

UNIVERSITATEA BABEȘ-BOLYAI CLUJ-NAPOCA  
FACULTATEA DE PSIHOLOGIE SI STIINTE ALE EDUCATIEI

# **Integrating Plastic Arts in the Kindergarten According to Modern Educational Approaches**

## **Long Abstract**

PhD Coordinator: Prof. Dr. Vasile Chis

PhD student: Anat Ein Gedi

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- › **Keywords**
- › **Art Education in early childhood,**
- › **Kindergarten teachers' Educational perceptions,**
- › **The Flow Activity Approach;**
- › **The Structured Approach,**
- › **Integrating plastic arts in kindergarten,**
- › **Early childhood development.**
- › **The CHICK model.**
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## Abstract

This research constitutes a comprehensive study of the perceptions, attitudes and beliefs of kindergarten teachers regarding the integration of plastic art in kindergarten. It focused on the role of plastic art in kindergarten and its integration into the artistic-educational activity in kindergarten. Art education constitutes more than just a learning discipline. It poses a challenge to kindergarten teachers who seek to provide the children with interactive connections with the world around them, so that they can construct their personalities and identities via their relationship with Israeli art and the society of which they are a part. Hence, art education and the integration of plastic arts in kindergarten constitute central tools in the development of young children. Research Aims: (1) To identify the kindergarten teachers' perceptions in the context of art education in early childhood. (2) To examine the kindergarten teachers' personal perceptions regarding the role of plastic arts in kindergarten and the different ways of implementing them in kindergarten. (3) To develop a model for integrating plastic arts in kindergarten.

The research is a mixed methods research seeking to present rich data pertaining to the research topic. The research was conducted in two stages: Qualitative Stage: in-depth semi structured interviews were conducted with kindergarten teachers in order to examine their attitudes to educational approaches and to integrating plastic arts in kindergarten. Additionally, to enrich the findings and get as much information as possible, it was decided to add kindergarten teachers' reflective diaries. Quantitative research: the categories emerging from the qualitative research stage enabled the construction of a closed-ended questionnaire which was distributed among 50 kindergarten teachers for statistical measurements.

Theoretically, a significant paradigmatic change was proposed as a model for integrating and applying plastic art in kindergarten. This model was built in the course of the research and can constitute the theoretical educational and cultural grounds as an addition to the existing knowledge, in addition to art being an acquired value important for culture and tradition, which has to be integrated in the education system as a contribution to the child and in general. This research has shown the importance of this topic in the context of education with regard to the child's areas of development and contributes to all the domains which encourage children to engage in optimal effective learning which is interesting and inspiring.

The conclusions include an optimal innovative model which challenges the existing Paradigm maintaining there is only one educational approach employed by a kindergarten teacher. This research reveals the educational approach is influenced by a variety of components and is structured throughout the years by the teacher's personality traits and developmental and professional characteristics. The model reflects all the components to be applied in the integration and implementation of plastic arts in kindergarten. The model is to serve as grounds for guidance and enrichment programs for early childhood, and includes suggestions regarding how to "create" art in early childhood and guidelines for the development of an educational approach that will contribute to the kindergarten teacher's professional development.

**Key words:** art education in early childhood; creative education in early childhood; early childhood educational approaches; the Flow Activity approach; integrating plastic art in kindergarten; characteristics of development in early childhood; the CHICK model.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this research is to introduce the educational approach to the integration of plastic arts in kindergarten to the educational agenda, which stems from the belief and realization that art education - as part of a more general cultural education – must start at a young age. The prominent figures who accompany a child on this journey are kindergarten teachers. Teachers select and provide the cultural assets for children, and for this reason it is important and significant to monitor their characteristics, which reflect their “credo” and artistic professional profile.

The research sought to examine and compare the perceptions and attitudes of Israeli kindergarten teachers towards plastic arts, and also to examine the role of plastic arts in kindergarten. The literature review engages in art education in early childhood, the various approaches within the education system, forms of expression, and developmental stages as well as teaching methods in kindergarten.

Israeli society is socially and culturally heterogeneous, as are kindergarten teachers; each with her own different background and experience.

### **The research aims were:**

- To identify the kindergarten teachers' perceptions in the context of art education in early childhood.
- To examine the teachers' personal perceptions regarding the role of plastic arts in kindergarten and the different ways of implementing them in kindergarten.
- To develop a model for integrating plastic arts in kindergarten

### **The current study aimed at exploring the following questions:**

#### **Research question 1:**

Is there a connection between the educational approach of kindergarten teachers and their points of view with regard to the integration of plastic arts in kindergarten activity?

## **Research question 2:**

How does the educational approach of kindergarten teachers affect the actual implantation of plastic arts in kindergartens?

## **Variables**

This research examined the relations between two different educational approaches and the perceptions of kindergarten teachers about integrating plastic arts in the kindergarten.

- **The independent variable:** educational approach based on the structured approach and the Flow Activity Approach;
- **The dependent variable:** the teacher's perceptions about integrating plastic arts in the kindergarten.

## **Research Hypotheses**

### **The Primary Hypothesis**

- There is a connection between the educational perception of teachers and the way plastic arts are implemented in kindergartens.

### **The Secondary Hypotheses**

The closer the educational perception of a teacher is to the structured approach, the more structured the tasks and the activities of plastic arts will be.

- The closer the educational perception of a teacher is to the Flow Activity Approach, the more flowing and less structured the tasks and the activities of plastic arts will be.
- The educational perception of kindergarten teachers affects their viewpoints and concepts regarding the implementation and integration of plastic arts in kindergarten activity.

The literature review chapter includes literature relevant to the research goal and to a comparison between the various approaches to the integration of plastic arts in

Kindergarten education. Kindergarten is one of the best creations of the Israeli education system. Modern kindergarten education is based on many years of tradition and experience, during which various debates concerning its essence, function, methods and achievements accompanied the educational process. Most of the current debate is between those who advocate formal teaching i.e. the structured approach which emphasizes content and programs as a starting point for education (Leiner, 2006) and those who advocate informal teaching which places the child, his/her curiosity and initiatives in the center, i.e. the Flow Activity Approach (Levin, 1989).

As for the pre-school curriculum in Israel, the Ministry of Education's decision to enforce a core curriculum in all kindergartens for children aged 2 – 6 provides an opportunity for developing an advanced pedagogical program that may be implemented in all formal and recognized education systems in all sectors. The implementation of a uniform and innovative educational approach will constitute a breakthrough in overall early childhood education in Israel.

The task of educating young children is complicated since it involves the creation of infrastructure for knowledge, beliefs and behaviors that serves as a foundation upon which the education system continues to nurture future citizens. The issue where capabilities and skills should be developed as an infrastructure for life and social-emotional skills in children, who are now taking their first steps in the education system at the age of two-three years old and will live as adults in 2020, is complicated.

## **Gap in Knowledge**

The literature offers knowledge in the field of material presentation and the importance of integrating plastic arts for early age child development. However, the professional literature lacks knowledge on integrating plastic arts in kindergarten in conjunction with different educational approaches. Therefore, this research aims to surface the issue of educational approaches to integrating plastic arts in kindergarten to the educational agenda, out of the belief and recognition that art education, as part of cultural education, should begin at an early age.

## **I. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter presents the literature review which underpinned this research, based on the following theories: Art Education in Kindergarten, Education for Creativity in Early Childhood, Educational approaches in early childhood: the Flow Activity Approach and the Structured Approach.

This research seeks to place the educational approaches to integrating plastic arts in kindergarten on the education agenda, due to the belief and recognition that art education as part of education for cultural consumption should begin in early childhood. The main figures that accompany the child in kindergarten regarding this issue are the teachers. The teacher selects and assigns the cultural property and the child, so it is important and significant to monitor and note prominent features in her character, which reflect her "credo" and her professional artistic profile. The goal of this research is to examine and compare the perceptions, attitudes and opinions in of early childhood educators in Israeli society, in the field of plastic art, and check the place of plastic art in kindergarten, in order to develop a new model of integrating plastic arts in kindergarten.

In this mixed-methods research, seeking to develop a kind of theory for the research question, the literature review constitutes the ideational grounds underpinning the basic research assumptions and the theoretical environment within which it is conducted.

Since this research engages in the attitudes, beliefs and perceptions of integrating plastic arts in kindergartens in Israeli society, the conceptual framework guiding the research includes the following concepts: Art Education in Kindergarten, Kindergarten teachers' educational approaches, the Flow Activity Approach to integrating plastic arts in Kindergarten and characteristics of early childhood development. These aspects are described below:



## **Theories Pertaining to Art Education in Early Childhood and Integrating Plastic Art in Kindergarten**

These theories include the knowledge necessary for kindergarten teachers and acquisition of knowledge about ways of developing the children's disciplinary knowledge, as the teacher brings to the learning process prior knowledge, perceptions, art and life experience. This process requires a kindergarten teacher to be responsible for implementing the various approaches, which include teacher involvement and the organization of the educational environment in the kindergarten. These two concepts play a considerable role in each of the educational approaches and in integrating plastic arts in kindergarten, and they strongly influence the application of the approach and its implementation in kindergarten.

Different approaches to educational practice have developed in the course of the history of early childhood education. Some approaches are based on the development theories (Freud, Gesell, Erikson, Piaget), and other learning theories (Skinner and Watson) and educational theories (Fröbel, Montessori, Dewey).

Most approaches introducing an educational theory rely on theories of development, and especially Piaget's. Thus it was found that in early childhood education, theories of development and educational theories are intertwined and complementary (Spodek and Saracho, 1994).

Researchers have emphasized the importance of the child's personal involvement in the learning process as the key to education for creativity, the contribution of the physical environment's stimuli (Runco, 1990), and the need to allocate adequate learning time periods to allow a child to engage in creative thinking, and the need to allocate adequate learning time periods to allow a child to engage in creative thinking, and to realize the results of this creative thinking in a creative way (Edwards & Springate, 1995; Malaguzzi, 1993; QCA, 2000). Another approach pertaining to Flow Activity and integration of arts is the Reggio Emilia approach. This approach is not defined in terms of the requirements of a teacher or system; rather it is built as a response to children's creativity and learning processes which construct meaning. Educational planning is an

interactive process, built out of the learning processes that occur in class and of the processes of reflection and repetition of educators and children.

Integrating a petting zoo and the arts, crafts, music and drama activities alongside formal pedagogical application allows for the creation of a curriculum developing and rife with development projects and producing flexible and creative thinking. Educators have the status of mediators in the educational process (Malaguzzi, 1993)

### **The Flow Activity Approach**

The Flow Activity theory was first formulated over ten years ago by Gideon Levin, in light of his accumulating experience with the work of Center for Child Activity, established at "Oranim" Academic College of Education in 1975 within the context of political, social and cultural Israel. Levin (1989) argued that the free flow of activity of children is a kindergarten practice, which regards the initiative and creation of the child as an educational framework that enables this flow, which is the heart of the kindergarten's educational work. This theory is grounded in the progressive ideology.

The Flow Activity Approach encourages the child to be independent and to choose activities according to individual interests. All this takes place, provided that a wide range of varied activities are offered, and of course we as educators need to be flexible, open and creative.

Levin (1989) maintains that the uniqueness of the Flow Activity Approach in kindergarten can be understood by its benefits. Choice and responsibility are typical of the Flow Activity Approach. The child's free choice ensures his/her interest in the activity, and can also be an educational lever to educate for action, being committed and the self-selection of activity. It turns an inner commitment into an exterior commitment. The preferred children's activities can be examined as well whether there are preferred activity areas in kindergartens. There are two centers of activity: household and construction areas. It therefore follows that these two areas should be located at the center of the space, and should be large and well-equipped in order to allow as many children as possible to use them.

The Flow Activity Approach creates preference in a child, because of his/her interest and the interest in his/her work, and he/she learns to delay gratification in favor of the results and products of his/her activity. The kindergarten atmosphere changes with the Flow Activity Approach. An atmosphere of intensive work necessary to complete the task, and a feeling of anticipation are created instead of the barren expectation of "What should we do now?" atmosphere. Thus the workshop becomes a major center of activity in the kindergarten, where many different activities occur simultaneously.

The Flow Activity approach is part of the constructivist worldview (Cohen, 1993), emphasizes learner. The learner is the one who creates the structure of personal knowledge in his or her mind; it is an open, dynamic structure which differs from person to person. The learning process is not passive, but is rather an active process of creating different mental constructs. Such an approach places the responsibility for learning on the learner. The teacher does not teach, but rather offers an environment in which learning can occur.

### **The Structured Approach in Kindergarten**

The Structured Approach is based on and influenced by the ideology of cultural transfer, presenting knowledge, skills, and the like, and their transfer from one generation to the next. This theory places the teacher or the curriculum in the center and uses Behaviorist teaching methods that emphasize a fixed, steady curriculum and the formal, structured teaching of topics as the main means of learning (Dayan, 2006).

The structured program concept usually derives from the inherent educational goal of transferring knowledge, characterized by Zoran (1998) according to the following criteria: a defined, usually binding program which guides the teacher in selecting contents and topics. The program sets goals which are formulated for children by an adult.

The concepts are imparted via direct instruction. The main responsibility for the occurrence of learning processes lies with the teacher. The structured curriculum is based on the assumption that learning is the transfer of knowledge and therefore learning is mainly absorption and memorization of pre-given knowledge submitted to the learner by the educational system. The learner is passive and will absorb all the knowledge to be

submitted to him or her by the structured learning system, which is realized as a linear process of knowledge acquisition. From this view, a learning model developed, which emphasizes absorption and memorization of objective knowledge, with the teacher responsible for the transfer of the knowledge in his possession to the passive student.

## **Characteristics of Early Childhood Development**

The main theories in the field are: Jean Piaget's Stages of Development, Lev Vygotsky's Contextual Theory, Noam Chomsky's deep structure and surface structure of language acquisition, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theories of personality development, Melanie Klein, Margaret Mahler and Donald Winnicott, John Bowlby's Attachment theory, Erik Erikson's theory of the eight stages of personality development, and Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory. In this work some of the theories are related to kindergarten children and their development (Gardner, 1998; Barton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 2000; Seruf, Cooper, Dehart, 1998).

Studies which followed the development of children found that arts meet biological, psychological and social developmental needs and thereby maintain their nature and contribute to the wellness of children.

Artistic development is influenced by both heredity and environment. Active and continuous learning point to an active learner whose learning is context based and who is equipped with intrinsic interest and tendency to seek meaning in his or her artistic and personal experience in construction with the help of internal concepts and appropriate representations. It appears that his art contributes significantly to enhancing the development of creative thinking habits, fluency, accuracy, originality, focused perception and an imaginative approach to encouraging the desire to explore ambiguity and the ability to identify different points of view. The development of all these skills already in early childhood has significant implications for all development of learning (Pearl & Klein, in Yablon, 2008).

## **Kindergarten Teachers' Perceptions Regarding Integrating Plastic Arts in Kindergarten**

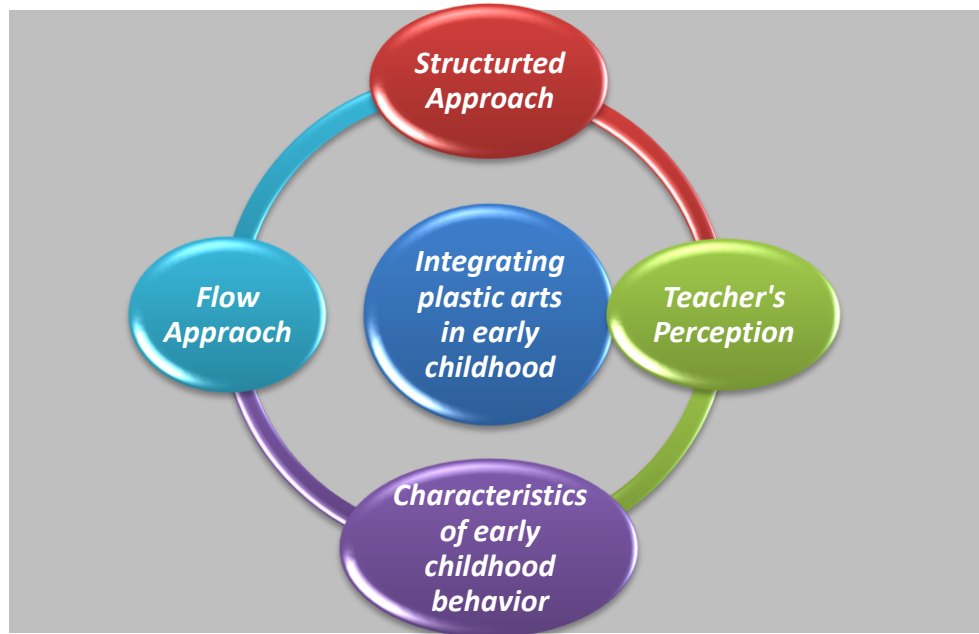
Contemporary society has to consider whether the way it is preparing its future citizens for the future is right for them. When referring to educational philosophy suited to today's kindergarten - teachers are trying to find out for themselves how and according to which educational models and teaching methods, they can integrate the visual arts in kindergarten, and what materials can achieve other educational goals that they must reach.

Post modern paradigm in education refers to the learning process rather than to its products. Learning is a process of constructing representations of significance and attributing meaning to personal experiences by integrating the plastic arts.

Nowadays, the perception of varied competence of children who already in their first steps are exposed to many communicative, rich information, and friendly means of teaching (computers, computer games, television) which allow them to expand their knowledge and improve their learning styles.

Conversely integrating plastic art in kindergarten sets the source of knowledge within the child who is uses his or her senses and demonstrates feelings and desires creatively and emotionally. Through experiential activities, the child explores his or her immediate environment and inner world.

Figure 1 depicts the research concepts, showing how all the topics together constitute the research design, and are intertwined.



**Figure 1: The research concepts**

Integration of plastic arts in kindergarten was chosen to be in the center of the model, because this is the focus of the current research. Around this central topic, there are sub-topics that comprise the research.

The research focuses on the integration of plastic art in the kindergarten and the question whether there is a connection between the teachers' perceptions and attitudes and the implementation of plastic art in kindergarten. Various modern educational approaches are used in kindergartens, such as the Flow Activity approach and the structured approach. These two approaches are inherently different and can be applied through the integration of plastic art in kindergarten.

In addition to the various educational approaches, each kindergarten teacher has her own educational perception upon which her credo is based in terms of an annual work plan, goals and the Ministry of Education's core curriculum. Each perception is different and unique to a teacher, whereby the common denominator is attention to the characteristics of the development of children in kindergarten. This attention is given by the teacher while emphasizing the organization of an optimal educational environment together with involvement, mediation, reflection and freedom of choice in activity and learning.

This literature review constituted the ideational grounds on which the mixed-methods research paradigm was chosen for the purpose of collecting data in the attempt to reach the research aims.

The following chapter presents the considerations which guided the choice of research methodology.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

This study utilized the ethnographic approach which explores the knowledge, attitude, position and art of people which expressed their discourse (Elbaz, 1981). Similar to many other qualitative studies, the current research utilized the narrative-biographical approach to explore the point of view of kindergarten teachers who participated in the study. Carter (1993) emphasized that the teacher's voice, the way she tells a story and her phraseology contain all the practical knowledge elements that guide her work. This type of research utilizes a variety of tools; qualitative tools such as interviews and reflective diaries and quantitative tools such as questionnaires. Ethnographic research is always more than a mere description, it reveals the general through the personal, the abstract through the concrete (Peacock, 1986). This study provides a detailed, thorough and wealthy insight about people, processes, events and concepts in the field of education.

## Research Design

The research was conducted in two stages:

Stage	Research Tool	Aim	Population
<b>Stage I:</b> Qualitative research	Semi-structured interviews	Gathering data on educational concepts and approaches in the field of plastic arts in kindergarten education	<b>10 teachers</b>
	Reflective diaries		<b>10 teachers</b>
<b>Stage II:</b> Quantitative research	Closed questionnaire	Identifying and comparing between various approaches for implementing plastic arts in kindergarten education	<b>50 teachers</b>

### Stage I - Qualitative

In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with kindergarten teachers in order to examine their point of view on the educational concepts and the integration of plastic arts in kindergarten. In addition, also I decided to use the teachers' reflective diaries in order to extract as much data as possible on their methodology.

### Stage II – Quantitative

The categories that emerged from analyzing the data of the qualitative stage assisted in constructing a closed-ended questionnaire which was later distributed among a broad spectrum of kindergarten teachers (about 50 teachers) in order to statistically analyze the quantitative measurements.

The current study combines qualitative and quantitative research methods. This type of research design assisted in neutralizing the disadvantages of each of the research approaches, the quantitative and qualitative, and also in facilitating the benefits of each.



In actuality, performing this type of research allows for combining practical research with the theory that underlies its hypotheses and then examining the combination through quantitative research. In addition, this approach allows for the implementation of qualitative research tools such as interviews (especially in-depth interviews) and reflective diaries in the research.

I chose this combination in order to strengthen the internal and external validity of the data. The combination of these two research approaches requires discerning between the data completeness and its extent. The prevailing view in contemporary qualitative research is that it is more appropriate for studying issues such as reasoning, knowledge, attitudes and beliefs of teachers (Munby, 1990). According to Tzabar Ben-Yehoshua (1990), the qualitative approach aims to understand human activity and thinking as part of the global understanding of the entire research process. The qualitative research is based upon the constructivism paradigm, which determines that there is no one absolute reality, especially when it comes to sciences that study human behavior. Reality is a reflection of the perceptions and opinions of individuals, who together create multifaceted realities simultaneously. The research starting point is holistic with contextual dependency (Sever, 2005). Understanding the context of the research question is essential for understanding the reality being studied. The researcher understands the uniqueness of each of the research subjects and the role of the context in constructing the reality of the events studied (Shkedi, 2003).

## The Research Population

**Table 2: Research population profile – interviews**

		Age of Children	Place of Kindergarten	Teaching Certificate	Education Institute where she studied	Years of experience in teaching	Age of kindergarten teacher
<b>Stage A: Qualitative Research</b>	1	3-5	kindergarten in the city	+	Nahalal-College for Teacher Education	25	49
	2	3-5	Kindergarten in the city	+	Oranim-College for Teacher Education	20	43
	3	3-5	Kindergarten in the city	+	Gordon-College for Teacher Education	8	41
	4	3-5	Kindergarten in the city	+	Ohallo-College for Teacher Education	17	41
	5	4-6	Kindergarten in the city	+	University of Haifa	15	45
	6	4-6	Kindergarten on a kibbutz	+	Oranim-College for Teacher Education	30	55
	7	4-6	Kindergarten in the city	+	Oranim-College for Teacher Education	21	45
	8	3-5	Kindergarten in the city	+	Nahalal-College for Teacher Education	25	48
	9	4-6	Kindergarten in the city	+	Oranim-College for Teacher Education	28	55
	1	4-6	Kindergarten in the city	+	Oranim-College for Teacher Education	19	45

## Data Collection

The data collection included three research tools:

- Semi-structured interviews
- Reflective diaries
- Closed questionnaires

The data were collected in two stages: In the first stage, I as a researcher participated in the daily activity of the studied framework and in this way was exposed to a wealth of various types of information. The second stage focused on the specific research topics as they emerged from the data and then consolidated through the initial impression and data collection stage. All research tools were pre-tested by a pilot study during which the questions were changed or clarified.

### **First Research Tool: Semi-Structured Interviews**

During the interviews, the interviewees raised events from their work in kindergartens, revealed their past practices and how they have changed over the years. They identified situations and training they had undertaken, which led them to change their attitudes and professionalism in the field and application of arts in art teaching. The questions were derived from the research questions and goals (Dayan, 2000). To stay focused on the research objectives and to encompass all research questions, I prepared a list of topics in advance and kept them in front of me during the interviews (Fetterman, 1989 and Day 1993). It is important to note that during the interviews a few more questions were added to the list of important issues to be discussed.

### **Second Research Tool: Reflective Diary**

A diary is an intimate and spontaneous document, which depicts events occurring in someone's life and the reflective responses about them. A diary often describes an educational institution clearly, including its various layers, the educational involvement created and the work patterns. Through the diary, various and important issues can be clarified, such as becoming familiar with the educational processes, the teaching strategies, the knowledge disciplines taught at the institution and the acquisition of work habits. From a diary a teacher's character is discovered, her perceptions regarding her role, her attitudes towards the children's activities, her teaching experience and the way she copes with the children's social and self-expectations.

Research has shown that by using a diary the thinking characteristics of the teachers are enhanced and promoted and thus increase the self-confidence and self-esteem of the authors (Doney, 1995; Flix and Lawson 1994). In addition, the diary improves

interpersonal communication skills (Collins and Baird 1991, Patrick, 1994) and increases the creativity level of both students and teachers (Anderman, 1993).

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews and the reflective diaries were analyzed by utilizing the content analysis method. The data collected through the closed-ended questionnaire were analyzed using statistics.

### **II. Stage II: Quantitative Research**

The qualitative research was completed by examining the opinions of a broader population of kindergarten teachers regarding the integration of plastic arts and their impact on application methods in kindergartens. Because this is a mixed-methods research, I chose a closed-ended questionnaire to examine the correlation between the kindergarten teachers' educational attitudes and their ways of integrating plastic arts in the kindergarten. It seems that quantitative, scientific research is through recognition and understanding and mapping of reality. One of the basic assumptions in science is that reality is not chaotic and is characterized by abnormalities - some regularity. The purpose of science is, through systematic and objective research, to discover and describe the same rules that govern reality. The focus of interest is the explanation of the laws of reality - general laws (Nahmias, 1982).

Thus, a closed-ended questionnaire was distributed among 50 kindergarten teachers who implement plastic art activities in their practice.

### III. FINDINGS

#### I. Findings emerging from the Qualitative Research

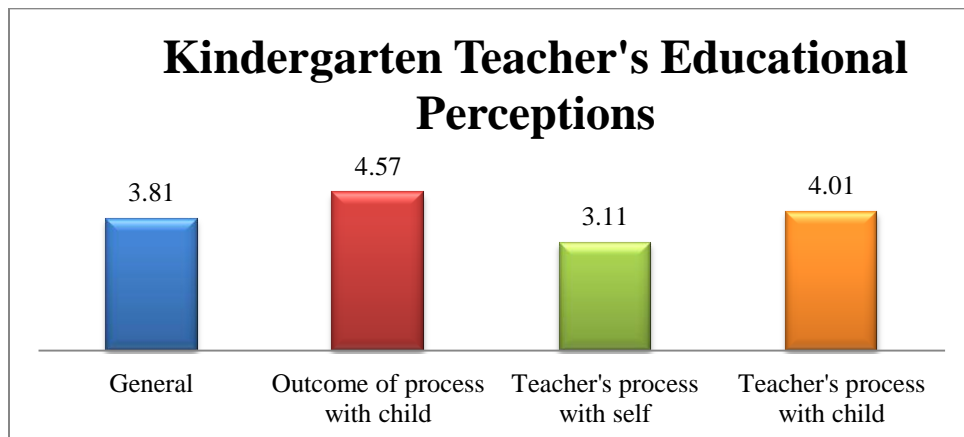
**Table 3: The Flow Activity Approach**

Category	Statement
Developing choice capabilities	<i>"In the Flow Activity Approach the child can choose the place in which he wants to create and what he wants to do during the time provided."</i>
Learning from personal experience	<i>"The Flow Activity approach causes children to be more independent in their experiences. Wide variety of materials."</i>
Multidisciplinary development	<i>"The Flow Activity Approach develops all areas: cognitive, emotional, social and motor skills."</i>
Awareness to the disadvantages of the judgmental approach	<i>"The downside of the Flow Activity Approach is that there is no guidance."</i>
The role of the teacher in the approach: mediator	<i>"In the Flow Activity approach the kindergarten teacher mediates, assists, encourages and is involved."</i>
Allowing for the expression and the preference of the kindergarten teacher	<i>"Each teacher selects the educational approach she prefers."</i>

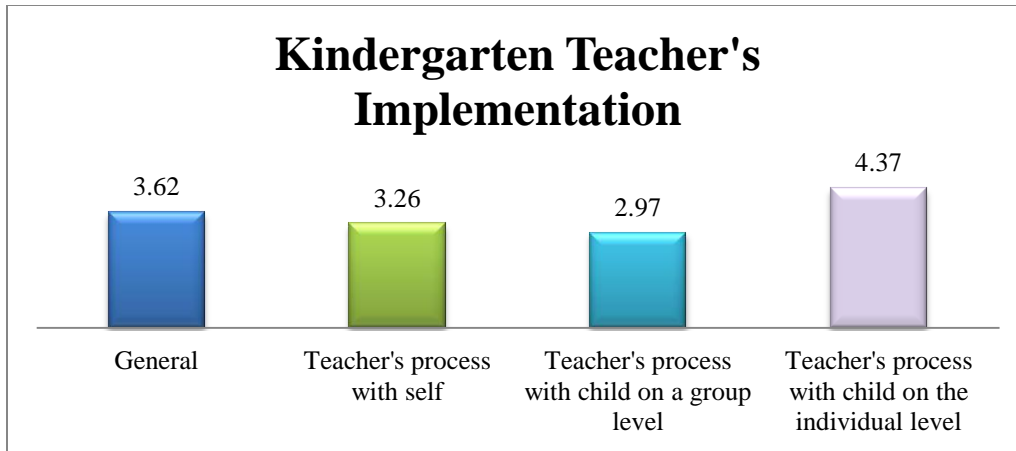
**Table 4: The Structured Approach**

Category	Statement
Organization and stability - fixed order.	<i>"In the structured approach everything is structured and predictable"</i>
Developing confidence	<i>"The structured timetable inspires consistency and security in the children"</i>
Strong affinity to the study curriculum	<i>"In the structured approach the study curriculum is at the center"</i>
The teacher's role	<i>"In the structured approach the teacher's role is to impart knowledge"</i> <i>"To teach the children content and topics of her choosing"</i>
Awareness and judgment	<i>"In the structured approach everything is stereotypical and structured"</i>
There is no choice and no initiative	<i>"Material is supplied according to the teacher's choice"</i> <i>"The children are active in designated areas according to a fixed order"</i> <i>"The child cannot choose nor initiate"</i>
Allows close monitoring and evaluation	<i>"You can estimate how much the child has learned and acquired"</i> <i>"You cannot miss children who need mediation"</i> <i>"Using this approach I have control over the events in the kindergarten"</i>

**Findings Emerging from the Quantitative Research**

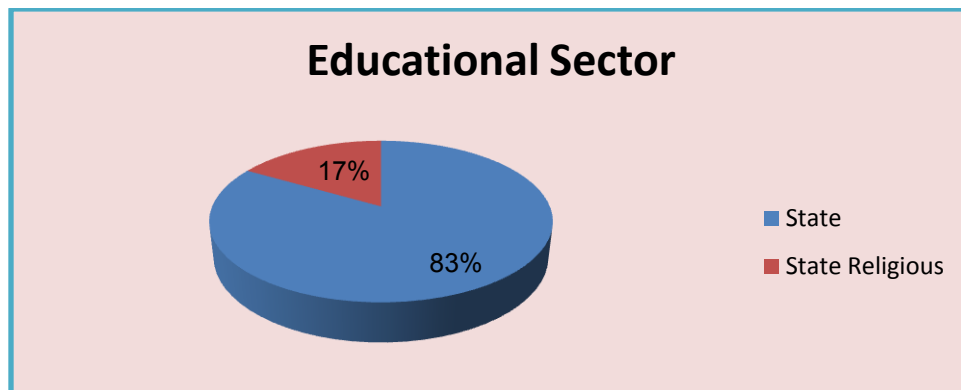


**Figure 1: The Kindergarten Teacher's Educational Perceptions**



**Figure 2: The Kindergarten Teacher's Methods of Implementation at Work**

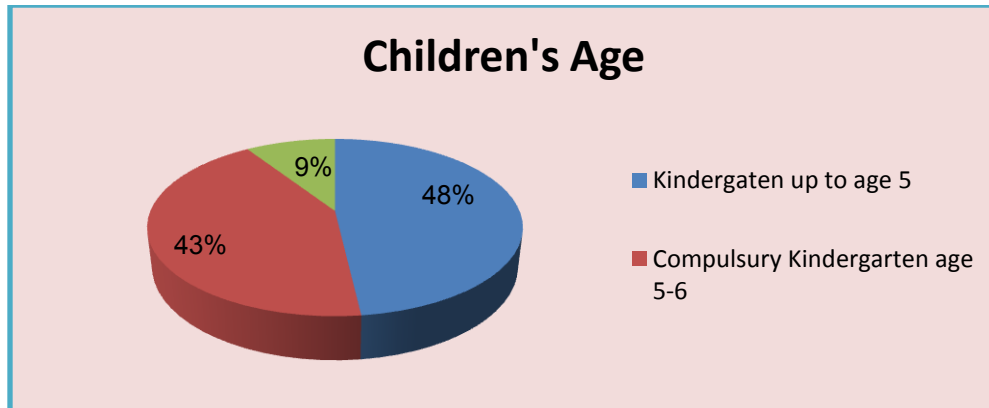
These two graphs show that, in general, the scores of "the educational perception" are higher than the values of the "method of implementation," so that it appears that the kindergarten teacher's perception leans more towards the "Flow" perception, while on the implementation level this way is used less. This is especially prominent in the way the implementation is used with Correlation between educational sector and perceptions



**Figure 2: State education and State Religious education**

In general, no differences were found between the two groups of variables that were examined, but the general consensus is that kindergarten teachers working in the state educational sector have higher values, indicating a more "Flow" perception. A single significant difference was found in the "behaviors 1" variable showing that the state education kindergarten teachers scored higher than the teachers in the state-religious sector.

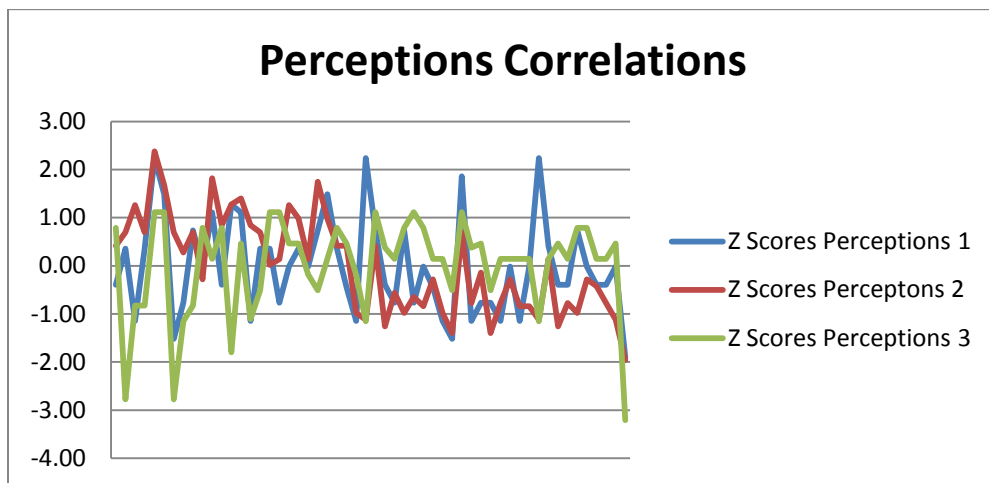
## One Way ANOVA: Differences according to the children's ages



**Figure 3: Differences according to children's ages**

The findings reveal that the children's age variable is not a discriminant variable expressed in the kindergarten teacher's perceptions or behaviors.

## Confirming the general research hypothesis



**Figure 4: The teacher's educational approach and implementation**

There is a connection between the kindergarten teachers' educational approach and her implementation, i.e., the way she integrates plastic art in kindergarten. Hence, the general research hypothesis was confirmed.



## IV .CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It can be concluded that the integration of plastic arts in kindergartens emerges as a multiplicity of approaches and methods. Hence, integration of plastic art is an array of various approaches deriving both from the educational approach and the implementation methods. Despite this variety, there is a mutual tendency to put the child in the center of the educational activity and to grant the child with a freedom of choice regarding integration of plastic arts.

Moreover, the integration of plastic arts is perceived as highly significant in its contribution to developing social cognitive emotional and creative connections and abilities among the child. A new approach to integrating plastic arts was discovered in this research, i.e., the integrative approach. Thus, advantages of each of the approaches – Structured or Flow Activity - are combined together to create a new pedagogical approach – the combined approach. – Mix & Match.

On the conceptual level, the evidence gathered for this study yielded the CHICK model.



**Figure 5: The CHICK model: a new construct for integrating plastic arts in the kindergarten.**

The CHICK model shows the integration of plastic arts in the kindergarten as a creative, holistic, integrative, and child-centered process that interacts with the teacher's educational approach.

**The process is creative** since it offers the freedom of choice to create according to personal interests using a variety of materials. The inclusion of plastic arts is designed to develop the child's ability to use different materials and know their properties. Plastic arts also foster the child's ability to express what preoccupies him/her through an activity, and give tangible form to his/her imagination, impressions, experiences, wishes, and so forth. On the other hand, the teacher must organize an optimal, creative educational environment, and enable the exposure to creative programs and creative instruction, in order to develop an artistic perception and enhance the performance and products of the children's work with the arts.

**The process is also holistic**, since it relates to the child and his/her areas of development. We can see that the central theme that is established throughout the research, which is **directedness towards the needs of the child**, is realized. With the child in the center, he or she is a part of the whole, with different parts helping him/her in the learning process in order to build the whole and achieve his/her goals. The other parts are: the teacher, the environment, the materials, and society.

**The process is integrative**, as a means to achieving academic, social-emotional, and intellectual goals. As a means to realizing these goals, this model's integration aspires to construct the implementation and integration of plastic arts in kindergarten in an optimal and effective manner, thus maximizing the educational and cultural output.

**The process refers to the child, who is in the center and interacts with the teacher's educational approach** to the implementation of plastic arts in kindergarten. Throughout the research, the central theme emerging from the data has been the directedness towards the needs of the child. We can see that in this instance the child is at the center, and the teacher has either a direct or indirect contact with the child; there are always additional stimuli, both from the environment, and from encouragement and conversations. The

teacher's role in this model is to organize an interesting and stimulating educational environment, and provide mediation, reflection, and guidance when necessary.

Art education is more than a teaching discipline. It is a challenge for kindergarten teachers who seek to create an interactive link between their students and the world around them, so that they can construct their personality and identity through their direct contact with Israeli art and the society within which they live. Hence, art education including integration of plastic arts in kindergarten constitutes a central tool in the development of the young child. In light of the knowledge accumulated in this research, the following **recommendations** emerged:

- It is recommended to develop a new, updated curriculum which will include the artistic repertoire of Israeli artists and universal artists, whose works are suitable to the kindergarten framework in general and the child development in particular. This curriculum ought to include objectives and ways of implementation in the long term with details corresponding to the topics taught in kindergarten. Preschool education has to constitute the solid grounds for artistic education. Art education in kindergarten has to be ongoing and well grounded, and is meant to develop artistic knowledge and skills whose buds are in early childhood.
- Support mechanisms have to be developed for the art curricula, so as to encourage the teachers to implement them starting at the level of informing, through cooperation with the inspectorate, in-service courses and long-term guidance and direction, and ending with assessment. The following conditions have to exist for that:
  - (1) The teachers have to be properly prepared;
  - (2) Teachers have to be provided with an authentic and reliable art repertoire;
  - (3) Methods and teaching materials have to be developed for the teachers;
  - (4) Programs have to be practical and applicable.

## **Contribution to Knowledge**

The contribution to theoretical knowledge in the field of plastic arts integration in kindergarten is shown in this research with the introduction of the CHICK model.

Theoretically, a significant paradigm shift has been suggested as a model for the integration and implementation of plastic arts in kindergarten. This model can become a theoretical infrastructure that combines educational and cultural aspects as an addition to the existing knowledge. Additionally, plastic arts constitute an important acquired value that is important to culture and traditions, and they must be taught and integrated into the education system as a basic skill that contributes to the child in all areas.

This research also contributes to the existing knowledge in the field of educational methods for the application and integration of plastic arts in kindergarten by introducing the Mix & Match approach. The research showed that there are various different educational approaches in kindergartens, and that each teacher formulates her own approach based on her own personality, and professional and demographic background. The existing approaches apparent in kindergartens today are: the structured and Flow Activity Approach approaches, according to what has been known thus far.

However, the practical aspect uncovered a new pedagogical approach - the Mix & Match approach. Namely, kindergarten teachers adopted a new model using the advantages of each approach to create an optimal, integrative, holistic approach to the implementation and integration of plastic arts in kindergarten.

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