

# THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ECEC TEACHER'S ROLE IN ARTISTIC CREATION OF CHILDREN IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Antonija Vukašinić

Faculty of Humanities and Social Science in Osijek, Croatia

## ABSTRACT

In the Early Childhood Education and Care, art can be understood through many perspective directions. Children's artistic expression is often seen through the prism of the finished product and less through the observation of the process by which art expresses children's thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The importance of expressive media in children's artistic creation is manifested in the early childhood education and care teacher's understanding of their use. The Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) teacher's role is to understand the developmental stages of children's artistic creativity, to know the function of expressive media, and to properly support children in their use. Therefore, this research is focused on the importance of establishing guidelines in art study programmes that would improve the competence of future ECEC teachers in performing methodical exercises in kindergartens. In the focus group, eight students from the Early Childhood Education and Care programme at the University of Slavonski Brod in Croatia participated, specifically six from the undergraduate programme and two from the graduate programme. In the focus group, open-ended research questions were used to determine opinions on the importance of art in children's creativity, the professional competencies of ECEC teachers needed to support children in art creation, and the attitude towards stencilling. Data from the thematic analysis of the transcripts of focus group conversations point to students's reliance on implicit pedagogies. Therefore, it is important to improve the development of the professional competencies of future ECEC teachers and establish an integrated approach to art activities in early childhood education and care institutions. The guidelines resulting from the research provide an overview of the possible methods of students performing methodical exercises in ECEC institutions that are focused on children's interests and a child-centred approach. The aforementioned research leaves space for further research that would include a larger number of student participants and provide a more detailed insight into the aforementioned issue.

**Keywords:** *expressive media; methodical exercises; phases of artistic creativity; professional competences; the role of the ECEC teacher*

## Introduction

In the past three decades, three different approaches to art education have had an impact on early childhood art education (Arabaci & Gok, 2021). The first approach is teaching young children to create art, which is a natural and inward reflection of their growth. Using this method, a psychological element of the person is taken into account (Chung, 2022; Mahgoub & Ahmed, 2022; Santana et al., 2022). The second strategy is based on the developmental approach, which emphasises the importance of providing children with age-appropriate art materials and activities that are tailored to their developmental level (Johnson, 2021; Manrique, 2021). Finally, the third approach is the cultural-historical approach, which focuses on the social and cultural contexts in which art is created and viewed, emphasising the importance of exposing children to a variety of artistic traditions and practises. The cognitive development hypothesis emphasises how art helps children build a general understanding of the world (Brown, 2020; Thompson, 2021; Polat et al., 2022). According to the third perspective, learning about the arts can help children express themselves, communicate with others, and come to terms with their place in society (Ayaydin, 2011; Boone, 2008; Mynaříková, 2012). Therefore, Arabaci & Gok (2021) conclude that the early years are a time when a child cannot express themselves verbally or in writing well, so it is crucial to encourage creative child development as well as all other developmental areas because children in the early years develop and learn at the quickest rates. The roots of personal and social development are laid in the early years, which are the formative years of life, so educational programmes should encompass these developmental domains as early as possible (Cetin, 2021). During the early years of a child's life, it's critical to assist identity development. Moreover, art-related educational practises are essential for fostering in children a sense of social responsibility, self-assurance, creativity, self-expression, and fairness in people who listen to and understand others (Kaya & Romanescu, 2020; Vujičić & Ujčić, 1999; Zimmerman & Zimmerman, 2000). Children make discoveries, play with interesting objects, and they are free to express their creativity. Their artistic feelings and intuitions begin to emerge during the early childhood years. The creative process produces the most fruitful outcomes during this time since children do not have schemas, preconceptions, or rules in their minds. Children's knowledge of science, social studies, health, mathematics, and literature can be combined through the use of art (Eglington, 2003). They are given learning opportunities and are assisted in examining the connections between the various learning objects through activities that are relevant to their daily lives. Children can discover a space to explore and create, develop their own narratives, and bring their aspirations to life via art instruction. Art helps children release suppressed, upsetting emotions and encourages the use of their imaginations and communication skills in general. Also, by exposing children to a variety of circumstances and events, these activities foster an environment where their unique traits may be seen and where they can develop their ideas and symbolic thinking (Arabaci & Gok, 2021). However, young children rely on adults to acquire art materials and to encourage them to utilise these materials. Every location and culture has various chances and limitations with relation to art instruction.

## The role of the Early Childhood Education and Care teacher

According to Twigg (2011), the content and organization of a “child-centered” curriculum are determined by the interests and needs of children in art instruction. The ECEC teacher serves as a vehicle through which the children can practise their requirements. The primary goal of the art curriculum is to support each child in developing their artistic abilities and expressing their unique needs. The rights of children with regard to the child as artist must be acknowledged by adults (including ECEC teachers, parents, researchers, carers, and others). A very effective yet subtle way to promote children’s rights in relation to their own is through the straightforward process of talking with each child about the artwork and the suggested method of presentation. Kaya & Romanescu (2020) maintain that the integration of physical, intellectual, and creative skills into an educational model is made possible by art education.

Thompson (2021) asserts that adopting a new materialist perspective on how children interact with the conceptual, experiential, and physical materials used to create art works enables us to recognise the improvisational singularity of art-making events. Art education in early childhood and education is essential for encouraging a child’s creativity and helping them to develop an aesthetic sense (Polat et al., 2022). It is important that ECEC teacher adopt constructive attitudes and behaviours in order to support children art expresion. Twigg (2011) suggested that it may be beneficial for ECEC teachers at all career levels to receive additional training in the arts. For ECEC teachers to grow professionally, it is crucial to use pedagogical strategies from the core curriculum, including those for art education. Eglinton’s (2003) maintain that teachers play an integrating and active role where they motivate the participation of children in an art-based discussion or activity. The role of the ECEC teacher in viewing art should be one of mentoring, guiding, and supporting children in discovering their interests rather than imposing knowledge and information on specific works of art.

According to Balić-Šimrak & Markotić (2018), the new educational paradigm and contemporary knowledge of children both take a holistic approach to the child in all of his or her facets. An engaging atmosphere encourages the use of artistic language. The child’s pre-existing knowledge of the ECEC teacher’s authenticity, along with the ECEC teacher’s intrinsic motivation when choosing such incentives and content, and the ECEC teacher’s active and creative approach, all help to develop the child’s creative potential, strengthen competencies (Brooks, 2005; Edwards et al., 1993). Children’s research abilities, the creation and co-construction of their knowledge, and their creativity should all be seen as predicated on the social, physical, and temporal context of a contemporary educational institution (Vecchi & Giudici, 2004). In today’s social environment, cooperation and cooperative learning are encouraged. It is essential to encourage children’s cooperative play, inquiry, and creative expression (Twigg, 2011; Yolcu, 2004). Because of the culture or ambiance of the kindergarten context, children are encouraged to develop theories and come up with ideas together. In such a setting, children gain the ability to work together, listen to others’ ideas, and jointly develop their own (Arabaci & Gok, 2021; Eglinton, 2003). Several fundamental elements of work, such as respecting and accepting

the authenticity of others' work, can help children develop their artistic abilities (Garvis et al., 2012; Miller et al., 2008; Workman, 2017; Wright, 2003).

### **Traditional vs. holistic approaches in Early Childhood Education and Care**

According to Arabaci & Gok (2021), 30 to 50% of the children attending kindergarten are involved in art-related activities every day. ECEC teachers typically have not gone through a formal art education. However, they are encouraged to integrate art into the basic curriculum. The number of studies (Ahi et al., 2016; Chung, 2022; Edwards et al., 1993; Johnson, 2021) claims that the teaching of visual arts by ECEC teachers who lack adequate expertise widens the gap between theory and practise.

According to Twigg (2011), there are many problems with how art education is incorporated into early childhood curricula and how art is taught to children because there is a lack of knowledge and pedagogy in this field. Another problem appears to be the early childhood art education textbooks, which seem to place more of an emphasis on teaching kids how to use their hands and develop their fundamental motor skills than on letting them express themselves through painting. Art-related textbooks tend to place more emphasis on the surface-level meaning of art than on figural elements like colours, lines, and shapes. These kinds of activities don't call for artistic ability and don't encourage the children to examine, comprehend, or discuss the artistic works of other children (Holt, 1997; Li et al., 2022; Lyon et al., 2016). These events are very structured and do not give children a chance to be creative.

### **Methodology**

The research is focused on the importance of establishing guidelines in art study programs that would improve the competence of future ECEC teachers in performing methodical exercises in kindergartens. In the focus group, eight students of the Early Childhood Education and Care programme at the University of Slavonski Brod in Croatia participated, specifically six of the undergraduate students ( $N = 6$ ) and two of the graduate students ( $N = 2$ ). Although the participants study at the same university, they come from different regions of the Republic of Croatia, and they have different work experiences in kindergarten. Two graduate students are working ( $N = 2$ ), and the six undergraduate students ( $N = 6$ ) still do not have work experience. The research participants were guaranteed anonymity, and thus the ethical aspect of the research was respected. The research was conducted using the Zoom platform. In the focus group, interviews contained research questions to determine opinions on the importance of art in children's creativity and competencies, the professional competencies of ECEC teachers needed to support children in art creation, and the attitude towards stenciling. The possibility of answering an open question enabled a deeper understanding of the role of ECEC teachers and the needs ECEC teachers have when working with children in art creation. The recorded conversation was transcribed into text, which was then classified into topics with regard to areas and dissected, and key concepts were determined through thematic analysis.

## Results

Participants were asked to comment on their opinions on the importance of art in children's creativity, the child's cognitive development, social and emotional development and language development in the early years. When asked about the development, of creativity in children's art, the participants said that children's art is the most powerful medium for expressing creativity. It provides children with the opportunity to experiment and reason in a new way.

*S2: "A child's way of expression, and I actually think that it is the strongest way of expressing creativity, and children create something new through such artistic expression... S3: experimenting and creating something new."*

The link between visual expression and communication is based on verbal deficits in accordance with children's age and visual arts as a medium that helps children verbalise thoughts and situations.

*S1: "If they are smaller children, then they may not know how to express themselves verbally, so they express themselves through expressive media."*

Research participants point out that art creates social connection between children, develops dialogic speech because children analyse their art works with each other.

*S7: "Children should have the opportunity to exhibit their artwork. Then the children will later observe, analyze, and talk about the works. I can compare and explain to other children what someone has drawn or made."*

The participants believe that children express their emotional states by drawing, painting, and modelling.

*S3: "Actually, we know that through art, when children are angry, when they are sad, when they are unhappy, or when they are happy, it is all expressed..."*

*S5: Children express their experiences and emotions. Everything they experience mentally and emotionally The art medium conveys the inner state of the child."*

As for cognitive development, the participants note that children express their experience of the world, and the art medium serves them to channel their overall development.

*S4: "They express the world around them and the situations they are in."*

Likewise, the participants note the importance of developing critical thinking in children's art expression.

*S1: "We influence children to think for themselves, to encourage their own thinking, and, in the long run, to one day be people who think for themselves and don't just do what they are told."*

The participants state the importance of the role of the educator in supporting the child's artistic expression. Support is defined as showing the ECEC teacher's interest in children's drawings.

S6: *“I think that even a lot of educators, at least from what I’ve seen in practise, tell the child what to draw with and what to draw, and then when the child draws something, he says: “Look, I did something”, and the ECEC teacher replies that great without general interest really what the child did.”*

and as verbal support from the ECEC teacher to the child:

S4: *“Vocal support and praise to the child. The praise should be appropriate and supported by describing the reason for the praise.”*

According to the participants, the ECEC teacher’s role is to create a play and material context.

S5: *“The ECEC teacher’s role is primarily to provide the spatial environment, incentives, and materials, to provide them with all these materials, to provide them with freedom of expression, not to impose anything on them, but primarily the spatial environment and materials, resources, to provide them with everything.”*

and the importance of pedagogical documentation of children.

S3: *“So we are here to enable everything that is needed and to watch from the side like a supervisor, and they with their own free will in the time that suits them in the way that suits them, and on the fourth we are here to provide them with everything and to be observers without any interference, directing, or suggesting.”*

Also, research participants believe that providing autonomy to children in their artistic expression is very important because in this way they avoid stencilling, which is an undesirable directive form of work that is focused on the product and not on the process of children’s artistic creativity.

S1: *“The children just coloured 20 of the same violets, and no, no, I immediately said no, no, no, and I will say no. Then, of course, there are the children who do not want to draw or paint...”*

S5: *The problem is when the child receives exact instructions on how to work...*

S2: *It is also an important process for the child to participate in and express himself. Whether it will be something or resemble something is ultimately not important.*

S4: *If the works are identical, then the child is not given the freedom of self-expression...*

S3: *Children should be given enough time for artistic expression. Sufficient time is important.”*

The participants in the research point out that it is important that the competences of ECEC teacher’s are an important factor in supporting children in artistic creation.

S2: *“Until the age of three, it is acceptable that it is the doodling phase. However, if my child, who is four or five years old, is still in the doodling phase, it means that this is already some kind of alarm for me.*

S3: *a complex discipline that needs to be developed...*

S5: *We must also be pedagogically competent and know the psycho-physical abilities of children, their possibilities, their wishes, and their needs...*

S6: *know how to communicate with children about the artistic work they have made...*

S8: *we need to find ways and elements to induce the child to give the maximum of himself."*

The attitude of the participants towards the importance of the contemporary curriculum and the holistic approach to the upbringing and education of children in the early years is based on the integrated approach of art creation in kindergarten.

S4: *"We specifically had music, so we did pre-exercises in reading and writing. Art can be integrated in such a way that it integrates through the development of all competencies in a very interesting way."*

Research participants believe that it is important to cooperate with parents so that parents also understand the importance of art and expressive media in early and pre-school education. Therefore, they emphasise modalities that would improve the relationship and increase awareness of the importance of art.

S2: *"We can invite parents to some kind of art workshop, creative workshop in kindergartens, together with the children..."*

S4: *At the individual interview, give the parent an insight into the child's developmental map. The main thing is that the parent has an insight into the child's progress and his artistic status.*

S6: *Through parent meetings, she would encourage them to learn about the importance of art...*

S2: *I think it is important to emphasise to parents that children's works do not agree with the aesthetic criteria that adults have and that it is actually very important to encourage and praise the child."*

According to the ECEC teachers' statements, the factors that play a role in the child's holistic approach to art in kindergarten are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** The crucial elements for children's art expression in kindergarten

<b>Development of children's competencies</b>	<b>The role of the ECEC teacher</b>	<b>Parental involvement</b>	<b>Contemporary curriculum</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• social development</li> <li>• emotional development</li> <li>• language development</li> <li>• creativity</li> <li>• critical thinking</li> <li>• cognitive development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interest of children's art</li> <li>• verbal support</li> <li>• create a play and material context</li> <li>• pedagogical documentacion</li> <li>• providing autonomy to children in art expression</li> <li>• ECEC professional development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• workshops for parents and children</li> <li>• parents meetings</li> <li>• creative workshops</li> <li>• individual interview</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• holistic approach</li> <li>• integrated approach</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** The needs of the ECEC teacher

Formal education	Non-formal education
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• more methodical exercises</li><li>• art literature</li><li>• art education (early years)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• support by:<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Agency of Education</li><li>2. principal and expert team</li><li>3. lectures</li></ol></li></ul>

Regarding open questions about the understanding of the role of ECE teachers and the needs they have in initial education, the research participants expressed the need for factors that would contribute to the quality of education of future ECE teachers in the field of fine arts. Also, they believe that artistic creativity is underestimated and that they do not have adequate literature related to the artistic creativity of children in kindergarten. They also point out the need for more hours of methodical exercises in kindergarten.

S2: *“I had as a student little experience in direct art work with children in kindergartens, so I think that children’s drawing and artistic expression are actually greatly underestimated...”*

S5: *“Unfortunately, as a student finishing my 3rd year, I can’t really brag about the literature I’ve read on the stages of children’s artistic creation...”*

S6: *“I am fully aware, but I am sure that when I was working and when it came to that, I would have read everything necessary because I know that it is very important. I am not doing very well at the moment, but I know that I will try to study it.”*

Research participants state the need for formal and informal professional development; education; professional development; and the need for support from the professional service and the institution where they work. They also believe that the Agency of Education should organise more lectures and provide more support for ECEC teachers on this topic.

S1: *“We have a need for additional art research, improvement, and education...”*

S4: *“Again, we are focused on the fact that we have to educate ourselves through research because everything is changing. I can say that we lack workshops or some kind of education.”*

S5: *“Education should be provided by the kindergarten principal and the expert team...”*

S8: *“An Agency of Education that would support ECEC teachers in their professional development.”*

## Discussion

The results of the research support previous research (Chung, 2022; Çetin 2021; Mahgoub & Ahmed, 2022; Santana et al., 2022) in which the importance of developing children’s competences through expression through the medium of art is represented.



Participants in the research maintain that children's art is the most powerful medium for expressing creativity. According to Brown (2020) and Thompson (2021), art in education helps the cognitive development of children. Data from the thematic analysis of the transcripts of focus group conversations point out that the art medium serves children to channel their overall development. Arabaci & Gok (2021) believe that children in their early years do not have sufficient vocabulary, and art helps them express themselves more easily. As for older children, at the age before starting school, research results indicate a connection between speech development and social development, as children talk to each other dialogically about their artistic expressions, which is also confirmed by research, according to Arabaci & Gok (2020) and Eglinton (2003). Furthermore, research participants emphasise the importance of an integrated approach to art in early and preschool education, which is also confirmed by research from Eglinton (2003). They also believe that a contemporary curriculum and a holistic approach are important in working with children so that they express and develop all their potential. Furthermore, the participants emphasise that the development of children's critical thinking is necessary for artistic expression. The obtained results related to emotional development point to the importance of the role of ECEC teachers in recognising the emotional states of children. According to research (Ayaydin, 2011; Boone, 2008; Mynaříková, 2012), children express their emotions through visual expression. It is questionable whether the educator has sufficient competence in understanding and monitoring children. Therefore, the research results point to the importance of developing professional competencies and pedagogical documentation, i.e., monitoring children and recording their thoughts and emotional states. Pedagogical documentation is possible if the professional competencies of ECEC teachers are developed, which, according to Balić-Šimrak & Markotić (2018), leads to defining the quality of the institution's culture. The research participants pointed out that the role of the ECEC teacher is important in children's artistic expression. Even if they do not have sufficient professional competence, it is desirable that they provide autonomy to children in artistic expression and create a play and material context. It is also important for ECEC to show an interest in children's artistic expression, to talk with children about what they have drawn, and to try to find a deeper understanding of artistic expression. According to Garvis et al. (2012) and Miller et al. (2008), precisely respecting and accepting the authenticity of others' work can help children develop their artistic abilities. Research participants believe that the mentioned support is based on verbal support for the child's artistic expression. According to the authors (Chung, 2022; Edwards et al., 1993; Johnson, 2021), ECEC teachers have lack of adequate expertise widens the gap between theory and practice in early childhood education. Research participants believe that initial education does not include enough methodical exercises and direct work with children in kindergarten. The lack of literature that refers exclusively to art in the early years is a problem faced by future ECEC teachers. In formal education, they believe that they do not have good enough support from the principal of kindergarten and professional services that should organise additional education on the subject of fine arts or the organization such as the Agency of Education. Precisely because of the lack of

support and insufficient professional knowledge of ECEC teachers about art, the use of stencilling in kindergarten is more frequent, which is also confirmed by the research of Twigg (2011). According to the participants in this research, an important factor in the high-quality artistic expression of children is partnership with parents and parental involvement in the educational context. Parents, ECEC teachers and children participate together in various creative or art workshops and thus learn about art together. During individual conversations, they can analyse a child's drawing and its meaning together, as well as their emotional state and overall development. It is the joint aspiration of parents and ECEC teacher that children's research abilities can contribute to the creation and co-construction of their knowledge, which ultimately results in a contemporary educational institution (Vecchi & Giudici, 2004). Further research on the relationship between ECEC teachers' professional expertise and children's artwork as well as recommendations for factors that can improve the quality of art instruction in the early years may benefit from the findings of this study. The number of participants is a research's limiting factor. More participants with various professional development backgrounds and more work experience in kindergarten may be enrolled in future research.

## Conclusion

The importance of artistic expression for children in the early years is of great importance for their overall development. Children discover the world in different ways; they need to express themselves in different ways and in different forms of expression. Although the stated claims are common knowledge, the importance of art education in educational institutions is often underestimated. The paradigm that refers to the instructional method of teaching children art often leads to patterning and denies children's creativity. Although ECEC teachers have a professional responsibility in working with children, their initial education does not enable them to systematically understand children's artistic expression or the possibility of analysing children's work. The importance of supporting future and current ECEC teachers is precisely in the development of professional competencies related to the arts. Initial education that includes methodical exercises carried out in kindergarten can be aimed at systematic mentoring of future ECEC teachers in working with children. Also, participation in joint art and creative workshops with parents and children can contribute to the enrichment of knowledge about art and art elements.

## REFERENCE

- Ahi, B., Cingi, M. & Kildan, A. (2016). Examining 48–60 months old children's perceptions about teacher concept by analyzing their drawing', *Elementary Education Online*, 15(1), 77–90.
- Arabaci, N., & Gok, N. F. (2021). Art Education and Its Importance in Early Childhood. *Developments in educational sciences*, 164.
- Ayaydin, A., (2011). Art and painting as a game in child development', *Electronic Journal of Social Sciences*, 10(37), 303–316.

- Balić-Šimrak A. & Markotić, B. (2018). *Dijete, cjelovitost, umjetnost, krug: svašta se može dogoditi u krugu...* Golden Marketing: Zagreb
- Boone, D.J. (2008). Young Children's Experience of Visual Displays of their Artwork. *Australian Art Education*, 31(22), 22–45.
- Brooks, M. (2005). Drawing as a Unique Mental Development Tool for Young Children: interpersonal and intrapersonal dialogues, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 6(1), 80–91. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2005.6.1.1>.
- Brown, E. D. (2020). *The Art of Early Childhood Education, State Education Standart*, 20(1), 14–20.
- Çetin, Z. (2021). The effect of a modular art education programme on the personal-social development of preschool children. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*, 11(1), 1–7.
- Chung, K. D. (2022). A Dialogical Artmaking Space: Cultivating a Pedagogy of Listening in Early Childhood Art Education. *Studies in Art Education*, 63(3), 188–201.
- Eckhoff, A. (2008). The Importance of Art Viewing Experiences in Early Childhood Visual Arts: The Exploration of a Master Art Teacher's Strategies for Meaningful Early Arts Experiences, *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 35, 463–472.
- Edwards, C., Gandini, L. & Forman, G. E. (1993). *The Hundred Languages of Children: the Reggio Emilia approach to early childhood education*. Ablex.
- Eglinton, K. A. (2003). *Art in the early years*. Routledge.
- Garvis, S., Fluckiger, B., & Twigg, D. (2012). Exploring the Beliefs of Commencing Early Childhood Education Graduate Students: Providing Insights to Improve Teacher Education Programs. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 37(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.14221/ajte.2012v37n1.3>.
- Holt, D. (1997). Problems in primary art education: Some reflections on the need for a new approach in the early years. *International Journal of Early Years Education*, 5(2), 93–100.
- Johnson, N. P. (2021). Early-Career Art Teacher Educators' Professional Tensions as Catalysts for Growth. *Marilyn Zurmuehlen Working Papers in Art Education*, 2021(1).
- Kaya, Ö. & Romanescu, S. (2020). Ergonomics In Design Education: The Case Of Romania and Turkey. *Ergonomi*, 3(2) , 74–81 . <https://doi.org/10.33439/ergonomi.738469>
- Li, H., Yu, Q., Ji, S., & Wang, Y. (2022). A questionnaire survey on the relationship between early art education and emotion regulation of Chinese college students. *International Journal of Neuropsychopharmacology*, 25, (Supplement\_1), A82–A83.
- Lyon, P., Letschka, P., Ainsworth, T. & Haq, I. (2016). Drawing pedagogies in higher education: The learning impact of a collaborative cross-disciplinary drawing course', *The International Journal of Art & Design Education* 37(2), 221–232. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jade.12106>.
- Mahgoub, Y. M., & Ahmed, M. K. (2022). Enhancing Students' Education and Learning Via the Teaching of Art Education. *Journal of Pharmaceutical Negative Results*, 3484–3488.
- Manrique, I. L. (2021). Art education and sensitive tolos innovation project in the training of early childhood education teachers. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 5(S3), 794–805. <https://doi.org/10.21744/lingcure.v5nS3.1728>.
- Miller, M. G., Nicholas, E. L. & Lambeth, M. L. (2008). Pre-service Teachers' Critical Reflections on Arts and Education Discourse: reconstructions of experiences, *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 9(4), 354–364. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2304/ciec.2008.9.4.354>.
- Mynaříková, L. (2012). Art-based program for social and emotional development of children', *US-China Education Review A*, 8, 720–726.
- Polat, Ö., Aslan, N., & Aydın, E. (2022). Investigation of the Relationship Between Preschool Teachers' Attitudes towards Art Education and Creative Thinking Dispositions. *Journal of Kırsehir Education Faculty*, 23(3).

- Santana, F. D. T., Hartono, H., Narawati, T., Cahyono, A., & Hapidzin, R. I. (2022). Self Expression Art Education Orientation: Art Education for Early Childhood in the Independent Learning Curriculum. In *International Conference on Science, Education, and Technology*, 8, 683–691.
- Thompson, C. M. (2021). Beyond the single story of childhood: Recognizing childism in art education practice. In *Visual Arts with Young Children*, pp. 159–168. Routledge.
- Twigg, D. (2011) Look out Below (and Above) Challenging Adult Understandings of Displaying Young Children's Artwork. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 2(3), pp. 196–292.
- Vecchi, V & Giudici C. (2004.). *Children, Art, Artist – The expressive languages of children, The Artist Language of Alberto Burri*. Reggio Children.
- Vujičić, L. & Ujčić, T. (1999). Likovna komunikacija u teoriji i praksi predškolskog odgoja, *međunarodno stručno-znanstveni skup*. Sveučilišna knjižnica Rijeka.
- Workman, E. (2017). Beyond the Core: Advancing Student Success Through the Arts, Education Commission of the States, Education Trends. [https://www.ecs.org/wpcontent/uploads/Beyond\\_the\\_Core\\_Advancing\\_student\\_success\\_through\\_the\\_arts.pdf](https://www.ecs.org/wpcontent/uploads/Beyond_the_Core_Advancing_student_success_through_the_arts.pdf).
- Wright, S. (2003) *The Arts, Young Children, and Learning*. MA: Pearson Education.
- Yolcu, A. (2004). Values of visual arts education in pre-school period, *Journal of Erzincan Education Faculty* 12(1), 187–200.
- Zimmerman, E. & Zimmerman, L. (2000). Art Education and Early Childhood Education: The Young Child As Creator and Meaning Maker Within A Community Context, *Young Children*, 55(6), 87–92.

## About Author

**Antonija Vukašinić** is a Ph.D. student of Contemporary Pedagogy and School at the Faculty of Humanities and Science in Osijek, Croatia. A narrower field of her interest is early and preschool education, more precisely partnership with parents and the professional competences of ECEC teachers. She wrote several scientific papers and participated in numerous international scientific conferences. She directs her scientific work towards the development of Early and preschool education institutions and the quality of early and preschool education in Croatia as well as beyond Croatia's borders. She is a member of OMEP and EECERA.