

# EFFECTIVE LEARNING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

Lena Damovska

*Ss. Cyril and Methodius University Skopje, Faculty of Philosophy,*

*Department of Pedagogy, Republic of Macedonia*

*lenad@fzf.ukim.edu.mk*

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## Abstract

This work covers the issue of achieving quality in learning, and the development of children from an early age. Effective learning refers to creating preconditions necessary for achieving quality in the realization of the aims, i.e. the planned content that is to be realized with the children from an early age.

Among other points, this work stresses the current European principles for achieving quality and well-being of the children, in addition to how possible the assumptions for creating the new policies for early childhood development in R. Macedonia are.

**Keywords:** *effective learning, holistic development, early age, preschool children.*

These past few years there has been an emphasized need for raising the quality of the education, i.e. the notion of **an education based on standards, or an education based on final results**, has taken over:

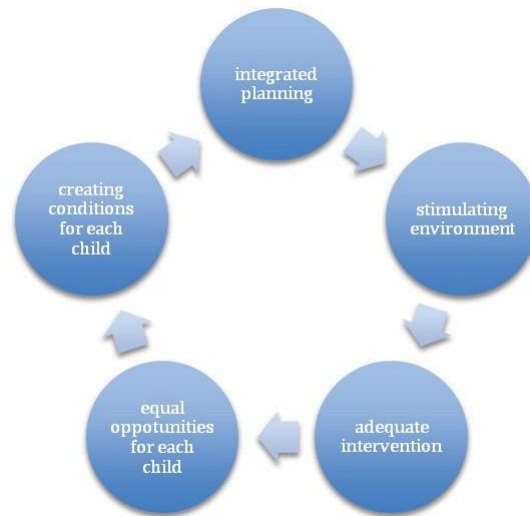
## What does that actually mean?

The people who are directly involved in the realization of the educational process with children (especially in a preschool and early school age) frequently ask themselves questions regarding: ***What are their expectations from the children? What do the children know and what can they do at a specific age? What do they want to achieve and how do they do that? What are their aims?***

The distinction between *learning* and *achieving* is recognized as the main force for improving and achieving a quality of education. According to some authors (French, M.) only an exceptional education is concerned with learning: the usual kind, which is dominant, is in fact directed towards achieving. For young minds, these two points are almost total opposites. Learning is dedicated to experience, while achieving is dedicated to control. Therefore, it is necessary to make a distinction between learning and achieving; or as Bloom states in his unsurpassed work, "Taxonomy of Educational Objectives", the aims are explicit formulations of the ways in which the children are expected to change in the educational process.

Creating conditions for effective learning at an early age is directly conditioned, above all, by the way in which the contents of all of the program areas are planned and realized, and at the same time all of the developmental domains. Integrated planning of the content, as a contemporary didactic-methodic concept (see Graph below), represents an adequate intervention of the educator, in accordance with the individual developmental characteristics and needs of the children, thus creating a stimulating

learning and developmental environment, creating equal opportunities for each child in the group, planning activities for different levels, and finding a middle ground for the individual opportunities of each child.



Therefore, this didactic-methodic concept always demonstrates the need for greater expectations from the children:

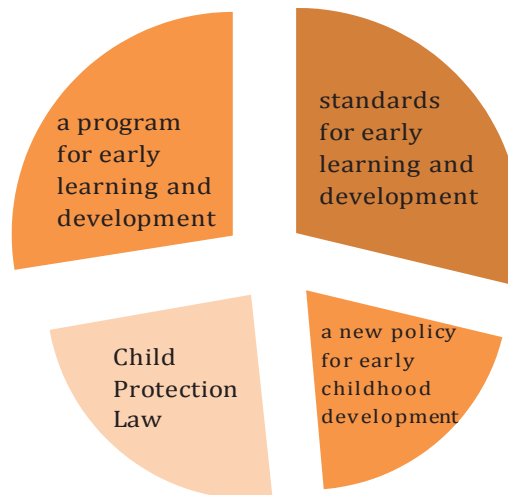
#### ***What are the leading European principles for Early Childhood Development by 2030?***

- *The children should be treated as competent partners in the educational process;*
- *Achieving the well-being of the children should be understood as a process, and not as a final result of a given program;*
- *The children's education should allow for strengthening of the individual capacity of each and every child, without exception;*
- *The children's health should be understood in the broadest meaning possible, i.e. through the promotion of the holistic approach;*
- *Improving the quality of the parent-child relation.*

The early childhood development in R. Macedonia, directly or indirectly, more or less, touches upon the five principles of learning and achieving the well-being of the children. The economic situation in the country and the data demonstrate a decrease in the quality of life, the quality of the citizens' standard, and by that, the well-being of the children, understood in the broadest sense of the word. Nevertheless, the promotion of the document for the standards for early learning and development (UNICEF, 2009), as well as the promotion of the new Policy for

Early Childhood Development, has brought to the focus the idea that EVERY CHILD CAN DO. However, it is another issue as to how much they can do!

Furthermore, a new Child Protection Law (2013) has been brought, and a new program for work in kindergartens has been prepared (or the Program for Early Learning and Development, 2014, which is based on the standards for early learning and development and follows the holistic approach in the development of children).



In recent years there have been created conditions for disloyal competition, with the possibility for the first time to open private kindergartens, and to increase the competitiveness in this branch. On a national level, formally there exist conditions for a qualitative step forward in this field, but the implementation of the new policies in the early development and learning is totally a different thing. The existing capacities in the country are quite limited, so this starting position represents an impediment for the implementation of a large part of the points that are being promoted with the new policy. Disrespect towards the standards regarding the number of children in a group (over 30 children in one group) is the realistic state that R. Macedonia is in.

***What are the main aims of the policy of early childhood development in R. Macedonia?***

- Improving the quality of the services;
- Promotion of the holistic approach in preschool education;
- Promotion of international documents (the Convention for Children's Rights, the new global tendencies for early childhood development);
- Promotion of kindergartens as resource centers for education of parents;
- Active inclusion of the parents in the realization of the activities with children;
- Increasing the coverage of children in their early age on a national level, especially in rural environments.

All of these activities are undertaken with the aim of national promotion of the significance of early childhood development and raising awareness of the importance of the first few years in the development of each child, without any exception. At the same time, certain documents are taken into consideration, such as: Eurochild, Learning for Well-Being, L4WB Charter for Children 2030, Green Paper on Teacher Education in EU, High Quality Teacher Education 2000, the Unesco Strategy on Teachers 2012-2015 (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/>), Education and Care in Early Childhood 2009 (European Commission for Education).

Investments in early childhood development produce effectiveness in:

- The social adaptation of the children;
- Gaining grounds for further learning and development;
- Guaranteeing slimmer chances for leaving their further schooling;
- Equaling the differences between children.

In the following period, on a national level there are expected to be corrections in the weaknesses in the initial education of the educators and teachers, the activities are to be directed towards changes in the initial education, in addition to increasing the compatibility of EU qualifications for teachers, coordinated policies, and quality services. In the end, there is also expected to be avoidance of the situation of proving the social value and meaning of the profession of an educator, and teacher.

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