a continuous, collective, organizational process in its nature, surpassing the experience of individuals and their competences. The value of an organization can be obtained from unique combinations of knowledge and imperceptible unification of them, which is constructed by the members of the organization (Raudeliūnienė, 2012).

Acknowledging the importance of the education of children of early age for their successful lifelong learning the improvement of the quality of education becomes a permanent process and the main aim of the organization. It is not by incident that the member states of the European Union encourage improving professional standards, setting the requirements of obligatory competences for persons working in the field of preschool education. In the Communication from the European Commission of 2011 “Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow” it is emphasized that “early childhood is the stage where education can most effectively influence the development of children and help reverse disadvantage” (2011, p. 4). By this communication the EU members are encouraged helping to strive to achieve one of the objectives – to improve the quality of these services developing educational programmes, improving the qualification of preschool education employees and improving management. Meeting the requirements of the European Union in the Lithuanian education policy the necessity to provide high-quality preschool education services is emphasized, in the requirements for staff performing the programme of

preschool education the necessity to constantly improve their qualification, understand their role and responsibility in educating young children is emphasized (Jankauskienė, 2014).

The improvement or self-directed improvement of teachers' qualification is an integral part of the process of the improvement of the quality of the activity of educational institutions. Preschool education teachers have the opportunity to learn and develop by the methods of formal, non-formal and informal (self-directed) learning. Their harmony ensuring constant (self-directed) development of teachers is a continuous aspiration of the quality of preschool education while realizing teacher's traditional and new roles that require the development of lifelong learning skills. When the attitude that the person's main aims and objectives of general education are to be related to the development of the competences necessary for life and professional activity is becoming more and more predominant, learning becomes a part of the culture of every organization because it helps the organization to actively adjust to the changes that take place (Česnulevičienė & Lakis, 2002), is an important factor of the successful development and competitiveness of the organization.

Expanding the variety and opportunities of the types of learning in order to make learning closer to the organization itself, the research has proven that the workplace can be treated as an effective learning environment joining non-formal and informal education, individual and team work. The process of the improvement of qualification should ensure the harmony between teacher's individual needs, the needs of the educational institution and national needs.<sup>1</sup> This process should be directed towards the help to a teacher, and at the same time to an educational institution. Individual needs for professional development of a teacher of a preschool educational institution are perceived as an opportunity to actualize personal abilities, inclinations and aspirations, overcome the problems that are an obstacle for better results of professional activity and satisfaction with work, changes in thinking and behaviour, and at the same time as an opportunity to gain the competences that one lacks and that are important for high-quality and harmonious activity of the institution, the implementation of the aims set by its community. Consequently, *learning in an organization is such learning process that takes place during professional activity, precisely expressing learning environment, i.e. a place where various learning methods and forms are applied, in this case it is workplace that is important.* Learning that takes place in the process of teacher's everyday professional activity is important both for the employee and for the educational institution if it is purposeful, meaningful and useful for both parties.

The relevance of the improvement of teachers' qualification, its forms, learning needs, its importance for the quality of education and the change of the educational institution are substantiated by many researchers conducted in Lithuania (Grincevičienė, 2001; Barkauskaitė, 2001; Monkevičienė, 2004; Jurašaitė-Harbison, 2007; Malinauskienė, 2010; Masiliauskienė & Bagdonaitė, 2012; Smilgienė, 2012; Smilgienė, Masiliauskienė, & Pivorytė, 2014; Smilgienė, Matienė, & Žiauberytė, 2015); Gumuliauskienė & Smilgienė, 2010, Gumuliauskienė, 2014, the data of the research conducted by Monkevičienė with the co-authors (2009) show that the indicators of the quality of preschool education and users' expectations firstly are related to the competences of the staff, their high qualification, experiential learning.

The issues of the opportunities of informal independent learning, its expression in the workplace and influence on the development of general competences are also in various aspects analysed by many scientists from Lithuania and other countries (Žydžiūnaitė et al.,

<sup>1</sup> Concept of the Development of Teachers' Qualification (2012). Valstybės žinios, 2012-06-01, Nr. 62-3152

2012; Torokoff & Mets, 2004; Kvedaraitė, 2009; Jurašaitė-Harbison, 2008; Jurašaitė-Harbison & Lesly Rex, 2010).

In order to ensure constant development of preschool education teachers the managers of the institutions get the responsibility alongside with a wide scope of forms of development that exist outside the institution to look for effective strategies of teachers' learning in the organization. It is likely that having created the conditions for teachers to teach/learn in the organization by more diverse and convenient learning methods meeting the needs of the development of their professional knowledge, skills and competences and the quality of a preschool educational institution, not only the quality of education but also of the activity of an institution as an open sociocultural system will change more rapidly. Although there is no lack of researches in recent decades where from one or another aspect the problems of the quality of preschool education, (self-directed) development of teachers, a learning teacher community, a learning educational organization, but when the importance of teachers' learning in an organization is becoming more and more distinct, *it is relevant to reveal the aspects of the advantages of learning of preschool education teachers in their institution and its importance for high-quality activity of the institution in the context of the implementation of the education policy.*

Applying the concepts of the theories of a learning organization, a teacher learning community and experiential learning in the article, a preschool education institution is perceived and investigated as an organization implementing the strategy of teachers' learning in an organization, where child's high-quality education/learning and new culture of teachers' learning and quality become an aspiration of the teachers and the organization. It is considered that the quality of education is an integral dimension of the quality of the activity of the institution. *In the article it is attempted to answer the following problem questions: How do preschool education teachers learn in an organization? What are the advantages of such learning? What is the importance of the experiences of teachers' learning in an organization for the organization in the implementation of the aims of the education policy?* **The object of the research** – preschool education teachers' learning in an organization.

**The aim of the research** – *to reveal the importance of preschool education teachers' learning in an organization implementing the aims of the education policy.*

**The methodology and sample of the research.** While conducting the research the strategy of a qualitative research was applied, the purpose of which is to thoroughly learn about and describe a chosen object of knowing (Bitinas, 2006; Bitinas et al., 2008), i.e. the phenomenon of teachers' learning in their organization and its importance for the educational institution.

The methodology of qualitative research is the investigation of the reality of life not by measuring it (as in quantitative research), but by feeling this reality, understanding it (Creswell, 2009; Lichtman, 2006; Luobikienė, 2002; Ruškus et al., 2005; Tidikis, 2003). This is achieved by listening to the opinions of active participants of the phenomenon under investigation, to the meanings given to the phenomena and evaluations. Researchers do not impose prejudice but they try to find out how the participants of the research themselves perceive the reality under investigation, how they describe and interpret real facts, how they characterize reality. Abundant and diverse stories of the participants form one multi-dimensional and polysemantic image of the reality under investigation. In this case subjective experiences of practices become an objective image of the reality. By social quantitative research it is attempted to understand and reconstruct the existing phenomena. Moreover, qualitative research allows discovering

new unknown paradigms, stimulates the acknowledgement of the new dimensions of already existing paradigms (Lowder, 2009). The aspect of the development of the quality of the activity of an organization while developing the process of teachers' learning in the workplace is a relatively new field of scientific knowledge, that is why the strategy of qualitative research is the most suitable for the analysis of the chosen field. The choice of qualitative research was also conditioned by the fact that such a strategy is focused to a greater extent on the analysis of the process, i.e. the analysis of effectiveness (Ruškus et al., 2005).

The chosen way of the presentation of the data is qualitative content analysis. Research methods: analysis of literature and documents, synthesis, interpretation; generalization; focus interview of preschool education teachers (18 female teachers working in eight preschool educational institutions of towns and districts of the country participated in the discussions of the focus groups) and written interview for the managers of preschool educational institutions (the interview in writing was conducted in eleven preschool educational institutions of towns and districts). The research was conducted in two stages. Group discussion with preschool education teachers enabled to identify the advantages and the most effective ways of their learning in an organization. By the structured written interview of the managers of preschool educational institutions it has been attempted to reveal their attitude towards the importance of teachers' learning in an organization for qualitative changes in the activity of the institution in the context of the education policy.

Aiming at holistic approach, depth of analysis, reliability of information, insights on contradictions and incongruities three separate focus groups with the participants having individual and different or similar learning experience – preschool education teachers who work at different educational institutions – were organized. The participants of the teachers' focus group were selected applying "the sampling of a convenient situation and the *selection based on the principle of voluntary participation*" (Ramanauskaitė, 2002, p. 64). The teachers were approached personally presenting the problem of the research and those who got interested in this research were invited on a set time and place to come to a discussion.

The participants of the focus group were given the opportunity to express their experiences, opinions, interests, expectations and evaluations. The topics were previewed by the researcher in advance but the order of the questions and words was not rigid, it was freely changed during the conversation, additional questions were asked. The questions were presented orally. In the discussion of the focus group in a separate premise 5-7 persons were having a conversation, the obtained verbal information (teachers' thoughts) was recorded by dictaphone having obtained the consent of the participants in advance. After that the conversation was rewritten into a text document, the language was not corrected. The chair of the group directly interacted with the participants of the research, she was an active researcher and an equal participant of the process. Collecting the material during the group interview the researcher posed questions, aimed to specify whether she understood the ideas expressed by the participants of the research well, tried to provoke and encouraged the reflectivity of the participants of the research. An active interaction between a researcher and the participants of the research allowed increasing the validity of the data and later their reliability as well. The responses of the participants were coded from one to eighteen, i.e. F(1) – F(18).

In the research presented by a structured written interview of the managers of preschool educational institutions the *main criterion of the selection of participants was the experience in managing a preschool educational institution*, because it was aimed to collect information referring to the experience gained by the respondents while directing and managing an

institution. Each respondent had to have management experience of at least one year. Other criteria, for example, age, gender, area of management, etc., were considered as not having influence on the implementation of the aim of the research. Eleven women participated in a structured written interview. The managers of the institutions were contacted by phone, the aim of the research was presented and they were invited to participate in one of the stages of the research, the possibility to present questions was also discussed. All the managers preferred to get the questions of the interview by email. Three principals and eight vice-principals for education participated in the interview. In case of uncertainties the researcher communicated with the respondents by phone.

*In the research saturation was achieved when the responses to the questions for the respondents started to repeat themselves, i.e. having conducted eleven interviews.* The reliability of a qualitative research depends on the method of the research and on how it is described. To reveal the problem under investigation work experience in management and skills are very important. Eight managers out of all who participated in the research have the third management category, two have the second, and one has the first. Consequently, the managers of the institutions have enough experience in management work, which meets the principle of the reliability of the research. It is possible to make a precondition that the attitude expressed by the participants reflects an actual situation in the context of the problem analysed and helped to distinguish the essential aspects of the development of the process of learning in an organization. The respondents had a right to refuse and not to participate in the research, therefore, the consent could be treated as voluntary. The participants of the research agreed to express their attitude on the topic of the research conducted because the teachers of the institutions they were managing participated in focus groups. During the research the privacy of a respondent was respected, precise information on the character of the research conducted was given, anonymity was ensured. The researcher gave an oral commitment to all the participants of the research that information related to a particular institution or person would not be published. The responses of the participants of the interview were coded according to the order they were received from one to eleven, i.e. V(1) – V(11).

#### **The essence of teachers' learning in an organization, its importance for the development of the quality of the activity**

Because of rapid changes in the structures of occupation and qualification learning in an organization is becoming more and more important striving for high qualification of employees and constant development of competences. Evans, Hodkinson, & Unwin, (2002), Quinn, (2004) and other authors notice that in every situation of work there is an opportunity to learn. According to Dohmen (1998), learning on the basis of everyday experience makes up 70 per cent of learning that takes place in human life. While learning in real life environment the questions related to professional activity are solved, the problems caused by social relations are experienced, the conditions are created to better understand value attitudes characteristic to a certain profession, the norms of activity of a particular institution, the subtleties of culture and microclimate that exist in it. These are the factors that condition the advantage of learning in the workplace (Kondratavičienė & Sajienė, 2007).

Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004 a, 2004 b), who investigated the processes of teachers' learning in an organization and their expression have revealed that usually it is very complicated to identify the types of such learning; the contents of learning depends on a teacher's personal features and the learning culture predominant in the organization. Therefore a person's learning

culture is perceived as a component of the culture of a group or organization, it influences the learning culture of the society, and the learning culture of the society, organization or group, to which a person belongs influences his/her individual learning culture. The implementation of learning on the levels of persons, groups and organizations takes place in two directions: from a person to an organization and vice versa.

According to Bakanauskienė (2008), purposeful learning of the staff of an organization, taking into account not only the aims of the organization but also of the employee himself/herself, when the employee himself/herself is an active subject of learning, increases employees' motivation for constant learning. Teachers' learning is a natural cycle of everyday work: they gain new knowledge, try to implement it in practice and during this practical process they gain new knowledge again. Teachers learn while collaborating, sharing experience with each other. This cycle is influenced by: structural factors that can stimulate or suppress collaboration; cultural factors – expectations and values of the community; style of leadership that influences both structural and cultural factors of an educational institution (Monkevičius & Čiužas, 2015). Constant development of competences learning in an organization actually is the development of pedagogical consciousness that is based on gaining knowledge and abilities and self-evaluating them.

Looking for effective and economical strategies of its development while implementing the aims of the education policy preschool educational institutions can use their inner potential – learning in an organization. It is focused not only on the needs for children's high-quality education but also on the needs for a qualitative change of an organization reflecting the priorities of the education policy.

### The results of the research

Having analysed the results of the research of focus groups on the advantages of learning in an organization and the most effective ways of learning it has become clear that *preschool education teachers consider its purposefulness as the essential advantage of learning in an organization*. It means that namely this knowledge is searched which is lacked by a teacher “here and now” and which can be used now and in the nearest future. Teachers have a particular aspiration to improve the practice of education posing problems and looking for solutions together. Moreover, the same information is at the same time received by the whole community. It means that *time is more effectively used* – there is no need to additionally inform other members of the community. *Information that is purposefully related to a practical need is meaningful, it makes employees' communication more effective, closer interrelations between teachers develop*. Not accidentally relations, relationships, interaction are emphasized in the concept of learning organizations. In order to work better it is necessary to change, improve one's actions and behaviour. This change should take place in the environment where we perform these actions i.e. at our work, in our organization. It means that doing *better actions* we should harmonize them with the actions and behaviour of other people that are near us. In this way we are “growing together”. *Learning environment* that is “one's own” is considered by the teachers as another essential advantage of learning in the workplace. Suitable time and environment stimulate teachers to communicate freely, to get rid of the fear of mistakes and criticizing. Teachers learning in the workplace step by step create a supporting, evaluating, reacting, accepting environment that stimulates the self-confidence of the members of the community, their creative, intellectual efforts, responsible behaviour, trust, respect, acknowledgement for achievements. The managers of an educational institution

should support such learning and ensure suitable conditions for its implementation. Teachers' learning with the help of the managers supports the purposeful systems of their communication stimulating positive changes in the communication culture and climate of the organization. It is emphasized by many researchers of the issues of a learning community, a learning organization (Sigur & Sardottir, 2010; Senge 1990; etc.). The informants who participated in the research named the *opportunity to learn for free* as an important advantage of learning in the workplace. Due to the fact that financial resources for educational organizations is a relevant problem, the conclusion could be made that learning of preschool education teachers in the workplace from the time and financial aspects is a rational strategy of (self-directed) development.

Striving to find out *what ways of learning in an organization are considered by preschool education teachers as the most effective ones*, the obtained results have revealed that the *most effective* ways of learning are "Observation" and "Practical educational activity". The category "Observation" is particularized by two subcategories: "Observation of colleagues" and "Observation of learners", the content of which confirms their significance. The subcategory "Observation of learners" is expressed slightly more strongly. That shows that for preschool education teachers the observation of learners, which "here and now" gives them information about the suitability of educational activity for children, is especially important. While observing the learners of the group teachers the most quickly get the feedback, i.e. learn about children's reactions towards the activities they are offered, find out whether they managed or not to meet children's needs and interests. It enables them to correct their activity. Teachers admit that learning takes place while observing learners not only in the activities suggested by the teacher but also communicating with them or observing children's spontaneous unplanned activity, which gives certain ideas. It has been mentioned that nowadays children themselves share their ideas about the activity which would be more acceptable to them and how it should be organized, and what they want. The content of the subcategory "Observation of colleagues" has revealed that for learning of preschool education teachers the opportunity to observe their colleagues' work in the workplace, participate in open activities they suggest is important. There are cases that in the institution strategic decisions are taken that are related to the commitment to share best pedagogical practices inside the institution or to involve other members of the community of the institution (for example, parents) into this process. The content analysis of the category "Practical educational activity" allows stating that for teachers' learning and professional development experiential learning is very important when a teacher is not afraid to make mistakes and when he/she identifies the mistake as an opportunity to develop. In this context it becomes clear that it is especially important to test the possessed theoretical knowledge in practice, and referring to the results of this activity, depending on the circumstances to change and remodel other educational activities. Preschool education teachers attribute "Reflection" to the most effective ways of learning as well, when inside the institution they discuss educational activities among themselves. The aforementioned discussions usually take place after the observation of open activities (usually group level) or during methodical days taking place in the institution (usually institutional level, when all the teachers of the institution participate). Preschool education teachers also consider the participation in "Scientific practical events" ("Conferences", "Seminars") organized by the institution as one of the most effective ways of learning in the organization. The teachers admit that the organization of the conference at the institution stimulates them to "gear up" and demonstrate the ability to relate practical and research skills. The organization of seminars in a preschool educational institution is related to the initiative of a manager. The participants of



the research admit that in this case the main aim of the manager is the improvement of teachers' qualification. The teachers emphasize that some events are really interesting and useful for all the staff members. Preschool education teachers name the participation in "Project activity" (not only to participate, but also create and organize project activities themselves) and "Self-directed education" (reading respective professional literature) as effective ways of learning.

The analysis of the research data allows stating that preschool education teachers in their institutions learn in different ways, however, their effectiveness is not equal. The congruence of the ways of learning, their appropriate organization is an important condition in order to ensure the effectiveness of learning of preschool education teachers, because every way gives experiences of different types. Their sum total and methodical validity of implementation enables to develop teachers' competences in a versatile way and effectively, to meet the demands of the quality of children's education and the development of various components of an organization as a system in a more complex way. The quality of education as an integral category comprises a sum total of aspects, for the implementation of which various competences of preschool education teachers are obligatory.

**The data of the structured interview of the managers of preschool educational institutions have revealed** *the relations of teachers' learning in an organization to the implementation of the strategic aims of the education policy, the value of such learning for systemic changes of an educational institution, the meaning of the formalization of experiential learning.*

The obtained array of the data was analysed looking for semantically close responses and key words. The managers' responses were grouped according to separate notional units, i.e. categorized. In total 11 categories and 7 subcategories have been distinguished (see Table 1).

**Table 1.** The expression of the importance of teachers' learning in an organization (managers' attitude) (N=11)

| Category  | Subcategory                  | Numbers |
|---|------------------------------|---------|
| Sense of community (7)                                    | With partners                | 1       |
|   | With parents                 | 1       |
|   | With colleagues              | 5       |
| Ensuring the quality                                      |                              | 7       |
| Ensuring the status of a constantly learning organization |                              | 2       |
| Change in the process of education (7)                    | Using innovative means       | 1       |
|   | Originality of events        | 1       |
|   | Using ICT                    | 1       |
|   | Variety of forms and methods | 4       |
| Promotion of the image of the institution                 |                              | 5       |
| Gaining confidence of parents                             |                              | 5       |
| Increasing of teachers' self-confidence                   |                              | 2       |
| Gaining new knowledge                                     |                              | 3       |
| Improving material facilities                             |                              | 1       |
| Ensuring the number of children                           |                              | 1       |
| Increasing of the competence of the staff                 |                              | 3       |

Three categories have the biggest weight: “*Ensuring the quality*”, “*Sense of community (collaboration with colleagues, parents and partners)*” and “*Change in the content of education*”. The latter category is particularized by four subcategories: *variety of forms and methods, using innovative means, ICT, originality of events*. It evidently shows that learning of preschool education teachers in the workplace is closely related to strategic aims of these institutions, the implementation of which corresponds to the priorities of the education policy focused on the systemic development of the implementation of the purpose of this sector of education.

In the opinion of the managers of preschool educational institutions, while learning in an organization the competence and professionalism of teachers increase, which firstly improves the quality of education itself (“*The quality of education is improving*” V(11)). Some of the managers stated that “*The competence of pedagogical staff makes up 90 per cent of the indicators of the quality of the whole institution <...>*” V(5). It shows that teachers’ professionalism undoubtedly influenced by constant learning in an organization is important for qualitative changes in various fields of the whole institution and determines their results.

When teachers’ professionalism, for which constant learning is important, is increasing, the managers of preschool educational institutions relate the “*Change in the process of education*” to the expanding variety of the methods, forms and ways of the implementation of the content of education, their effectiveness, the change in educational environments (*education takes place in libraries, museums, nature, etc.*), the enrichment and diversification of the content of education itself. The managers note that a learning teacher applying modern, more original educational aids, improving the opportunities of children’s education creates added value for the educational institution (“*Enormous added value, because the institution becomes attractive for clients*” <...> V(6)). *It ensures parents’ bigger trust in an educational institution, improves its image in the society, at the same time guarantees the stability or even growth of the number of the users of the services.*

Teachers’ learning in the workplace, in the managers’ opinion, is also important for the *sense of community* (collaboration with colleagues, parents and social partners is becoming stronger), *the quality of communication and collaboration style is changing*. It is especially important for the quality of the functioning of the organization as an open social system. As it has been already mentioned, relations, relationships, interaction are the features of a learning organization. In the managers’ opinion, teachers’ learning in an organization is important for the *consolidation of the status of a learning organization*. The development of a learning educational organization is one of the aims of the education policy. It confirms the relations of the strategies of educational institutions with the priorities of national education. On the other hand, the environment of an organization that is friendly for collaboration and development, its ethical and psychological climate alongside with the growing professionalism of a teacher who constantly learns, *increase his/her self-confidence*, which is important not only for the *employee’s motivation, his/her professional self-actualization, professional satisfaction*, but also for the increasing of the *loyalty for his/her organization*. In the context of the value transformations of today these are characteristics of an employee that are very important for an organization. The aforementioned dimensions are closely interrelated, their expression is important not only inside the organization but also for its external environment. It is confirmed by the statements reflecting the contents of the categories generalizing the managers’ attitudes “*Promotion of the image of the institution*” and “*Gaining confidence of learners’ parents*”. The external evaluation (by the community of the city or town) of their institution is very important

for managers, therefore, in their opinion, the competence of the pedagogical staff influences the quality of education, meanwhile the quality of the activity of the institution forms the opinion about the institution: “*the competence of the pedagogical staff forms a positive attitude of the society towards the institution; <...>*” V(7), “*<...> the institution is directly or indirectly promoted, positive reviews “attract” more children;<...>*” V(10), “*learners’ parents trust in a competent teachers’ team, therefore, they bring their child*”; <...>V(7) “*<...> parents’ confidence in teachers helps to improve the material facilities of the institution*” V(11). The creation of a positive image of an institution is influenced by many factors. However, the essential ones of them are the quality of children’s education, their achievements, teachers’ professionalism, microclimate of an educational institution, material facilities of education/ learning, etc. Parents as users of the services of preschool education today set high requirements for child’s education and care in a preschool institution. Reflecting parents’ and children’s needs and expectations preschool education institutions have to maximally use their inner resources and the opportunities from the outside implementing the purpose delegated for them by the state.

The research has revealed that some of the managers of preschool educational institutions see lower value of teachers’ learning in an organization as a way of producing or gaining new knowledge because the content of the categories “*Gaining new knowledge*” and “*Increasing of the competence of the staff*” is more weakly expressed than in other categories, which slightly discords with the concept and functions of learning as the main means of (self-directed) development. However, in the context of the research these categories are also significant. The managers state that while learning in an organization the competence of teachers is increasing, the quality of education is improving (“*The quality of education is improving. Teachers’ professionalism. <...>*” V(11); “*Only learning teachers collaborating with each other can improve competences, take up innovations, be able to apply and implement innovations in their work, change and develop, which has a big importance for an institution that is open for change.*” V(7); “*The importance of teachers’ learning for the institution is exclusively positive because new knowledge stimulates an employee to use it in the process of education, thus learners gain new knowledge, try to apply it in practice*” V(6)).

Every organization taking into account its purpose, environmental conditions and internal factors creates a specific strategy for employees’ training, therefore, during the research it was aimed to find out the managers’ opinion on how the process of teachers’ learning should be implemented in a preschool educational institution. *In the opinion of all the managers who participated in the survey, the process of teachers’ learning in the workplace should be purposefully organized, it is necessary to foresee the strategy of its implementation focusing on the priorities and aims set by the institution.* The arguments reflecting the attitude of the managers of preschool educational institutions have been presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** The attitude of the managers of preschool educational institutions towards the formalization of the implementation of learning in an organization (N=11)

| Category  | Subcategory  | Numbers | <b>EXAMPLES OF STATEMENTS</b><br><i>Only one example of the statements that reflect the category the best has been presented for each category. Other statements are discussed in the text of the data interpretation.</i>   |
|---|--|---------|--|
| <b>Purposefully organized according to a certain strategy or system</b> | To reflect the priority directions and aims of the institution | 11      | “A teacher while learning in an institution should plan, develop his/her competence in the field depending on the direction that is followed, <b>what aims, objectives, priorities are set by the institution</b> ” V(7).  |
|   | To purposefully use resources                                  | 1       | “While planning a purposeful activity we strive for consistency, reflect our priorities, <b>more purposefully use resources allocated for qualification</b> . We prepare the outline of the improvement of qualification, find out about the demand for the development of teachers’ qualification” V(3).  |
|   | To identify the demand for teachers’ learning                  | 4       | “The institution had set the priorities and strategies that had been created by the whole community, it means we should go in the same direction. The manager coordinates the necessity for <b>teachers’ learning discussing it with teachers individually or in groups</b> . <...>” V(8).   |
|   | To make learning outlines                                      | 4       | “While planning a purposeful activity we strive for consistency, reflect our priorities, more purposefully use resources allocated for qualification. We <b>prepare the outline of the improvement</b> of qualification, find out about the demand for the development of teachers’ qualification” V(3).   |
|   | Convenience  | 1       | “Every institution knowing its weaknesses plan qualification events, investigates their demand in the institution. <b>It is convenient, there is no need to go to another institution, you can continue your work with children (if you work, for example, all day long)</b> . Other teachers want to go outside the institution motivating that they relax, get away from monotony. Qualification events could be planned taking demand and priorities into account” V(10). |

An organization as a system implements the aims that reflect its purpose. To realize them the qualifications and competences corresponding to the functions performed by the employees are necessary. Striving for the quality of the activity of an organization, an effective process of (self-directed) development of teachers’ qualification it is obligatory to identify the needs for competences necessary for the development of the quality of an organization and the realization of employees’ activity. Their harmony enables to purposefully develop the system of (self-directed) development of the staff purposefully combining various forms and ways of learning. The processes are made purposeful and systemic by their planning, coordination of their implementation, evaluation. All the managers of preschool educational institutions who participated in the survey emphasize that teachers’ learning in the workplace at first should meet the priorities and aims set by the institution ( “While planning a purposeful activity we

*strive for consistency, reflect our priorities <...>*” V(3)). It has been mentioned that a small number of teachers could learn by the method of independent learning, however, the majority of them are still unable to respect their colleagues’ experience and often criticize them not perceiving the essence of informal independent learning (“*Only organized, and when people learn how not to criticize anymore, it will be possible to think about informal independent learning. Although it is not possible to say that there is no informal independent learning, it will not be true, only teachers rarely decode it and do not treat it as important*” V(5)). Such managers’ attitudes reveal the problems of the ensuring of the harmony of the ways of teachers’ learning in an organization, their implementation related to internal factors of the organization, the elimination of which at first is to be related to management processes. The congruence between the aims and needs for (self-directed) development of the institution and employees should become the aspiration of preschool educational institutions. The analysis of the data of the survey has revealed that it is important that teachers perceived the essence of learning (“*<...> P. S. The process of teachers’ learning to a great extent depends on their inner motivation, if it is not present any learning process can become a formality*” V(4)). For the managers it is relevant to identify teachers’ personal needs for learning and ensure their congruence with the priorities and aims of the educational institution (“*The institution had set the priorities and strategies that had been created by the whole community, it means we should go in the same direction. The manager coordinates the necessity for teachers’ learning discussing it with teachers individually or in groups <...>*” V(8)), creating the outlines of the improvement of teachers’ professional qualification (“*Individual outlines of professional development are foreseen, referring to the individual need and recommendations by supervising persons. The outline should be not only made congruent with individual demands but also with the demands of the institution. <...>*” V(4)). It is not less important to know one’s employees’ learning styles and foresee effective forms and ways of learning in a complex way creating suitable opportunities of their implementation. Such activity of managers is important because it increases teachers’ motivation for constant learning and striving for higher quality of the activity of the organization. The managers apart from the aforementioned advantages of teachers’ learning in an organization emphasize the rationality of this way of learning because not only *the time is saved, there is no need to go out of the workplace leaving children under other employees’ supervision for a long time, it is possible to purposefully reallocate the resources meant for teachers’ qualification to other fields of the development of the educational institution.* In their opinion, it would be expedient to formalize teachers’ learning in an organization at the level of the state creating the mechanism of the regulation of this form of the improvement of qualification.

To make learning in the workplace purposeful and effective, corresponding to the needs of the institution and the aims of the education policy it is necessary to plan and coordinate this process, constantly perform self-assessment and motivate employees. The aspiration of the community to implement the aims of the organization by constant learning, developing their competences influences the quality and results of the activity of the educational institution.

Implementing the system of preschool education teachers’ learning in an organization at the same time the culture of learning in an organization is developed. Therefore, it is necessary to estimate the whole complex of factors influencing this multi-dimensional phenomenon and improve its management.

### Conclusions

Preschool education teachers' learning in an organization is an effective, economical strategy of the implementation of the aims of the education policy, acceptable for the staff and managers. It is influenced by many internal factors of the organization and at the same time is important for complex qualitative change of the organization.

The quality of education as an integral category comprises a sum total of aspects, for the implementation of which various competences of preschool education teachers are necessary. Teachers' professional development is an essential condition ensuring high-quality education/ learning of children.

Teachers' learning in the workplace can be effective if it becomes an object of strategic management of the organization, when because of management processes the preconditions for effective functioning of learning in an organization as a system are created. High requirements for high-quality implementation of the purpose of preschool education actualize the demand to combine various types and ways of learning in an organization in order to give a target orientation to this process, to ensure the effectiveness of preschool education teachers' learning developing their competences in a versatile way, meeting the demands of the quality of children's education and the development of various components of an organization as a system in a more complex way.

The results of the research confirm that the teachers and managers of preschool education institutions tend to have positive attitudes towards learning in an organization. Identifying its advantages (purposefulness, meaningfulness, effective use of time, one's own learning environment, financial rationality) the teachers consider the following ways of learning in an organization as the most effective: observing learners and colleagues, practical educational activity (experiential learning), reflection of activity. The results of the research allow stating that preschool education teachers in their institutions learn in different ways, however, their effectiveness is not equal.

The managers of preschool education institutions mostly relate the importance of teachers' learning in an organization to the ensuring of the quality of education and organizational activity, close interaction between community members, change in the contents of education, they relate it less to the consolidation of the status of a learning organization, increasing of teacher's self-esteem, improvement of the image of the institution, gaining the confidence of the learners' parents, as a consequence of that the number of the users of services is stable or even increasing. Most of the managers who participated in the survey emphasize that while learning in an organization teachers' professionalism is increasing, the quality of education is improving.

The managers of institutions are interested in stimulating teachers' learning in an organization and strive to make learning in the workplace purposeful, organized, corresponding to the priority fields of the organization and the aims of education. For this purpose it is necessary to foresee the strategy of the implementation of teachers' learning in an organization focusing on the priorities and aims set by the institution. The managers recommend formalizing teachers' learning in an organization at the level of the state creating the mechanism of the regulation of this form of the improvement of qualification.

### Discussion

The article discusses the problem of preschool education teachers' learning in an organization in the context of the implementation of the education policy. It is meaningful

from the educational and management aspect. Interdisciplinary approach towards the object of the research enabled to reveal the ways of learning in an organization, its advantages and importance for qualitative changes in the organization that are effective if they become the object of strategic management. Namely strategic management enables to ensure the implementation of the priorities of the education policy in an educational organization. The improvement of the quality of education, the development of human resources as closely interrelated priorities of the education policy are the strategic aims of a preschool educational institution while implementing its purpose. The commitment of the managers of the institution and the whole community to strive for quality is the most important precondition and position of the development of education and at the same time of the institution as a system, its various components and fields of activity, as well as the effective management of changes. Human resources are the essential factor conditioning quality, inner potential of the organization, the development of which, employing learning in an organization because of its importance and advantages, actualizes the need for modelling the strategies of its implementation. Because of management processes teachers' learning in an organization enables to effectively use its potential opportunities. In order to make preschool education teachers' learning in an organization function as an effective system of the development of their competences and at the same time of the activity of the organization, it is expedient in prospect to expand the investigation searching for the answers to the questions: what factors have positive and negative influence on learning in an organization, what the essential needs of teachers and organization are, what methodical help is necessary for managers and teachers applying particular ways of learning in an organization to make them effective, what management competences are lacked developing closer collaboration of the staff, changing the culture of learning, how to develop the system of teachers' motivation for learning, how to create learning system ensuring the congruence of the demands of the staff's personal (self-directed) development and the development of the organization, what ways should be used to develop the dissemination of professional experience, create positive environment for learning, etc. These are open questions that require additional information, its structuration and conceptualization.

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## LEARNING IN AN ORGANIZATION AS A STRATEGY OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION POLICY IN PRESCHOOL EDUCATION INSTITUTION

### Summary

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The quality of education/training and the development of human resources are closely interrelated priorities of the education policy, the implementation of which plays a predominant role in the structure of the strategic management of educational institutions. Teachers' professional development is an essential condition ensuring children's high-quality education/learning. In order to ensure constant development of the teachers of preschool education institutions, the managers of these institutions get the responsibility to look for innovative, effective, economic strategies of teachers' learning in the organization. Applying the concepts of the theories of a learning organization, a teacher learning community and experiential learning in the article, a preschool education institution is perceived and investigated as an organization implementing the strategy of teachers' learning in an organization, where child's high-quality education/

learning and new culture of teachers' learning and quality become an aspiration of the teachers and the organization. It is considered that the quality of education is an integral dimension of the quality of the activity of the institution. **The object of the research** – preschool education teachers' learning in an organization. **The aim of the research** – to substantiate the importance of preschool education teachers' learning in an organization implementing the aims of the education policy.

The results of the research confirm that learning of preschool education teachers in the workplace is closely related to strategic aims of these institutions, the implementation of which corresponds to the priorities of the education policy focused on the systemic development of the implementation of this sector of education. The teachers and managers of preschool education institutions tend to have positive attitudes towards learning in an organization. Identifying its advantages (purposefulness, meaningfulness, effective use of time, one's own learning environment, financial aspect) the teachers consider the following ways of learning in an organization as the most effective: observing learners and colleagues, practical educational activity (experiential learning), reflection of activity. The managers of preschool education institutions mostly relate the importance of teachers' learning in an organization to the ensuring of the quality of education and organizational activity, close interaction between community members, change in the contents of education, they relate it less to the consolidation of the status of a learning organization, increasing of teacher's self-esteem, formation of the image of the institution, gaining the confidence of the learners' parents. The managers of institutions are interested in stimulating teachers' learning in an organization and strive to make learning in the workplace purposeful, organized, corresponding to the priority fields of the organization. For this purpose it is necessary to foresee the strategy of the implementation of teachers' learning in an organization. The managers recommend formalizing teachers' learning in an organization at the level of the state creating the mechanism of the regulation of this form of the improvement of qualification.