


Chapter 17

Romanian Preschool Teachers’ Perceptions About Early Childhood Online Education: A Qualitative Study on the Inclusiveness of Zoom Kindergartens

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ABSTRACT

COVID-19 replaced face-to-face instruction with online learning. This study examines preschool teachers’ online ECE attitudes. 375 preschool teachers took an online course on quality and inclusive early childhood education. 195 out of 375 preschoolers completed this study’s online questionnaire about internet learning. The authors coded responses to find pros, cons, and mixed viewpoints. Romanian preschool instructors see the challenge of online learning in Zoom kindergarten, the requirement of online teaching instead of not retaining contact with kids and families, and tightening the connection with parents as advantages of early childhood online education. Romanian preschool teachers have mixed opinions about Zoom kindergarten’s pros and cons, including that online classes can be used as integrated online educational sequences but never replace traditional kindergarten.

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INTRODUCTION

Children nowadays are being born into the digital age. According to Neumann (2015), children aged 2-4 spend roughly 80 minutes each day at home using cell phones and tablets. This is undoubtedly the major reason for instructors in early childhood education to have a greater knowledge and understanding of the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the classroom (Güneş & Bahçivan, 2018). The findings of the research (Nuri, & Cagiltay, 2017; Blackwell, Lauricella, & Wartella, 2014) also revealed that early childhood teachers' views and attitudes had a favourable influence on ICT use. However, using ICT in early childhood education has become a necessity in order to improve children's learning experiences (Masoumi, 2015; Jalongo, 2021; Chen et al., 2018). The necessity for research on early childhood teachers' perspectives of ICT appears to have piqued the interest of multiple academics, leading to a study by Dong (2018) suggesting that instructors have acknowledged the value of incorporating ICT into their teaching process. A similar study (Nikolopoulou & Gialamas, 2015) found that many early childhood instructors are comfortable incorporating ICT into the educational process. Furthermore (Yurt & Cevher-Kalburan, 2011; Fotakopoulou et al., 2020), early childhood educators believe that the use of ICT is appropriate in early childhood education, particularly in the creation of varied activities to enhance children's cognitive development.

Digital learning for young children has also been contested and condemned. Some researchers (Jiang & Monk, 2015; Radesky et al., 2016) expressed worry about online hazards and dangers, video addiction, social isolation, and physical health problems. Others stated that parents have a mediating role in preventing damage and regulating children's internet activity by establishing and monitoring technology use regulations for their children (Nouwen & Zaman, 2018). These issues, however, have had little effect on online learning's fast expansion over the last decade, which has reached millions of young learners at an unprecedented rate (Silverman, 2020, Zalaznick, 2019). An increasing number of online programs have been developed and offered to help young children with impairments and/or living in distant or impoverished environments (Smith et al., 2016, Zalaznick, 2019).

Furthermore, internet technologies have evolved into social, cultural, and personal artifacts in the multimodal lifeworld' of today's children (Arnott & Yelland, 2020). It should thus be supported to create a multimodal learning ecosystem for today's children, parents, and teachers. While online learning looks to be becoming increasingly common in the future (Franklin et al., 2015; Hansen & Hansen, 2017), there is a lack of research on online learning in the early years. This study will address this gap by polling Romanian preschool instructors who were involved in online instruction during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Because of the Covid-19 epidemic, ICT is now mandatory at all school levels, including early childhood education. Even while the use of ICT has many benefits for supporting the learning process, it will undoubtedly be a problem for levels of education where the majority of the learning process has not utilised ICT substantially, such as in early childhood education in Romania (Anghel, 2020). Before the Covid-19 epidemic, all early childhood education institutes in Romania used a face-to-face learning style. The Covid-19 pandemic, on the other hand, mandates that all early childhood schools integrate online learning. This is undoubtedly concerning for Romanian early childhood educators who are unfamiliar with the usage of ICT in the classroom (Hasbi & Hasanah, 2020).

Numerous research from all across the world has looked at the new educational issues brought on by the COVID-19 epidemic (Pacheco, 2021; Morgado et al., 2020; Pacheco et al., 2021, Flores et al., 2021; Rad et al., 2022; Rad et al., 2022). Given that the pandemic affected different regions of the world at different times and intensities, as well as the fact that local and national educational responses

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