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Democratisation of early childhood education in the attitudes of Slovene and Finnish teachers

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ABSTRACT: The article presents the findings of the comparative survey on attitudes (beliefs, preferences) of 222 Slovenian and 230 Finnish early childhood teachers (Turnšek 2005). They have completed the questionnaire on aspect of democratisation of early childhood education, which consisted of attitude (Likart) scales and questions of ranking the preferences. The descriptive statistics were made, cluster analysis, analysis of variance (Chi-square test, t-test) and two-way Anova/Manova analysis. One half of the Slovenian teachers are pro-democratic oriented; the percentage of teachers whose attitudes are extremely pro-democratic is higher (17.9%) than of those with extremely counter-democratic attitudes (9.3%). Their beliefs are in moderate correlation with the level of education, but not with working experience. The variable COUNTRY has prevalent impact on the set of democratic beliefs and attitudes. The differences between Slovenian and Finnish teachers are significant on most variables; the largest concern the attitudes towards children of immigrants.

RÉSUMÉ: L'article présente les résultats d'une étude comparative portant sur les attitudes (convictions, préférences) d'éducatrices et d'éducateurs de jeunes enfants: 222 Slovènes et 230 Finlandais (Turnšek 2005). Ceux-ci ont rempli un questionnaire sur la démocratisation de l'éducation des jeunes enfants, comprenant des échelles d'attitude (Likert) et des questions visant à hiérarchiser les préférences. Des statistiques descriptives ont été faites, ainsi qu'une analyse de panel, une analyse de variances et une analyse Anova/Manova. La moitié des éducateurs slovènes ont une orientation pro-démocratique ; et le pourcentage des éducateurs dont l'attitude est extrêmement pro-démocratique est plus grand (17,9%) que celui de ceux dont l'attitude est extrêmement anti-démocratique (9,3%). Leurs convictions présentent une corrélation modérée avec leur niveau de formation, mais pas avec leur expérience professionnelle. La variable PAYS a un impact prédominant sur l'ensemble des attitudes et convictions démocratiques. Les différences entre éducateurs slovènes et finlandais sont significatives pour la plupart des variables, les plus importantes différences concernant les attitudes vis-à-vis des enfants d'immigrés.

ZUSAMMENFASSUNG: Der Artikel stellt die Ergebnisse der vergleichenden Umfrage von Einstellungen (Überzeugungen, Vorlieben) von 222 slowenischen und 230 finnischen FrühpädagogInnen vor (Turnšek 2005). Diese füllten einen Fragebogen über den Demokratisierungsaspekt von Frühpädagogik aus, der aus Einstellungsskalen (Likart) und Ranglisten zu Vorlieben bestand. Erstellt wurden beschreibende Statistiken, Clusteranalysen, Unterschiedsanalysen (Chi-Quadrat-Test, t-Test) und ANOVA/MANOVA-Varianzanalysen. Die Hälfte der slowenischen Lehrkräfte sind pro-demokratisch eingestellt; der Prozentsatz von

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Lehrkräften mit einer stark pro-demokratischen Einstellung ist höher (17,9%) als jener von Lehrkräften mit einer stark contra-demokratischen Einstellung (9,3%). Ihre Überzeugungen stehen in moderater Korrelation mit dem Bildungsniveau, nicht aber mit der Berufserfahrung. Die Variable LAND hat einen starken Einfluss auf eine Reihe von demokratischen Überzeugungen und Einstellungen. Unterschiede zwischen slowenischen und finnischen Lehrkräften sind sich bei den meisten Variablen signifikant; der größte Unterschied betrifft die Einstellung zu Kindern von Einwanderern.

RESUMEN: El artículo presenta los descubrimientos de la investigación comparativa sobre las actitudes (creencias, preferencias) de 222 profesores eslovenos de educación preescolar y 230 finlandeses (Turnšek 2005). Han completado el cuestionario sobre el aspecto de la democratización de la educación preescolar, que consistía en escalas de actitudes (Likart) y preguntas para elaborar un ranking de preferencias. Se realizaron las estadísticas descriptivas, análisis de grupo, análisis de la varianza (prueba de ji-cuadrado, prueba t) y análisis de dos vías Anova/Manova. La orientación de la mitad de los profesores eslovenos es hacia la pro-democracia; el porcentaje de profesores cuyas actitudes son extremadamente pro-democráticas es más alto (17,9%) que el de aquellos con actitudes extremadamente anti-democráticas (9,3%). Sus creencias están en una moderada correlación con el nivel de educación, pero no con la experiencia laboral. La variable PAÍS tiene un impacto frecuente en el conjunto de creencias y actitudes democráticas. Las diferencias entre los profesores eslovenos y finlandeses son importantes en la mayoría de las variables; las mayores se refieren a las actitudes hacia los hijos de los inmigrantes.

Keywords: early childhood teachers; beliefs and attitudes; Slovenia; Finland; national curricula; democratisation; quality; hidden curricula; equal opportunities; immigrant children's habits and customs; immigrant children's mother tongue

1. Plurality, equity and participation – the main principles of democratic early childhood education

The developments in early childhood systems in the past 20 years indicate a general direction towards the democratisation of policies and practices. Many countries still prioritise democratisation on a macro level – directed towards better accessibility and affordability of institutions and programmes. The global policies have been developed to ensure equitable access for vulnerable children or children with special and additional needs (Bennett 2006, 2007; OECD 2001, 2006). Shifts in relations among subsystems are appearing; new forms of relations between preschools and their neighbourhoods along with experts supporting family welfare appear as a result of the need for a holistic approach – an approach aimed at overcoming the restricted functions of preschools limited merely to 'dealing with children'. At the same time, there arises a need to broaden professional competencies of teachers, which would comply with the – extended – role of preschools (kindergartens) (Oberhuemer 2000). Theoretical and value foundations of contemporary curricula (OECD 2004) are based on concepts such as equal opportunities, non-discrimination and gender equality, which are becoming important aspects. On a micro level, democratisation has implications for human relations. Democratic pedagogies are re-conceptualising the role of children in the learning process; they are emphasising the importance of children's active involvement in the learning process (Leavers 1994) by enabling them to make their own learning choices (Hohmann and Weikart 2002) and create their own meanings of knowledge (Rinaldi 2005; May and Carr 1996). The child's well-being, their sense of belonging and quality (peer) interactions are seen as a prerequisite for learning and a

value in itself. A growing recognition is that children are learning about democracy through reciprocal relationships with adults who encourage their participation (Korpi 2000).

According to current trends, the following three key principles have become 'visible': *the principle of plurality*, *the principle of equity*, and *the principle of participation*; in the democratic early childhood system, all the principles are applied as mutually supportive forces. The *plurality* concept is closely related to the notion of *freedom of choice*; it implies the existence of alternatives, co-existence of differences, variety of choices available to people to make decisions. Plurality as a value is embedded in the national policies and legislation – aimed at stimulating the diversity of the programmes responsive to various needs of the families – within public provision or for-profit provision. Quasi-privatisation in forms of parents' cooperatives also represents the plurality of providers and founders from different social sectors (public, private, informal, voluntary). At the level of individual preschool or group of children the plurality is enforced by the teachers' practices or by their ways of relating to the others.

The *principle of equity* inscribes values, such as enabling equal opportunities for all children, respecting human rights, overcoming discrimination, advocating for inclusive and intercultural paradigm of education. Equality could be expressed as a central value of the national policy documents and legislation or embedded in the formal curricula. At the level of individual kindergarten, non-discrimination can be performed as a policy in the teachers' employment, or a policy of applying 'positive measures' in the process of admission of children with special needs. Equity as a value, therefore, can be regarded as an important supplement to the liberal understanding of democracy – focusing mainly on diversification (of services, practices, etc.) and the primacy of individualistic understanding of freedom of choice. The *participation* principle indicates a postmodern shift towards *involvement*, *dialogue*, *cooperation* and *shared responsibility* indicating major changes in the perception of relations between an individual and the institutions or experts. The *ethics of participation* and the *strength perspective* (Saleebey 1992) bind the professionals in institutions to renounce the power over final truths and answers – the power that does not belong to them. Instead, they should mobilise the 'strengths' of people in creating their own visions of their life. The participation discourse emphasises the role of children as social and political actors holding special rights in decision-making. It contributes to the perception of children as a social group with a potential to make a valued contribution to society (Kirby et al. 2003). It opens up a need for listening (Rinaldi 2005) understood as a part of a democratic and respectful relationship with children along with a possibility to promote radical changes in learning, policy-making and assessment (Clark, Kjølhort, and Moss 2005). The participation discourse shifts attention to democracy as a process; it reminds us that no decision or choice is democratic if excluding children and parents – those who are the most affected by the nature of preschools.

The works of Gunilla Dahlberg and Peter Moss remind us that the choices and decisions we are making – about preschools, their policies and practices – are immanently ethical or, rather, should be ethical. In other words: democracy is not just a matter of applying certain principles, but rather a careful reflection on the values behind our actions, our understanding of the concepts and their potential implications. The authors propose 'to *vitalise* the places of ethics, making it explicit and central to the life of preschools' and 'to *diversify* the ethical possibilities open to preschools' (Dahlberg and

Moss 2005, 12). They are re-vitalising the ethics which foregrounds responsibility and the relationship to the Other, such as 'postmodern ethics' (Bauman), the 'ethics of care' (Tronto, Sevenhuijsen) and 'the ethics of encounter' (Levinas). Their shared concern with otherness is expressed in responsibility for the Other, respect for otherness, and rejection of calculative and rational thinking in relations with the other (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 68–84).

In the authors' view, today's preschools along with teachers, politicians and parents are facing two important challenges: contesting 'technico-instrumental' discourse, and critical reflection on the market model of service provision (Dahlberg and Moss 2005; Moss 2008). The authors argue, that preschools as – a 'loci of ethical practices' and 'minor politics' – have a great potential in critical thinking and resisting the power in today's world (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 14). Resisting the dominant – Anglo-American – discourse means making a *collective* choice [*not*] 'to view and judge [preschools] as means for engineering certain ends, defined in terms of universal criteria – be it child development [e.g. preparation of children to school], educational standards [e.g. developmentally appropriate practice] or economically valued qualities' [e.g. reducing poverty] (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 59). Their idea of preschools as 'children's spaces' (social, cultural and discursive spaces) offers an alternative conceptualisation of preschools where values, rights and cultures are created (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 28–29). They wonder:

Can we imagine the preschool as ... a space of possibilities, or as a network of obligations, or as a work of art, or as a part of a local cultural project concerned with a good childhood and the relationship between children and the larger community. (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 26)

According to Moss (2007, 7), democracy at the level of institution involves 'fostering direct democracy' and understanding of 'institutions as public forums in civil society'.

Another important task for early childhood professionals is to oppose the understanding of preschools as enterprises of business providing private commodities within a competitive private market. According to Moss (2008, 9), 'the market model creates particular subjects, 'purchasers' and 'providers' who enter into a direct contractual relationship. For Moss, the risks of the market approach are: risk of provision closing, inadequate supply of services for certain groups, lack of consumers' information about the price and quality, lack of children – as direct 'consumers' – having a voice in the original choice of services. Perhaps the most important consequences the author discloses are 'the imperative of competition overriding the benefits of collaboration' (18) and 'undermining the importance of values such as 'loyalty, security and affective relationships' (14). In their view, 'preschools should be understood as a public good, of great social, cultural and political importance', '...provided by organisations whose first commitment is to the public good, unconditional universal access and democratic practice' (Dahlberg and Moss 2005, 29).

1.1. Teachers' attitudes as an integral part of a pro-democratic culture

Surveys on cultural patterns of norms and values (Inglehart, Basáñez, and Moreno 1998; Inglehart 1995, 1997) have shown that the attitude towards children (upbringing) is closely linked to the indicators of social democracy. Inglehart (1997, 102–3) states that democratic countries show some common characteristics; he identified the

syndrome of pro-democratic culture which indicates the following attributes: moderate or low income social differences, high levels of political participation, high level of life satisfaction, trust in other people and a low level of ethnocentrism. The *post-modern pattern* of values and beliefs prevails in the above-mentioned societies/cultures. A postmodern cultural shift took place in Western European welfare states in the last two decades of the twentieth century. The prevailing pattern of beliefs is denoted by a characteristic shift from all authority sources – traditional (family, church) as well as state authority. The centre of the value system is the individual, his/her autonomy, freedom, self-expression and self-actualisation. People value their free time significantly more as well as the quality of their social contacts; they are more environmentally conscious and support gender equality. The crucial dimension of the postmodern pattern is the significantly higher level of tolerance towards foreigners and the so-called *outgroups*. According to Inglehart, values and beliefs reflect a ‘new perception of life and what people expect from it’ (1997, 326).

The image of the child is an important part of the perception of life; the specific pattern of the desired characteristics of children is an integral part of postmodern value pattern (Turnšek 2001). The preferences on *characteristics children should learn at home* are an integral part of Inglehart’s *coherent cultural patterns*. Progressive characteristics, e.g. *independence, imagination, tolerance and respect for other people and responsibility* are valued more by the citizens of Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Germany, Switzerland and Iceland. The desired characteristics of children concur with other characteristics of the postmodern cultural pattern (Turnšek 2001). Emphasising the child’s independence and imagination corresponds to a higher postmodern priority of individual self-actualisation and creativity. Child’s tolerance and responsibility are consistent with a higher level of tolerance towards minority groups and subcultures, as well as environmental consciousness.

An intriguing research question is whether the values and beliefs of teachers are merely a ‘copy’ of the prevalent cultural patterns. If so, we should expect that the beliefs of teachers in postmodern oriented countries are more democratic than elsewhere. Teachers’ training might cause a shift away from the prevalent cultural images towards forming a kind of universal professional culture. Surveys do not provide conclusive results; some of them show a high level of intra-cultural consistency – resemblance of parents’ and teachers’ views from the same country (e.g. Weikart and Olmsted 1996; Hujala-Huttunen 1996). Others show the opposite; a study by Edwards, Gandini and Giovaninni (1996) indicates that culturally specific ‘models’ determine the development expectations of teachers less than those of the parents. Researchers have identified many similarities between educational beliefs of parents from very different European countries (e.g. Lassbo and Hakvoort 1999) and common dimensions in practices of teachers from different continents (e.g. Weikart, Olmsted and Montie 2003). It is obvious there are topics in upbringing which are clearly culturally mediated as well as those influenced by science or teacher training.

1.2. A reflection on the Slovene early childhood institutionalisation

The Slovene early childhood system expanded in the 1970s; in most cases, the public preschools were built with citizens’ solidarity or voluntary contributions on the part of the local residents. The 1980s were influenced by the process of ‘socialising the area of care and education’ as a central socio-political aim of former state Yugoslavia (Novović 1988). At the time, the social role of preschools primarily intended to

provide care for the children of employed parents, as well as education, in order to produce 'all-round developed personalities' (although the concept have been strongly criticised; Bahovec Dolar 1985) according to the socialist 'self-governing' values (Makarovič 1978). Other goals were also explicit, such as fostering women's employment and equalising educational opportunities of children – particularly those living in poor and single-parent families. At the time, the institutionalisation of the early childhood was characterised by high-level centralisation and regulation, manifested in state agencies' control over the standards regarding the facilities, health care, nutrition and other living conditions, as well as assuming control over kindergartens and teachers' practices. The professionalisation process was reinforced by introducing the first National programme for care and education of preschool children (1984), and by establishing the higher-level teachers' training study programme.

Such development undoubtedly had its own advantages (Turnšek 1993) as evoked by Moss (2007), who says that 'creating democratic space' at the national level '...means providing a national framework of entitlements and standards' (9). Still, the contemporary Slovene ECEC system has many features which can be attributed to the former socialist tradition: a wide network of high quality public preschools employing well-trained staff, providing universal access, accompanied by a clear policy aiming at reducing social inequalities.¹ However, in the mid-1980s the shortcomings of such development became evident, as well. The 'side effect' of centralisation resulted in the one-dimensional development or a lack of diversity in service and programme provision. Although the National programme for care and education of preschool children (*Vzgojni program za vzgojo in varstvo predšolskih otrok* 1985) was not highly prescriptive, it had enforced a rather structured, rigid and overly collectivistic daily life and learning in preschools of the time (De Batistič 1990; Bahovec and Kodelja 1995). The state control over kindergartens and the implementation of the programme combined with the lack of teachers' professional autonomy, contributed to the uniformity of teachers' procedures and consequently led to uniformity in children's daily lives in preschools.

The 'movement' for pluralisation of the early childhood system and internal democratisation of kindergartens began in the mid-1980s. The first parents' cooperative was established as a welfare-mix organisation, with the state providing facilities, nutrition and other conditions and the parents working as 'teachers'; children and adult partnership relations were a key principle of the cooperative (Kranjc and Radovan 1998). At the same time, many other innovative projects were introduced and supported by groups of professionals from various fields. For instance, they focused on: developing democratic communication among all kindergarten participants (Žerjav 1989), creating conditions for parent's involvement (Turnšek 1985) and individualisation of sleeping routine in preschools (Batistič Zorec and Matičetov 1987), fostering process-oriented curriculum by an action research approach (Vonta 1990).

At the end of the 1990s, 'the movement for democratisation' was formalised in the foundations and principles of the new National curriculum for preschool institutions (1999). Re-conceptualisation of the curriculum was part of the whole educational system reform (White Paper on Education in the Republic of Slovenia; Krek 1996) within the context of the independent democratic state; the key underlying curriculum principles are 'democracy and plurality of value systems, cultures and knowledge'. The national curriculum is in line with current world trends, and in many ways contrasts with the socialist concept of preschool education and didactically oriented programmes prevalent in the 1970s, not only in Slovenia, but also elsewhere around the world (Batistič Zorec 2003).

The curriculum was declared as 'open', to stimulate the teachers' autonomy (accompanied with a high level of professional responsibility) as well as plurality of pedagogical approaches. In the national curriculum the developmental process-oriented curriculum obligates teachers to exercise critical thinking and professional self-reflection (Kurikulumum za vrtce 1999, 10–11). Child's play, especially symbolic play, is regarded a 'natural way of child's learning and development' (19–20). In addition, the role of preschools is to 'guide the children towards the new experiences and knowledge', involving them in '...active ways of learning based on intrinsic motivation, solving concrete problems and reflection' while '...gaining social experiences' (19). 'Positive group climate' and '...quality of peer interactions and interactions among adults and children have to be stimulated (10). Preschool education is seen as autonomous in relation to later schooling; it is emphasised that preschools should not become school-like, but rather 'preserve the specifics of preschool period' (10).

Special attention is paid to the elements of institutional 'hidden curricula' (Apple and King 1977; Jackson 1990). The recommendations have been primarily directed towards overcoming non-flexibility, a lack of individual treatment, over-collectivism (De Batistič 1990; Bahovec and Kodelja 1995). Systematic 'removal of the conditions causing [the negative manifestations of] the hidden curricula' is considered as an important goal of the democratisation (Kurikulumum za vrtce 1999, 20). Children are regarded as individuals making choices; it is emphasised that exercising choices 'means a variety of alternative activities and contents, not [merely] a choice between joining or non-joining the [teacher's initiated] activity', or '...a choice between activity and free-time' (12). In addition, it is stressed that children '...have the right to be different', '...to retreat from group-oriented routines' and '...enjoy privacy in intimacy' inside the institution (10). 'Re-conceptualisation and re-organisation of the space, time and equipment' in preschools (10) require providing 'a variety of learning and playing spaces with toys and materials accessible to children at any time', '...restraining the amount of time children spend without being active, in waiting and tidying up', and '...enabling children's choices regarding sleeping and eating routines' (21).

Preschool education is considered a supplementation to family education; however, 'the division of responsibilities and the different competences' are emphasised (Kurikulumum za vrtce 1999, 24). Kindergarten has to 'respect the privacy of the family and the parents, their culture, identity, language, values, convictions and habits'; while the parents '...have to respect the limits of their decision-making, which should not interfere with the kindergarten professionalism' (24). The rights of parents are 'to receive written and other forms of information, as well as to exchange information', '...to be informed about their rights and responsibilities', '...to be involved in the curriculum planning and to participate actively', '... to gradual admission to institution [parents accompany the child in institution for a certain period]', '...to in-depth discussion with the teachers on issues concerning their child', and '...to choose a public or a private setting' (15).

Respect for human rights, especially those connected with cultural (language, religious, ethnical) identity and gender, is undoubtedly the key novelty of the curriculum. It emphasises the importance of 'raising awareness of the individual and group differences' and '...non-discriminatory treatment' (Kurikulumum za vrtce 1999, 10). Cultural differences have also been embedded in the new, equal opportunities principle. 'Implementation of the equal opportunity principle' is explained as 'providing conditions for permanent or periodic inclusion of children with special needs' and for 'multi-language development of the children living on the Italian or Hungarian

nationally mixed areas' (8). It is also stated that 'although Roma people are not autochthonous [traditional] minority', '...it is important that the coexistence of the two cultures should be interactive, not only one-way' (8). The general goals of multicultural education are stated in the chapter 'Society'. In addition, the two special documents, *Supplement to the Curriculum for Preschool Institutions in Nationally Mixed Areas* (2002) and *Supplement to the Curriculum for Working with Roma Children* (2002), determine the curriculum's goals and examples of practices for teachers working in those specific situations.

On the whole, the curriculum's principles and foundations reflect democratic values. However, a critical examination of its statements and formulations raises some questions. First, are the parents regarded as teachers' partners who can contribute with their knowledge and experiences to creating the meaning of education inside preschools? Or, are they merely the clients who – by placing the child in institutional care – renounce their parental rights (except for those listed), and are obliged to accept a clear division of the responsibilities? Furthermore, the curriculum emphasises the need for *adults* to provide a *variety of choices*, and thus, enable children to choose *among them* but does not mention child's participation – in the sense of fostering children's influence on decisions and children *creating their own choices*. The last observation regards the exclusion of children who fall into the group called 'newly minorities' (immigrants from the former Yugoslavia, now mostly Slovene residents) from the curriculum's interpretation of the equal opportunities principle as well as from the *Supplement* to the curriculum. Does that mean that the teachers should consider special circumstances of the children who speak Italian or Hungarian, or Roma language, but at the same time ignore those who came from the Serbian, Croat or Macedonian families, or belong to any other ethnic, linguistic or religious minority? Does that imply an exclusive approach to the inclusion paradigm?

1.3. The Finnish context – why comparison?

The aim of the survey was to identify the similarities and differences between the official curricula conceptualisation of democratic early childhood education and the teachers' subjective concepts. In order to estimate the 'degree' of democratic orientation in Slovene teachers' attitudes, a comparison was needed with a 'reference country' – with a longer history of social democracy. Since the intention of the study was to obtain a 'wide picture', the survey examined several aspects of democracy – those specific for the Slovene national curriculum, but also relevant for Finnish early childhood education. The study examined: which *elements of democratisation* the teachers considered important for *providing high quality* institutional education, to what extent they supported an *active role of children* in the process of socialisation and learning, to what extent they agreed with the attitudes indicating a *hidden curriculum*, how they understood the principle of *equal opportunities*, what their position was on the *rights of children from immigrant families* and which *model of cooperation with parents* they prefer (47 dependent variables altogether). The potential 'problem areas' characterised by a high discrepancy between the formal curricula and the teachers' perceptions and attitudes were intended for later in-depth examination.

The study has compared the views of the teachers working in different cultural contexts but in similar preschool systems. Integrated services, universal access and

length of maternity leave are some of the similarities. A long tradition of cooperation between both universities and the teachers' and the students' exchanges has revealed some other resemblances of the preschools of the two countries. The main distinctive factors are the histories and the social value patterns. Finland has a long tradition of democratic institutions with a prevailing pro-democratic value pattern. Ten years after having established parliamentary democracy, Slovenia was already classified as consolidated democracy (Toš and Bernik 2002). The underlying assumption of the survey was that there might have been differences between the Slovene and Finnish teachers with regard to valuing democratic principles of early childhood education as well as with understanding their implementation. Namely, there are some crucial differences between the two countries considering the indicators of Inglehart's 'syndrome of pro-democratic culture' (1997, 102–3).²

At the time, both countries were also in a process of re-conceptualisation of the formal curricula (in Finland, the curriculum is called *Guidelines*); in both countries, the issues of multicultural education and democracy have been incorporated. The conceptualisation of the Slovene curriculum has followed the examples from the Nordic countries.

2. Method

The data have been obtained through a questionnaire conceptualised by the research team at the Department of Preschool Education at the Faculty of Education of Ljubljana. The translation from the Slovene into the English language has been provided for as well as proofreading by the native speaker. The next step has involved the checking of the meanings of questions in the translation from the English into the Finnish language; it has been done by early education professionals in Finland with good knowledge of English. After that, the Finnish early childhood research team from the University of Oulu carefully examined the relevance of every question; some questions have been left out in order to make the questionnaire shorter.

For sampling in Slovenia, a list of preschools in all Slovene regions provided by the Ministry of Education and Sport has been used; a random selection of 16 settings has been made. The members of the research team personally administered the questionnaire in preschool settings; the result was 100% of the response rate.

In Finland, the questionnaire was delivered to the day-care centres by using the network created by the Northern Finland Centre of Excellence in Social Welfare. This has been a good way of getting in touch with every day-care centre in this large area. The heads of the day-care centres have been asked to give the teachers either the paper version of the questionnaire or the email address of the researcher who then sent the questionnaire through email. As it has not been possible to get the information about the number of kindergarten teachers in Northern Finland, the exact response rate is not known.

In the Slovene sample, there were early childhood teachers working in preschool settings placed in urban and semi-urban areas of all Slovenian regions. 55.9% of Slovene teachers had upper secondary qualification (kindergarten teachers' training college), 31.5% completed a two year higher education early childhood programme and 7.7% a three year programme at the Faculty of Education; 1.8% had other university programmes. The Slovene teachers were 25 to 57 years old (mean = 42), with 1 to 35 years of working experience (mean = 20.4); three teachers were male. In the Finnish sample, there were 230 teachers mainly from the central and northern regions

of Finland. 72.6% of Finnish teachers had college level degree, 22% had university level degree and 4.4% had other qualifications. The Finnish teachers were 23 to 62 years old (mean = 40.7), with 1 to 42 years of working experience (mean = 15.2); 10 teachers were male.

3. The research findings

3.1. *Pro-democratic and counter-democratic attitude orientations*

The survey has confirmed our expectations that the *pro-democratic* and *counter-democratic orientations* occur in beliefs and attitudes of Slovene teachers.

Groups of teachers with accumulated democratic attitudes as well as groups with less democratic attitudes were identified. Cluster analysis shows five distinctive patterns of beliefs and attitudes that differ significantly (values range from 0.0 to 0.0332). The two clusters on the extremes appear as two extreme orientations. An extremely pro-democratic orientation is manifested as an above-average presence of democratic dimensions in attitudes, whereas the extremely counter-democratic orientation represents its contrast. The percentage of teachers whose attitudes are extremely pro-democratic is higher (17.9%) than of those with extremely counter-democratic attitudes (9.3%). In intermediary clusters, either one or the other orientation prevails with some singular exceptions. On the whole, a few less than half of kindergarten teachers in Slovenia support a pro-democratic orientation (46.9%), whereas the other half the opposite orientation.

The pro-democratic orientation contains attitudes supporting the concept of active citizenship as well as the empowerment concept. Teachers in this group emphasise that the role of adults is *'enabling children to participate in the decision-making about the things which are important for them'*; they also argue that *'in the process of socialisation children should acquire social and other skills needed for their active participation in society'*. For counter-democratic oriented teachers *'child's development lies exclusively within the responsibility of adults'*; they see child's role in *'accepting norms and rules of the society in which he/she lives'*.

Pro-democratic teachers disagree with a set of attitudes that are indicators of a *'hidden curriculum'* (e.g. *'children in kindergarten should get to know that they are primarily members of the group and only then individuals'*, *'waiting e.g. for meals, for participation in an activity is not a loss of time, but a lesson in socialisation'*, *'certain forms of competition should be introduced in kindergarten to prepare children for living in a competitive society'*). Counter-democratic oriented teachers agree with the quoted positions to a significantly higher extent.

The pro-democratic orientation is defined by a positive attitude towards family and support of a democratic dialogue (*'cooperation should be similar to a partnership relation, which means that parents and teachers regularly make agreements, check their viewpoints and co-form the most appropriate programme'*). It is not inclined to stereotype parents, e.g. *'parents are only interested in whether their child has slept and eaten in the day-care centre'*, *'parents expect the kindergarten to bring-up and discipline their children in their place'*, *'parents are not trained for the education of their children, so they need the help of a teacher to perform their parental role successfully'*.

The compensatory presumption – the belief that *'many children have no appropriate educational stimulation in the family, so the day-care centre has to compensate this deficiency'* – does not occur in the counter-democratic orientation. On the other hand, the counter-democratic orientation is founded on the presumption that parents

are not competent educators and have an inappropriate attitude towards day-care centres. Teachers are more inclined to the concept of 'limited participation' according to which *'parents should actively cooperate in the life of the day-care centre and thus enrich the day-care centre programme, but they cannot make decisions about it'*. They support formal cooperation forms; they agree to a larger extent with the statement that *'...the duty of parents is to participate in parental meetings and put forward their opinions at parents' council'*.

For pro-democratic oriented teachers the equity concept is based on the acknowledgment of individual and cultural differences, whereas the counter-democratic teachers' understanding of the equal opportunities is based on disregard for the differences. Pro-democratic orientation respects the right of children and parents from minorities to express their cultural identity, whereas in the counter-democratic orientation it solely supports traditions and language of children from the majority.

3.1.1. *Level of education and pedagogical experiences as attitude determiner*

The connection between the level of formal pedagogical education of teachers and a set of democratic beliefs is neither strong nor consistent. Statistically significant differences only occur with singular variables. Teachers with faculty education support to a larger extent the child's active role in his/her development and learning process ($F = 3.5541$, $p = 0.0502$), agree less with the statements indicating the hidden curriculum ($F = 4.5732$, $p = 0.0331$) and are less inclined to stereotype positions on parents ($F = 3.3393$, $p = 0.0485$) than those with secondary education. Nevertheless, higher education does not 'guarantee' less ethnocentric positions; namely, the differences between the respondents' levels of education are not significant for any of the variables concerning immigrants. Considering the whole set of variables brings us to the conclusion that a higher level of teacher education is not a reliable predictor of pro-democratic orientation.

Teachers' attitudes towards democratisation of early childhood education do not change with their working experience in kindergarten, since there is almost no connection with the set of dependent variables. Novice teachers with up to five years of working in kindergarten share similar preferences and attitudes with those teaching for 26 years. One exception, though, is in respect to using the mother tongue in immigrant families. The group with the least working experience shows the least respect, and it grows gradually in other groups ($\text{Chi-square} = 12.735$, $p = 0.0052$). The result was not expected, since this group is also the youngest and best educated. (Differences are also significant according to the age of respondents.) Further data analyses (Turnšek 2005) indicate that the teaching experience itself does not determine attitudes but rather the combination (interaction) of several variables linked to the workplace.

3.2. *Cultural differences³*

3.2.1. *Democratic elements in the quality of early childhood education*

The reformed Slovene national curriculum is based on the democratic principles operationalised in quality recommendations. We have asked the teachers which changes they consider the most important for the improvement of the quality of early childhood education⁴ Slovene and Finnish teachers differ significantly in their personal preferences (Pearson Chi-square for the preferences ranked as 'the most important' is 165.890, $p = 0.00$).

Slovene teachers are more inclined to organisational changes directed to flexibility and variability of kindergarten life; they support *'better organisation of interior e.g. learning centres', 'the accessibility of toys and materials to children', 'small group and individual learning', 'flexible daily routines'* as well as *'variety of learning contents'*. Finnish teachers support to a higher extent improvements in professional relationships (*'possibility that activities from educational fields for which I do not feel very competent, are carried out by another teacher'*) and in strategies of planning and monitoring (*'observation of children and monitoring of their development', 'evaluation of educational activities'*).

Differences also occur in preferences related to quality of relations. Slovene teachers support *'consideration and respect of the privacy and intimacy of children'* and *'individualisation of sleeping routines'*, whereas Finnish teachers emphasise *'interactions between children'*. For Slovene teachers, it is important to ensure *'opportunities for children to participate in decision-making'*, whereas Finnish teachers believe that *'parents' cooperation and taking part in decision-making'* is important.

On the whole, the preferences indicate that for the Slovene teachers the institutional quality (and democracy) is primarily directed to overcoming didactic curricula and rigid every day routines. There is an obvious tendency to overcome past institutional tradition based on the principles *'the same for all'* and *'everyone at the same time'* (Bahovec and Kodelja 1995). Thus, the tendency to diversification is strongly reflected in teachers' preferences. For Finnish teachers, the idea of democratisation is directed towards stronger cooperation between adults, including parents. For Slovene teachers, their strong belief that children are entitled to create their life in institutions is characteristic.

3.2.2. Attitudes indicating hidden curricula

Qualitative studies in Slovene preschools had demonstrated that practices indicating the institutional *'hidden curricula'* were often accompanied with a certain set of teachers' common-sense argumentations, subjective theories (De Batistič 1990) and *'internal ideologies'* (Bahovec and Kodelja 1995).

In our survey, the agreement with attitudes indicating *'hidden curriculum'*⁵ is low in both countries. Most teachers from the two countries (three quarters or more) respect children's privacy, individual needs and reject excessive disciplining, subordination to collective rituals, punishment and competition. However, noticeable cultural differences have been found on four variables (all p values are 0.0) The first is the attitude towards sleeping routines: 29.6% of Slovene teachers agree (or strongly agree) that *'it is not possible to arrange that some children would sleep and others play, in the same group'*; 3% of Finnish teachers share this opinion. We believe that the preferences reflect these differences in internal organisations of kindergartens. Finnish preschools have separate rooms suitable for different types of rest; the rest period is adapted to the needs of each child individually (and his/her family's rhythm of life). Similar changes have been made in Slovene kindergartens in the last 15 years; but at present there are still differences in practices between settings and teachers.

More Slovene (30.5%) than Finnish teachers (20%) agree with the statement that *'already in the preschool period certain forms of competition should be introduced to prepare the child for life in competitive society'*. We suppose that Slovene teachers support the transitional (neo-liberal) model of society development to a larger extent while it is being dropped in welfare countries.

Collectivistic and/or socio-centric orientation is present in both cultures; still, it appears in varied indicators. More Finnish (81.7%) than Slovene teachers (39.1%) support the position that *'waiting for meals, for participation in an activity is not a loss of time, but a lesson in socialisation'*. However, the position that *'children in day-care centre should get to know that they are primarily members of the group and only then individuals'* is more present with Slovene teachers (41.9%) than with Finnish teachers (3.9%). The above-mentioned data corresponds to the research findings (e.g. Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989; Harkness, Raeff, and Super 2000) showing that even in 'collectivistic countries' socio-centrism appears in varied 'shades' and can be explained with various professional and ideological argumentations.

3.2.3. *The principle of equal opportunities*

Throughout the history of institutionalisation of early childhood education various meanings were attached to the concept of 'equal opportunities'. We have asked the teachers *which statement is the closest to their understanding of the principle of equal opportunities*.⁶ The results indicate significant differences among the two cultural groups (Pearson Chi-square = 38.175, $p = 0.00$).

In the period of the 'nationalising early childhood education' policy, after World War II, the emphasis was on social equity. An intensive spread of the network of public preschools in Slovenia aimed at increasing social and regional accessibility, ensuring equal educational opportunities. One fifth of Finnish teachers (21.3%) and a similar percentage of Slovene teachers (19.8%) can relate to an explanation according to which *'society should guarantee to all children to be enrolled in preschool institutions regardless of the financial status and other characteristics of their family, place of residence or other differences, and thus provide an equal beginning of schooling to all children'*.

In the Slovene curriculum, the principle of equal opportunities is interpreted as 'ensuring optimal conditions for the development of all children...' while 'considering the differences' (Kurikulum za vrte 1999, 8–12). 48.7% of Finnish and 29.7% of Slovene teachers believe that *'the kindergarten should respect group and individual differences, which means that the programme should be individualised and adjusted to children with special needs and to children from different cultures'*. Since this is a key principle of the new curricula, we expected it to be accepted among Slovene teachers to a larger extent.

The pilot study (Krofič et al. 2002) also revealed a strong presence of a common-sense interpretation characterised by 'demanding' equal treatment for (different) children. In other words: a teacher who provides to both the Slovene and the Romany speaking children the same educational activities and learning material is considered impartial. This position is in diametrical opposition to the above-mentioned, since the foundation for ensuring equal opportunities is the disavowal of different 'initial circumstances', situations and contexts of children's lives. The position that *'the teacher should try to treat all children equally which means providing equal educational stimulations to all of them'* is more common among Slovene teachers (49.5%) than among Finnish teachers (29.1%).

3.2.4. *Preservation of immigrant children's habits and customs*

In preschools in both countries, there are children from traditional minorities (Sami and Swedish minority in Finland, Italian and Hungarian minorities in Slovenia) as

well as children of various other minorities. Legislation in both countries ensures the highest level of protection of the rights of the former groups whereas the rights of immigrants are limited or yet unformed. The survey looked at the presence of the three most common concepts in the teachers' attitudes: the concept of assimilation (immigrants must give up their cultural values, symbols and habits and assume those of the majority as soon as possible), the concept of preserving customs 'inside home walls' (the integration is based upon partial acknowledgement of cultural rights, thus the customs of minorities shall stay as 'inconspicuous' as possible, limited only to the family) and the concept of inter-cultural community (the rights of all society members are acknowledged, the majority practise active tolerance).

Most teachers in both countries strive for the highest level of respect for the cultural rights of immigrants. Nevertheless, the differences are significant (Pearson Chi-square = 26.943, $p = 0.00$). Three quarters of Finnish teachers (76.1%) and one half of Slovene teachers (56.8%) support the inter-cultural concept: *'children of immigrant families have the opportunity to present their culture to the teacher and to other children'*. The assimilation concept, according to which the *'families of immigrants should gradually adapt and adopt the language, the habits and the culture of the country to which they immigrated'* more often appears with Slovene (9.4%) than with Finnish teachers (1.7%). Almost one third of Slovene (31.5%) and one fifth of Finnish teachers (22.2%) believe that *'immigrant families should preserve their language, habits and culture at home, while in kindergarten children should adapt to the language and culture of the majority'*.⁷

3.2.5. Preservation of immigrant children's mother tongue

In discussions on language issues, we often detect several levels of argumentation – political, professional and pragmatic. The right to use one's mother tongue is undeniably an important human rights achievement; professionals also support a parallel (foreign, second) language-learning model. Nevertheless, kindergarten teachers (as well as immigrant parents) often believe that it is in the child's best interest (especially for his/her academic achievements) to use the majority language on all levels – even in private life.

The variable MOTHER TONGUE indicates the largest differences between Finnish and Slovene teachers (Pearson Chi-square = 110.562, $p = 0.00$). Almost all Finnish teachers (92.6%) and one half of Slovene teachers (52.3%) believe that *'parents [of immigrant families] should speak with their children in their own language while the child will learn Slovenian [Finnish] in the environment and in the day-care centre'*. The opposite opinion – according to which immigrant families *'should try to speak the language of the majority with their children as much as possible also at home'* is supported by 6.5% of Finnish and 46.4% of Slovene teachers.⁸

3.3. Crucial determiners of democratic orientation

The question of the survey was whether the attitudes (beliefs, priorities) of teachers are more connected to their nationality and culture, respectively, or to professional characteristics – the level of education and pedagogic experience. We have analysed which independent variable and/or their combination has the prevalent effect on the set of attitudes.

The results of the two-way ANOVA/MANOVA analysis (Table 1) show that the variable COUNTRY has a significant impact on the set of democratic respondents'

Table 1. The effect of independent variables on the beliefs of Slovene and Finnish respondents – results of ANOVA/MANOVA analysis.

Independent variables and their interactions	Wilks' Lambda	Rao's R	df 1	df 2	p-level
COUNTRY	.609107	12.34128	26	500	.000000
LEVEL_EDUC	.951629	.97750	26	500	.497553
PRACTICE	.842969	1.12757	78	1495	.213877
COUNTRY/LEVEL_EDUC	.928949	1.47088	26	500	.064200
COUNTRY/PRACTICE	.866865	.93863	78	1495	.630150
LEVEL_EDUC/PRACTICE	.852482	1.05151	78	1495	.360480
COUNTRY/LEVEL_EDUC/PRACTICE	.886584	.78787	78	1495	.911573

beliefs. To some extent, we detect the interaction of nationality and level of education, but the connection is of less significance. First and foremost, the attitude of teachers in both countries towards democratisation of early childhood education is a reflection of their 'ties' to the cultural patterns of values, norms and beliefs.

4. Discussion

The survey results (Turnšek 2005) on the whole indicate that the attitudes of Slovene teachers are for the most part in accordance with the democratic positions of the formal curricula. The children's right to make choices and to be 'different' stands out and appears as the central thread in their priorities. However, the teachers' views are more progressive than the curricula in two important dimensions: in emphasising child's participation and parents' partnership. The curricula support the children's right to make choices (about activities, materials...) – within the alternatives offered by adults, while the teachers are rather inclined towards the concept of empowerment – the child's right to contribute to their institutional life and to decide on important issues. Another 'step further' from the curricula is the teachers' support for parents' partnership. In this regard, the curriculum is rather 'reserved'; it guarantees the parents certain rights while emphasising a need for parents to consider the limits of their involvement. The statements indicate preschools and families functioning as two 'parallel worlds' not intervening in each other too much. The teachers' positions are though, closer to the Reggio Emilia concept, seeing kindergarten as a place of lively and developing relationships between children and adults (Malaguzzi 1993).

The curricula reforms usually stimulate tendencies to change teachers' attitudes and practices in accordance with the philosophy of the official curricula. We believe though that these 'investments' are based on the false points of departure. Firstly, they concentrate more on the success of the reform than on the factors determining high quality of preschool. Secondly, often the underlying assumption is that teachers' practices are the direct reflection of their attitudes. Our survey indicates that the teachers' attitudes are often more liberal (democratic) than they are the official positions of the national curriculum. Therefore, democratisation of early childhood education cannot be founded only on the official doctrine but needs to seriously consider the preferences of practitioners (as well as children and parents).

Important exceptions in the general democratic orientation are attitudes to immigrants, which (for one half of the Slovene teachers) are not in accordance with the philosophy of diversity and equity. A significant finding is that the data for teachers

do not deviate from the data on general public opinion in Slovenia. The concept of the 'intercultural kindergarten', which actively implements elements of many cultures, is supported by (only) half of the teachers. The data on Slovene public opinion polls indicate over the years that approximately half of the population supports cultural rights of minorities, whereas the other half does not (Toš 1999, 2004). Considering the – on average – higher level of teachers' education we expected more pro-democratic oriented attitudes.

The survey brings us to the conclusion that the formal teachers' education has moderate liberal influence on teachers' beliefs. Completion of faculty study programmes is not a reliable predictor of pro-democratic attitudes; we can, however, claim that the attitudes of teachers who 'stayed' on the secondary level are undoubtedly less progressive. In addition, the selection at the enrolment to the faculty (students with higher average grades are given priority) and auto-selection based on motivation has to be taken into account. We expect the attitudes of the teachers who choose to continue their professional development might initially be more progressive. On the other hand, not continuing education for many years seemed to be a clear predictor of less progressive attitude orientation. Further data analyses (Turnšek 2005) indicate that democratic attitudes are an integral part of the internal kindergarten culture. In other words: teachers' beliefs are significantly shaped under the influence of co-workers, headmasters and parents' expectations, inside a particular local culture. The fact that we found significant differences between settings in teachers' self-assessed level of decisions-making (on average low) and satisfaction with their job, leads us to the conclusion that leadership and management are important factors in shaping institutional ethos. Therefore, even if universities succeed in preparing students for democratic pedagogy, still special training for headmasters on quality leadership is needed, to support the changes.

We believe that traditional teachers' education – based primarily on developmental psychology knowledge on normative child development – is insufficient in preparing teachers for educating children to live in diverse world. If the universities want to promote the postmodern belief shift towards higher level of tolerance, the training aimed at increasing teachers' intercultural competence and anti-discriminatory awareness should become stronger components of their study programmes.

The teachers' ethnocentric attitudes do not define their practices directly; they rather appear as 'tacit knowledge' guiding un-reflected behaviours. Consequently, they considerably define the nature of institutional hidden curricula. But what kind of training programmes might succeed in tackling prejudice and stereotypes? The social psychology knowledge namely 'warns us' that attitudes which appear in the dimensions *nationalism–internationalism*, *conservatism–liberalism* are 'central' (Augoustinos and Walker 1995), which is why they are 'resistant' to change. We claim it is not enough that the training – aimed at tackling ethnocentric orientations – is intensive in content and focused on targeted groups. It has to provide a variety of educational experiences 'suitable' for each individual learning style. For some students/teachers workshops' experiences are effective, others might learn best from life-stories or narratives. Moreover, universities need to reconsider the traditional paradigm 'from beliefs to practices' and explore the reversed processes as well. The study programmes has to offer models of good quality kindergarten practices, providing first hand anti-discriminatory experiences to the students. Community projects e.g. working with Roma children or children in asylums seem to be effective; they 'force' changes in behaviours which in turn stimulate changes

in cognitions. Involving students into projects enhancing self-reflection of one's own practices from the perspective of members of other cultures (e.g. Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989; Pascal and Bertram 2006) are also effective in stimulating inter-cultural dialogue.

Are the attitudes of teachers primarily 'culturally delivered'? The study indicates that teachers' formal education is not an insignificant factor in forming pedagogical beliefs but it does not 'outshine' the influence of ethno theories (Harkness and Super 1996). The pro-democratic orientation is more present in the attitudes of Finnish teachers and most obvious in their attitude towards immigrants.⁹ The result is expected, since Finnish teachers live and have studied in a country with a longer democratic tradition. Their attitudes reflect the prevailing higher level of tolerance towards minorities and out-groups. The level of intolerance in Slovenia towards '*the others*' (foreigners and immigrants) and '*the different*' (residents differing from others in their lifestyle; e.g. people with aids, homosexuals, etc.) was relatively high in times after Slovenia gained state independence (Hanžek and Gregorčič 2003, 38–53) (Quoted finding originates in the question '*which group of residents you do not want as neighbours*'; Inglehart, Basáñez, and Moreno 1998). However, after 1992 a shift towards postmodern values (including higher tolerance) appears, indicating gradual 'alignment' of the two cultural patterns. Therefore, democratic changes in preschools are expected together with changes in public opinion, forced with positive political actions.

The discussions on European identity reveal that good regulation of relations between the majority and minorities is crucial for a functioning of the community of states and cultures. The competences of teachers, upbringing generations of children growing up into a diverse world, are becoming an indispensable part of early childhood professionalism. However, we need to overcome the present constrictions in recognizing cultural rights in constitutions, legislations and official curricula. We believe that especially those legal models which reduce cultural rights merely to traditional minorities are problematic. For instance, in Slovenia the Italian and the Hungarian minorities – the so-called *autochthonous minorities* (and partly Roma people) – are provided with the *full legal protection* model. For the '*new*' minorities – mostly economic immigrants from former Yugoslav republics, the *rudimentary model* enables the basic preservation of their cultural identity (Komac 2004). In addition, children of immigrants are not explicitly mentioned in the curricula interpretation of the equal opportunities principle (1999, 8–9). Therefore, legislative and constitutional changes are needed, providing a positive value model, leaning on broad sociological definition of the minority concept. The latter includes recognition and respect of the culture of origin of all children, regardless of their national or ethnic background, whether they are immigrants or foreigners, or if they have citizen status or not.

Notes

1. The Slovene ECEC is age-integrated; the majority of preschools are public (98%) providing places for children from 12 months of age (at the end of maternity leave) to entering compulsory school (at six years). The total percentage of children enrolled is 64.7%; the proportion of children aged from one to three is higher than the recommendation set by the Barcelona meeting in 2002. Fifty-eight percent of the teachers have upper secondary vocational qualification, the rest have higher education degree or Masters degree; only 0.8% have inadequate qualification. Parents pay from 10% to 80% of the economic price;

the rest is covered by the municipal budget. Parents who receive financial social assistance benefits are exempt from payment. In 2006, half of the children enrolled were in the three lower payment categories. Preschool education falls within the competence of the Ministry of Education and Sport. Quality assessment is in responsibility of the individual preschools; it is usually performed as self-evaluation according to the quality assurance model developed by Marjanovič Umek et al. (2002).

2. The Finnish value pattern indicates higher subjective assessment of happiness and health, lower ethnocentrism and a higher degree of political participation (Human Development Report 2003). The Slovene value pattern in 1992 still resembled the pattern of countries in transition, but later surveys indicated a significant shift towards postmodern or pro-democratic value pattern (Hanžek and Gregorčič 2003). The last indicator – social inequality – indicates similarities; both countries have the lowest income inequality level in the group of countries with similar national product and human development index – HDI.
3. Only the variables manifesting significant differences among the two samples are presented.
4. The respondents were instructed to choose up to five elements of 17.
5. The respondents indicated agreement with the 10 statements on Likert scale.
6. The respondents were instructed to choose one statement of the three.
7. The respondents were instructed to choose one statement of the three.
8. The respondents were instructed to choose one statement of the two.
9. The discrimination analysis (Turnšek 2005) has shown that the variable MOTHER TONGUE discriminates the attitudes of teachers of both cultures to the largest extent. Hence, it is a good predictor of democratic orientation.

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