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Evaluation Report on Educational Program toward:

Developing a Multicultural Kindergarten Educational Environment

**Venezia Institute for Differences and
Multiculturalism**

Researcher: Yali Hashash

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1. Introduction

The program for "developing a multicultural kindergarten environment", developed by the "Venezia Institute for Differences and Multiculturalism" was implemented among kindergarten teachers in Southern Tel Aviv during the 2006 academic year.

The participating kindergarten teachers were selected by the coordinating supervisor and the group consisted of teachers and assistants who were required to take part in the seminar and who operate kindergartens addressing a heterogeneous population. This population is comprised of Israeli children – Jews and Arabs, and of a large proportion of children of labor immigrants from countries such as The Philippines, Ghana, Congo, Spain, Turkey and more.

These kindergartens were opened by the Tel Aviv Municipality upon reaching a principle resolution to provide municipal kindergartens to the growing population of children of labor immigrants. However, they are characterized by a dire shortage of basic infrastructures and they suffer many hardships. These difficulties are unique both to kindergartens of Southern Tel Aviv, being the weakened area of the city, and to the manner of operating with the labor immigrants themselves, whose legal status is different than that of national citizens.

The basic assumption underlying the seminar, as in previous years, continued to be that there is a multicultural population of children in every kindergarten, not only kindergartens like these in which there is national, ethnic and religious heterogeneity. Thus, each kindergarten teacher must create a tolerant atmosphere in her kindergarten, which perceives diversity to be an advantage and a source for enrichment.

The program consisted of 11 kindergarten teachers and assistants, all from kindergartens operating in Southern Tel Aviv, and it was implemented through 14 weekly sessions between November 2006 and April 2007. The seminar was conducted as a workshop, and it included theoretical sessions and group dynamics. The sessions were occasionally integrated with theater skits performed by one of the moderators, Head of the Leer Theater, and an additional actress. The Venezia Institute developed two practical tools – the "My Story" book, produced by the program leaders specifically for the program and together with the Anne Frank Institute in Holland, and the theatre play "Ze-Zo", produced especially for the program by the Leer Theater and performed in kindergartens. These tools were presented to the seminar participants during the sessions and implemented in their respective kindergartens.

1.1 Assessment Materials

The assessment materials used include:

- A. Protocols of 10 out of 14 sessions.
- B. Depth interviews with members of the staff throughout the first half of the seminar.
- C. Depth interviews with kindergarten teachers in the middle of the seminar and several months after completion.
- D. Questionnaires distributed at the final seminar session.

1.2 Assessment Method

The assessment was based on the discourse analysis method, which uses the compiled textual information and analyzes it through the use of literary tools. The assessment study, using the compiled text, develops a "literary narrative", similar to a seminar plot. Using this narrative, we will then be able to determine whether and the extent to which the aims of the seminar, as defined by the coordinating staff, were achieved. The assessment report shall present excerpts of statements made by the various seminar participants. These participants include:

2 Facilitators: Nilly Venezia and Avi Sharfman.

11 kindergarten teachers and assistants, whose names were concealed for assessment purposes, Ruti, Lilach, Hedva, Susanna, Dana, Sarit, Bat Sheva, Yael, Bat Chen, Dikla and Tami.

(Technical comment: When the report presents participant statements taken from an ongoing dialogue, the dialogue will be presented in small letters, including the names of the speakers. However, when the report presents statements mentioned on separate occasions, but relating to the same issue, the content shall appear in small letters, while the names of the participants shall remain in large letters.)

1.3 Assessment Questions

The program assessment aimed to address the following questions:

1. What are the program objectives?
2. How did the seminar progress? What process did the

participants undergo?

3. Is the said process suited to the program objectives?

4. How did the program contribute to the participants and to what extent did it influence their perceptions, standpoints and behaviors in areas defined as objectives?

5. To what extent are the participants satisfied with the program and its implementation?

2Seminar Objectives and Progression

2.1 Seminar Objectives

The moderators, on numerous occasions, stated the objectives of the seminar conducted in Southern Tel Aviv between November 2006 and April 2007. The following list demonstrates a weighting of the said objectives:

A. Empowering kindergarten teachers.

B. Promoting change among the kindergarten teachers: Change shall be perceived as a state in which kindergarten teachers express inner standpoints that could not be expressed before, and a state in which there is an understanding of the difference between the declarative level, demonstrating equal acceptance, and between the daily practices.

C. Learning how to listen: The moderators perceive listening to be an opportunity not to feel threatened by the self expression of others. Listening is very important in the kindergarten setting, to provide the children with various expressive means and contents, without them threatening the kindergarten teacher, and in order to promote a relaxed atmosphere in the kindergarten. Through listening, the moderators wished to achieve to major goals:

1. To enable one to connect to the children's emotional world and get better acquainted with them, personally and as a group.

2. To convey the message of "from particular to universal", enabling one to connect to the unique emotional sphere of the individual, through identification generated by personal reflection, which links us to a different experience containing similar emotional elements.

D. Transforming the multicultural approach into a daily practice within the kindergarten setting.

2.2 Seminar Progression

Session I	Orientation and expectation alignment
Session II	Improving acquaintance through questions on issues relating to multiculturalism – Identity, stereotypes, culture.
Session III	Theater and movement exercises toward renewing the connection after a one month hiatus; activity on the top of identities.
Session IV	Continued discussion of identities
Session V	Study topic: What are stereotypes, bias and discrimination? Which social mechanisms duplicate prejudice and generate discrimination?
Session VI	The advantages of stereotypes vis a vis the ability to identify, and the transition from unique to universal.
Session VII	Reading "My Story".
Session VIII	Reactions after kindergarten reading. Mid-seminar feedback.
Session IX	Discussion: Is the group willing to move to the next stage of the process. The moderators ask the kindergarten teachers to "jump in" and the kindergarten teachers raise the problem of kindergarten boundaries.
Session X	Multiculturalism and family day.
Session XI	Play. Discussion of case study – Multiculturalism as a daily practice.
Session XII	Discussion of the difference between needs and capabilities.
Session XIII	Myself and the other. The difference between culture and folklore. Direct consideration of the difference between the need to accept diversity and the need to implement my order in the kindergarten. Dealing with holidays.
Session XIV	Conclusion

3 Seminar Process

3.1 Group Reaction to Seminar Content

Upon arriving to the training sessions, the participants were surprised that it was not conducted as a series of frontal lectures presenting them with clear recipes for kindergarten operation, to which they were accustomed, but rather a training that involves group dynamics and considers it, as well as the personal reflection of the participants, to be a professional tool. They often expressed their difficulty accepting the format under which the seminar was conducted. Expressions such as these were typical:

Susana: "I'm not used to workshop trainings".

Hedva: "It's interesting, but I find it hard to link to daily kindergarten activities".

Ruti: "There is a dissonance. We think of tangible things, that is what we have grown accustomed to. Here you address something more spiritual, emotional. Something that we don't talk about. It involves changing something inside and we are a bit resistant".

Alongside the expressions of difficulty, the kindergarten teachers also identified many advantages to the workshop method of learning. Ruti expressed it best:

"We are not just kindergarten teachers, but also diplomats, psychologists. I thought that, just as there is a hotline for emotional problems, perhaps you should open a supporting hotline for kindergarten teachers".

In other words, for Ruti, the group setting enabled her to formulate an additional objective to those initially set forth by the moderators, i.e. establishing a kindergarten teacher support group that will enable them to safely vent about their daily challenges at work.

Indeed, the kindergarten teachers repeatedly reported that the group evolved into a safe space where they can express themselves and even introduce their challenges to the group for input.

Bat Sheva reported the following at the mid-seminar feedback session:

“It’s like a support group. I was not personally acquainted with the others...
Like we are in the same boat, it helps, it’s reassuring.”

However, the objectives of the facilitators and the expectations of the kindergarten teachers, who sought tools for coping with diversity in the kindergarten, went beyond the scope of the support group and the mediators aimed to teach tools for designing a multicultural environment in the kindergarten. This met with two kinds of resistance, as described below.

3.2 Resistance

3.2.1 The Tension between Making Room for the Children and the Daily Sense of Distress and Poor Working Conditions

All of our sessions started, as an integral element of the workshop activity (Nili opened each session with: “What have you brought here today?”), with a description of the daily problems that the kindergarten teachers faced in the kindergarten or their lives away from the kindergarten.

Dana’s words were typical:

“I brought a dark classroom. It was pitch black. No computer no television. We stayed in the dark for three hours until the school day ended”.

At times, the challenge described was related to difficulties faced by parents of kindergarten children (thus, for example, Sarit arrived to one of the sessions after one of the mothers was beaten by her partner one morning) and sometimes problems relating to the kindergarten teachers’ daily life, such as hospitalization of relatives, etc. which clouded the sessions with an constant sense of distress.

These feelings were understandable, considering the working conditions experienced by these kindergarten teachers, as often described in the seminar sessions. On the one hand, the Tel Aviv Municipality resolved to open kindergartens for the children of labor immigrants several years ago. However, on the other hand, this decision was accompanied by minimal resource allocation and the kindergarten teachers were forced to cope with parents facing problems with the immigration authorities, employers who occupied them most hours of the day, significant dwelling problems, and more. In addition to the children’s family problems, manifested in behavioral problems, a lack of food, children’s disappearance due to the expulsion of their

parents, and more, the kindergartens lacked reasonable infrastructures, such as games, books, a kitchen and basic working equipment. These problems were further exacerbated by language barriers, where one kindergarten teacher was required to assemble 35 children, speaking different languages, and teach them how to communicate in Hebrew at a level that would enable them to integrate within the Israeli educational system. These difficulties did not prevent the system from assessing the teachers against a standard benchmark of achievements expected from kindergarten teachers operating in regular kindergartens.

In her interview, Susana describes her first years working in the kindergartens:

"The first year was difficult in terms of the system, because nobody knew how to approach the issue. We had no tools, no resources and there was no supervisor to guide us. Hedva and I fell between the cracks... we used to cry together. It was a very difficult year... we said that if we survived this year, we could survive anything".

In their interviews, the kindergarten teachers stated that they perceive their work as a mission. However, this feeling did not detract from the daily distress and challenges that they faced. As such, one of the points of resistance expressed by the kindergarten teachers was the rejection of the proposed tools, perceived as "academic", detached from the reality within the kindergarten and relating to an idyllic reality. The moderators were therefore often perceived as demanding and failing to comprehend the difficult issues raised by the kindergarten teachers.

The following dialogue was typical among the kindergarten teachers:

Dana: "Last year was a nightmare. The child was highly charged, the day went by slowly, one minute after the next, by the end of it I was drained and no one could understand and the system is unresponsive".

Ruti: "We can indeed understand, because we all have the same thing".

Dana: "He's an exceptional child that should be given his space, but he drains you. You want to help him, but it costs you your health".

Not only were the kindergartens crowded with children in need of a great deal of attention, the demands set forth by the system were also perceived to be illogical. In response to the supervisor's demand to establish a steering committee for the transfer of games from Northern Tel Aviv kindergartens to Southern Tel Aviv Kindergartens, Sarit mentioned that the issue of kindergarten equipment should be handled by the municipality, not the teachers. By transferring the responsibility to the

kindergarten teacher, said Sarit, an absurd situation developed in which “we became acrobats in a circus”.

Ruti expressed a problem that she had at work during the tenth session. One of the African children ran around the kindergarten, raising his hand and holding a Lego tile resembling a knife. His actions simulated a knife attack. Ruti was appalled. Sarit asked to elaborate on the issue raised by Ruti because she feels that that is where the challenge lies – how multicultural practice would handle such a situation. At this opportunity, the kindergarten teachers expressed their frustration with the many needs and lack of resources – human and others – for dealing with all of these needs:

Sarit: “I want to take Ruti’s event and understand what you mean. You have a kindergarten teacher crying for help, what do you do?”

Ruti: “This is the problem between our two schools of thought. You (Nilly) speak from an academic perspective. I am bringing my problem from the field. It is first important for me to provide a solution. A child is running and shooting. I first have to protect and then, if I have time, which I won’t...”

Dana: “Sometimes the children are so emotionally charged that you cannot provide them with a solution”.

Sarit: “Sometimes, at the same time, another child falls, and a third wets his pants... someone is crying and you have to deal with them all. That is our reality”.

Nilly: “You’re saying that, no matter what we propose, we don’t understand your reality and therefore you have nothing meaningful to give us. This is our reality; we have no time... no conditions”.

Dana: “We need more tools”.

Yael: “No, we need more assistants”.

Avi: “There is a basic misunderstanding here. You are looking for a solution to a specific problem. We are here to say that we do not have a magic wand for this case, but an approach that you will decide when to apply. It is not right for all children, or for all cases. It is possible that you will be able to use what Nilly suggests with one child, once a week”.

The resistance described in this section confronted the moderators with a clear demand – in order for the multicultural practice to be relevant to kindergarten life, it must fit – not conflict – with the need to adjust the human, material and professional

resource to the increasing needs of the heterogeneous kindergarten environment in which they operate. We will later discover how the moderators met this challenge.

The Tension between Kindergarten Teachers' Self Perception as Professionals and between Moderator Demands

The resistance expressed by the kindergarten teachers was not only based on the hardships that they experience as teachers of children from the weakest social stratum, but also on professional issues. Most of the kindergarten teachers and assistants had several years of experience with children of immigrants and they were actually pioneers in the field. They comprise the original core of kindergarten teachers sent by the Tel Aviv Municipality to kindergartens that no one was willing to approach. As stated, they were forced, usually on their own, to cope with multiple nationalities, religions and ethnic groups, multiple languages and customs. Furthermore, they often did so out of choice, based on a feeling that they are not sufficiently appreciated for their professional skills and personal contribution, and that the population with which they work is subject to ridicule by society. As such, they expressed strong resistance to the professional background – how could two moderators, unfamiliar with the neighborhood and the kindergartens therein, teach them something about multiculturalism, while they live in a multicultural reality every single day; doing so with love, willingly and investing their utmost personal and professional skills.

Sarit, for example, wished to emphasize that she is a kindergarten teacher by choice:

"I worked at [another place] with a good salary and benefits. [I became a kindergarten teacher because] I wanted to realize what I thought of doing."

Dana:

"We operate on emotion, we give the children a great deal of love".

Bat Sheva:

"Other kindergarten teachers would not accept the population. Other kindergarten teachers asked me how I could work with that population. That's who I am, this is what I believe in. I don't think we need a seminar in order to accept the other. All of the kindergarten teachers here work with diverse populations because they want to. Because we have the heart for it".

Furthermore, it was important for the kindergarten teachers to emphasize the extent

to which they understand the importance of multiculturalism, regardless of the seminar, and the extent to which they are personally involved in persevering multicultural values:

Sarit:

"I want to tell you what happened in the Shapira neighborhood. Our neighborhood takes on different forms and colors every few years. At the beginning, I worked with Russians and Bucharans, then came the Palestinian collaborators and foreign workers. At the beginning, all of the kindergartens were mixed and then, suddenly, the neighborhood veterans decided that they want exclusively Jewish kindergartens. So they decided that my kindergarten would be for Jewish children only. After that, there was some kind of conflict between two Arab cousins and one was transferred to my kindergarten. There was an outcry. Dana and I asked ourselves what we can do at the neighborhood level. We decided that, in spite of their cries, we would initiate a program of good will. It took us 2, 3 years of effort, but we managed to change the system and, with the help of the supervisor, all of the kindergartens returned to being mixed".

Susana also wished to emphasize her commitment to multiculturalism and to respecting the immigrant children.

Susana:

"Lilach called me at the beginning of the year to tell me that I am her assistant. I told her that we should meet. I said: "Listen, I don't know who or what you are, let's meet. But I have one important question – are you repulsed by foreigners? Because if you are, you should work on it before we meet"."

Similarly, when the moderators suggest the use of "My Story" in order to tap into the children's emotional world, the kindergarten teachers' reactions are of the following nature:

Ruti: "I always tell them about something familiar, in order to connect them".

Lilach: "You can reach the children with ordinary stories as well, I do that with every book".

Sometimes, in order to resolve such resistance and enable a breakthrough, the moderators attempted to crack the uniform façade presented by the kindergarten teachers:

Nilly: "I want to provoke you a bit... perhaps it's easier to work with foreign children because it is hard not to be politically correct among a completely Israeli population, it is difficult to sense the feeling of accepting the other... perhaps by working with a needy population of foreign workers, your work is perceived as compassion".

Avi: "They appreciate whatever they can get".

And in another instance:

Nilly: "I think you are on the cusp of jumping in or not. You are bit wary of reaching into the emotional area, which means... you have it all, power, understanding and tools, and a place that you have transformed into a blessing. I don't remember any other group that transformed a place into such a power and you are still afraid of jumping in, you are still scared to tap in to your personal tools".

Avi: "It's not that you're not using your personal tools, but you don't want to fully apply them and understand the difficult parts too... Try to use this place as a lab, allow yourself to go to places that you are afraid to go to with each other and the children".

In most cases, the kindergarten rejected the use of phrases such as "fear" or "apprehension" and expressed anger at what appeared to be the uninformed criticism by the moderators. And yet, when the multicultural tools were studied in practice, the kindergarten teachers demonstrated a high level of responsiveness.

Teaching the Multicultural Work Tools

As the group of kindergarten teachers began to feel more comfortable within the dynamic workshop setting, and to consider it a place for venting and support, the moderators expressed – both to me and to the group – dissatisfaction with what they experienced as resistance, as the fear to take the plunge. The moderators felt that the kindergartens were indeed listening to each others hardships, expressing empathy and support, but that this sense of sharing is based on a collective consensus of avoiding complex places, both in order to avoid awakening the differences between the different members of the group and creating tension, and in order to avoid exposing what may be perceived by the others as a professional weakness.

This resistance was found to be especially prevalent in this group and a great deal of time was invested in formulating ways to progress within the seminar and enable the workshop process to teach them the use the reflective tools of the kindergarten teachers as professional tools for implementation in multicultural practice. Below is a

description of the various tools taught during the workshop. The classification into "various tools" is sometimes performed for assessment purposes only, seeing that some of the reviewed topics overlap.

Listening in a Group

In the first session that I attended (the fifth in the order of seminar sessions), listening was very poor. The session addressed stereotypes as depicted through a theatrical skit. The reactions to the top and the acting segments demonstrated a stream of associations that failed to generate a dialogue among the speakers. While discussing stereotypes, bias and discrimination, various rifts existing in Israeli society began to appear: the tension between Sephardim and Ashkenazis, between Sephardim and Russians, between men and women, between heterosexuals and homosexuals, between the rich and the poor, and between Jews and Arabs. The group responded and cooperated, but did so with the moderators and not through the generation of an intergroup dialogue. The group members offered examples of their own lives and were absorbed by their own examples.

In the next session, the kindergarten teachers reacted to the skit presented to them, using words that actually described the previous session.

Bat Sheva offered an interpretation to the skit:

"No one can see the woes of others. Everyone sees themselves only. They think that their problems are the worst".

Dana:

"There was no dialogue, each one of them presented what was bothering them and there was no communication. They each vented their own baggage. It was more like him venting and her venting. He didn't provide a solution for her needs and she did not offer a solution for his".

The play enabled us to analyze a similar situation that occurred among the kindergarten teachers during the previous session. The teachers pointed to the uselessness of such a form of dialogue. In order to enable dialogue between the kindergarten teachers and escape from such a situation, the moderators would often demonstrate listening as they perceive it. Thus, for example, in one of the sessions, Avi attempted to give an example that included the use of the word "museum". Bat Sheva, who was very reticent and only partially involved in the sessions until now, rejected the example:

Nilly: "Bat Sheva, are you willing to take one step forward with us? What happened to you when you heard the word museum?"

Bat Sheva: "I didn't feel it at all".

Avi: "So I see, as the kindergarten teacher for this group, that I chose an image that is not right for you and that I should have used something more suitable".

Instead of the word "museum", Avi used the phrase "shopping mall". From this moment on, and throughout the ensuing sessions, Bat Sheva's resistance, which was initially greater, significantly declined. She became part of the group.

The fact that Nili noticed that the use of the word "museum" bothers Bat Sheva, and that Avi took the responsibility ("I should have used something more suitable"), enabled Bat Sheva to experience a sense of visibility within the group as well as an understanding to the importance of the manner in which she perceives reality and to the advantage of the kindergarten teacher wanting to make an effort to relate to her through listening to her conceptual world.

The following dialogue developed in the next session, following a drama skit in which a character called Jenia describes the ridicule she faced when going to buy a dress unsuited to her age. Bat Sheva shared a similar experience:

Bat Sheva: "The sales clerk told me to 'Go lose some weight and then come back. I don't have a dress for you'... he upset me and I could not look for a dress for a while."

Nili: "Let's connect you to Jenia (a character from the play). How did it make you feel?"

Bat Sheva: "Insecure, depressed..."

Nilly: "Jenia was told that the dress is not right for here age, you were told your weight was wrong."

Bat Sheva's participation in the discussion and Nilly's guidance enabled Nili to ask Bat Sheva to identify with another figure that experienced a similar, yet different, form of rejection. This demonstrated progress compared to the previous session, in which an emphasis was placed on identifying with Bat Sheva's sense of alienation. This time, the moderators wanted to not only to provide Bat Sheva with a situation in which others identify with her, but to take one step further and ask her to identify with someone else after listening to herself.

The dialogue continued to develop:

Hedva: "Things can improve for here, not for you".

Nilly: "Let's freeze now. We used the word 'improve'. What does that mean?"

Bat Chen: "That what he said is true".

Nilly: "In other words, that you are in a bad situation if you're single, fat, and not blonde enough – you have to improve. What kind of message does the word 'improve' convey?"

Ruti: "That there's something wrong with you".

Nilly: "That there's right and wrong".

Dana: "Right for who?"

Nilly: "That's the million dollar question".

In this case, Hedva's intervention enabled us to stop and reflectively review, not only the judgmental attitude expressed toward the group members or characters in the skits, but the judgmental attitude applied by the group members themselves.

The facilitators did not only want to teach the group how to listen to others, but also how to identify with them through, what they called, "from particular to universal". "Emotion is an international language" they repeated over and over again, trying to demonstrate how connecting to the emotional core of a situation that is seemingly foreign, enables them to transform the unfamiliar to the familiar and to establish communications based on being acquainted with the situation out of personal reflection.

Nilly explained it like this:

"Each and every one of us lives in a reality that is a bit different from that of the other and although we are all different, there is a way to understand each other, transform the unfamiliar into something familiar..."

The following dialogue appeared in one of the sessions in which the moderators tried to discuss the possibility of identifying with others by connecting with their internal emotional world:

Nilly: "Let's assume that I am learning about the Apollo 13. Was anyone ever an

astronaut? I want to make people understand what it's like to be inside a spaceship. To do so, I make a generalization, asking what it's like being in the Apollo 13."

Dana: "A closed space, without air".

Hedva: "Small".

Dana: "The ability to float".

Hedva: "Detached from the world".

Dana: "No control".

Hedva: "Alone".

Nilly: "As a generalization, I ask what other people may feel like this, at home, on the escalator, in the kindergarten, on the elevator..."

Dana relates immediately: "I am alone in the kindergarten, I rely only on myself".

...

Avi concludes: "You can see that once we talk about feelings, we find a shared language. But it's hard too, because there is emotional flooding, which seems to want solutions, but not everything must be solved".

Dana: "But in order to relax, you must find solutions. In order to feel that I have done what I am supposed to".

Using the "Apollo 13" example, Nilly wished to demonstrate how a seemingly distant situation could provide many opportunities for identification and communication. The group responded to this example and presented a variety of associations. The last words expressed by Dana describe a recurring tension that was addressed under the resistance section above: the tension between the need to set boundaries and establish control, and between the need to enable diversity and listening.

Dana was one of the kindergarten teachers who expressed a great deal of resistance during the workshop, and when asked – several months later – she reported that the workshop was not very relevant for her. Therefore, it is interesting to note that she, of all others, was one of the teachers who replicated behaviors taught at the workshop in her kindergarten and reported change and success:

"I told the children a story about Bobby getting stuck in the elevator. While doing so,

I remembered what happened with the group. I stopped and asked questions based on what happened here – who lives in an apartment building, safety and caution in the stairwell and elevator. The children revealed experiences of fear in elevators, who takes them. They didn't speak of other fears, only the elevator, but even now, I tend to stop more when telling a story and ask questions. What could happen, letting the children answer and then continuing. I encourage them to think, which I didn't do in the past. I used to ask question regarding to the context".

In other words, Dana testifies that she currently uses the story, not only to practice listening comprehension skills, but also as a tool for learning more about the children's emotional world.

Teaching Multicultural Practice with the Kindergarten Calendar

Two concrete possibilities were proposed for integrating a multicultural approach in the kindergarten schedule, operating according to a predetermined and dictated calendar of events.

During the tenth session, we discussed the application of a multicultural approach to Family Day.

The issue of same sex families immediately arose:

Bat Sheva: "There are kindergartens that don't discuss families in which there are two fathers or two mothers. It's not a family".

Avi: "Who decides that?"

Bat Sheva: "The kindergarten teacher. Instead of Family Day, she has a weekly family ceremony for each child. Each child invites whoever he/she wants to Family day. But she doesn't discuss father mother, grandpa grandma, because she cannot talk about it."

Sarit: "Why not make it okay to have two mothers?"

A discussion immediately begins on the issue of right or wrong. The moderators allowed the discussion to continue by accepting the contents of the two speakers.

Avi: "As soon as Bat Sheva said that there are kindergarten teachers who cancel... it automatically made me shudder. I immediately felt that the kindergarten was foolish in her decision. And then I heard you out with the second proposal and thought that it is another way, I don't know if it is better or not, to bring the family to

the kindergarten”.

The discussion later developed into complex questions: Is the sperm donor the father or not? Is a family of two mothers a normative family? Can the kindergarten teacher determine the definition of a normative family? The discussion was very open and reflected the kindergarten teachers’ true misgivings. It also revealed their rich experience.

Sarit: “I would like to say that I had two lesbian mothers and I really asked myself what I should do on Family day. I spoke to them, and they said: “Sarit, emphasize it”. I decided to give the child the stage and grant it legitimacy. We talked about having two mothers and one child said that he knew a family with two fathers, and the children were proud... really proud. The children were proud of who they are.”

Bat Sheva: “It depends on how old they are.”

Lilach: “You’re preparing them for life.”

Yael: “He was born into it; he knows how he’s growing up.”

Bat Sheva: “And what if he doesn’t, is it my responsibility?”

Sarit: “You have to speak to the parents first.”

The discussion on the issue of Family Day enabled the kindergarten teachers to address principle and professional issues regarding their ability to adjust the kindergarten calendar to the variety presented to them by reality. The manner in which the discussion was conducted enabled the kindergarten teachers, on the one hand, to offer examples of different solutions applied in different kindergartens and, on the other hand, to raise questions that every kindergarten teacher wonders about inside.

Another example was how they celebrate the holidays. In one of the last sessions, the group wondered how they should celebrate Passover in a kindergarten in which most of the children are non-Jews, but rather labor immigrants. After Dikla told the story of Moses in the basket and complained of the difficulty conveying this story to the immigrant children, Nilly said:

Nilly: “It amazes me, you are actually telling the story of the immigrants – why shouldn’t they understand? The king is Israel, when the police comes, they have to jump out of the window... they can understand it at a very emotional level. For example, ‘Once upon a time there was a king who did not like the Hebrews. Why?’ Let

them answer that, they will bring of their own experiences. 'There once was a boy named Moses, whose mother had to hide him'. Have you ever hidden? On the one had there are the details, they must know the story, the basket..."

Hedva: "You're saying that the foreign children have to know the historical stories of the Jews? That we should teach holidays as we do in an Israeli kindergarten? I used to think of what would relate to them. We would wonder how we could connect to them".

Avi: "It's great. We are surrounded by the ruling Israeli society; I would like it for the child to know what Passover is, so he can have something in common with the Israelis."

Here too, it was evident that the issue touched on a true difficulty that challenges the kindergarten teachers. The moderators provided an opening to a legitimate option that, on the one hand, does not contradict the rules of the system and, on the other hand, enables them to connect to the children.

An interview with Dikla, several months after the seminar ended, demonstrated that the discussion of holidays was very significant to her, as a kindergarten teacher:

"I never spoke with them about the Jewish holidays at the beginning of the year and, as Passover approached, I realized that maybe I should, but in small doses, without elaborating too much. The seminar taught me that we should tell them about the Jewish holidays because of where they are coming from, all of the fears. For example, we spoke of Moses in the basket, so they too do not belong, are detached... and finding a way to link in with their reality through the Jewish holidays, which I didn't think was possible. And I finally understood it in Passover. I told them about Moses and Egypt and about leaving Egypt, the journey, and Moses in the basket, and then we talked on Independence Day as well. We spoke of the flags, of Independence Day, of the flags in their parents' countries, where their parents came from, their clothing, food, climate... it was the first time that their countries of origin were discussed. It was a great experience, the children went home and asked, apparently they didn't know... the parents came in gladly, started to tell me more, opened up to me... I had one girl who really didn't know where her parents came from. She came to me a few days later and said: 'Dikla, my mother is from the Philippines, my father is from Africa', and this is a child that doesn't talk..."

The discussion of the holidays, within the group, enabled Dikla to safely experience something that, for her, was in a gray area filled with question marks. The new

possibility, connecting with the children through the holidays, solved a difficult problem for her: how to teach Jewish holidays while respecting the children in the kindergarten? How can she meet the demands of the system, on one hand, and here need as a kindergarten teacher and human being, to avoid giving the children a sense of alienation by teaching materials that are not relevant to them? The implementation of this option did not only open for the children new channels for expression, it also helped increase parental involvement in the kindergarten.

Teaching Multicultural Practice through "My Story" and the "ZeZo" play

Avi read "My Story" at the seventh session, demonstrating the use of a multicultural technique during story time. Avi told the story of George and stopped often to ask the kindergarten teachers various questions, such as: "Which games do you identify?", "What did you like to play with as children at home?", "Was there a dish that you did not like?". These questions led to a high level of involvement and the kindergarten teachers were surprised by the broad range of stories that they shared based on Avi's questions.

However, when asked, they stated that the story may not be right for the kindergarten environment, both due to the children's age – which will seek stories with more "action" or an element of surprise, and due to the language barriers.

Nevertheless, as the moderators predicted, the kindergarten teachers' response when returning the next week after reading the story, was enthusiastic:

Susana:

"I told them the story about Elisheva, the Ethiopian girl. The children were quiet. I was shocked that they were quiet. I waited for them to stop me, but they didn't..."

Dana:

"I told the story at the morning session. I was very curious. I did exactly what you did. We held a discussion from 08:30-09:15. They were with me and the story. They enjoyed every sentence. They raised experiences from home, when they are allowed to go out, when they are allowed to play. I imitated you, really. I asked questions after short discussions, and they remembered... I was surprised that they knew the chain of events. They understood why he doesn't let his friend leave. Each child related the fears of his/her mother, I'm allowed, not allowed, so that a stranger doesn't come take me. We then reached the surprise section – they raised many issues of presents, daddy brought me, an uncle brought me. Each child was asked to

draw his favorite toy..."

Sarit:

"By talking to them, I learned of the social relations within the kindergarten itself. Who feeds who and what they do."

We have seen, previously, that when the moderators sought to teach the multicultural practice of listening, the best way was through implementing the practice in their moderation. In "My Story" too, it is evident that learning through imitation enabled new experiences. The immediate reactions to "My Story" were very positive, despite the language barriers.

Experiences of success were also evident in most kindergartens, based on interviews conducted with the kindergarten teachers several months after the seminar ended.

Hedva:

"The children were very enthusiastic, they listened intently."

Lilach:

"My story" worked wonders, even though the children didn't understand it word for word. The illustrations were huge, real, very authentic and not masquerading. There was no lack of attention. I could develop a conversation with each picture – this is how it is with me, maybe it's different for you. I found it easy to connect with the children with words, something that is very difficult with the children in my kindergarten."

Unlike the case in "My Story", the facilitators did not simulate a kindergarten situation after watching the "Ze-Zo" play together. The discussion following the play was a professional one, relating to the various possible uses of the play. Perhaps the lack of the experiential aspect and perhaps the fact that watching the play required a greater understanding of the language, the reports related to the play itself and not to its use as a tool that leads to discussion with the children.

Dana reported that "The play was amazing, the children loved it, were drawn into it". Bat Chen said that the children liked the characters but failed to understand the plot due to language difficulties. Hedva stated that the children enjoyed the play, but she is not sure how well they understood it. In general, despite the positive feedback to the play itself, the kindergarten teachers did not always feel that it is right for their kindergarten population and none reported the development of a discussion as a

result.

3.2.2 Teaching Multicultural Practice as a daily Kindergarten Practice

One of the concepts that the moderators repeated during the seminar was that multiculturalism is a daily practice. They wished to emphasize that the tool they are teaching does not necessarily relate to a specific event, but that it should be utilized as much as possible in the ongoing kindergarten reality.

When Ruti presented cases from kindergarten life, the moderators were given the chance to teach different methods for applying the multicultural technique to concrete events.

As stated, Ruti reported an African child who assembled a knife from Lego blocks and ran around the kindergarten waving with the intent, so it seemed to Ruti, to harm other children. The issue was discussed again in the following session.

Nilly: "Last week, we had two excellent examples; one of the children with the knife, and Ruti said – I thought he was in the jungle fighting a wild animal. Where did that thought come from?"

Ruti: "He's an African child, from literature."

...

Nilly: "That's what we're talking about. What associations do I have when I see the child's behavior? The question is how I feel when I see the behavior of the other. Perhaps the fact that he is an African child immediately raised the jungle association."

The discussion of a concrete case allowed Ruti to immediately raise the stereotypes that she had about African children. Although most kindergarten teachers refused to admit that they, like others, may be prejudiced and might have stereotypes that determine how they relate to the children, working with this case study enabled them to circumvent the need for denial and concretely relate to the issue. This reflects the great importance of working with concrete case studies.

Nilly then asked what kind of feelings does the child's behavior raise among the kindergarten teachers.

Nilly: "What happens to you when you see his behavior?"

Ruti: "I feel angry".

Dana: "Scared"

Sarit: "Loss of control".

Ruti: "It's an immediate reaction. I have to react quickly, immediately."

The group discussed this case and now we could go back to the question of boundaries and the implementation of multicultural practice – not from a place of resistance against the moderators, but from a place of concretely addressing a case study. The moderation process also did not face resistance to overcome or evade, but rather demonstrated empathy to the needs of the kindergarten teachers:

Nilly: "Look at what we do. We take information that we know from our own lives, our own interpretation... and project it on the child, based on thought patterns. But nothing is taken for granted. Why do we have to keep these thought patterns?"

Dana: "You have 35 children who want you to solve all of their problems, and 35 parents who want all of the children... that's why I have patterns and catalogues, that's how I work. I am just one person and I don't have a secretary..."

The group continued to discuss instances in which opinions relating to the children became rooted because of their origin or previous behaviors that molded an automatic opinion of them.

At a later stage, Sarit felt that one of the other kindergarten teachers described her in a mistaken and negative manner. Nili used this opportunity to demonstrate how the harsh feelings Sarit expressed regarding what she experienced as her negative misperception, could create identification with the use of stereotypes toward the children.

Nilly: "What's important at the time is how your gut felt at that moment... you have a great deal of experience in life. You know what it's like to be stopped in the middle, rejected, and misunderstood. This is your work tool. This is your information pool. When you know that you are offended and need love... it's the same for the children. The question is whether, in order to shorten the process and survive under the pressures, I give the children something that doesn't belong to them. The multicultural approach does not have the answers. That is bad news, because we do not have a safe footing here, **but the good news is that the children have this information for us.**"

The transition from a situation that occurred within the group dynamic, to actual work in the kindergarten, enabled them to experience the importance of self reflection as a professional work tool.

3.3.4.1 The learning process reaches a peak: Between Daily Multicultural Practice and Boundaries

The discussion of events occurring within the kindergarten routine and of the use of multicultural practices in the kindergarten routine once again raised the concern that multiculturalism is not a practical application due to the intense reality within the kindergarten. Dana and Dikla pointed out the difference between the needs of the children and the kindergarten teachers' limited abilities:

Dana:

"Most of the problems are derived from a maternal deficiency. What can I do? I can't provide that. There's this one poor Turkish woman, works from day to night. She puts him in the kindergarten and that's it, no more mom. The child looks for attention in negative ways and it wears me out".

Nilly:

"You said a key sentence: I cannot provide. So you don't really have to try. Very often, when someone approaches us with a problem, our first need is to provide a solution. Why? Because at a very human level, it is difficult to contain the pain and sorrow of others and if one acts upon our solution, we will be saved the need to deal with the pain. The question is whether we can take the behavior and make room for feelings of pain and frustration. We give the child an opportunity, through the story or the play, fore example just as the rabbit didn't want to play with Ze-Zo, his mother doesn't want to be with him. You can ask him if he also feels the pain sometimes..."

Dikla:

"There are children who suck us in, they want us to provide them their need for a mother. I have no problem, I hug them and embrace them. But it can't just be all

about him. They drain you, all the time. They need... there's a limit to how much you can give."

Nilly:

"When meeting with the children, there is always a discussion of my limit and their limit. I must identify my limit. If I exceed my limit, I will not be able to provide the children anything... sometimes I can't, and I tell myself that it would not be correct to apply the multicultural approach at this point. I am allowed to ask everyone for quiet using the same method. I need to survive now. So long as I have the true dialogue with myself... what I can do is not wear myself out trying, but see the opportunities in the kindergarten and when they appear, allow him to express himself and explain where he is at."

This dialogue demonstrates that the kindergarten teachers' feedback is no longer perceived as resistance, but as the expression of a professional need by the teachers – setting limits. The kindergarten teachers' need to set limits in the kindergarten does not "interfere" with the multicultural practice now, it is related to it and even important for the working process: "If I exceed my limit, I will not be able to provide the children anything".

This process reached a peak during the 13th session and it was dedicated entirely to settling the clash between the need to set limits and the application of multicultural practice.

The kindergarten teachers were asked which behavioral values they dictate within the kindergarten, and Nili wished to find out which cultural code they use to determine these behavioral values:

Lilach: "First of all, a daily routine."

Bat Chen: "Listening."

Lilach: "Listening to a friend, conducting a discussion, work habits."

Sarit: "Sharing, tolerance..."

Nilly: "Whose culture does this behavior reflect?"

Group: "Ours."

Sarit: "I would even say it's mine".

Nilly: "The first choice is that of the kindergarten teacher."

Hedva: "There is a choice within the available possibilities."

Nilly: "It is I who design the behavioral culture in the kindergarten, I make the choice. It is not my own choice, but rather influenced by the values of the society that I live in, which are a challenge to keep, because the daily conduct in Israeli society is very different from these great values. Let's put it on the table that if we are talking about a multicultural kindergarten environment and respect for the other, there may be a conflict between my saying that there are different cultures and styles, and between whether I allow each child to express his/her own cultures..."

It seems like the manner in which Nilly presented the issue in this dialogue met a true need expressed by the teachers and provided a legitimate ground for the difference between their need, as kindergarten teachers to meet the demands of the system, implement the cultural code that they can work in and respond to the cultural and emotional needs of the children.

Following this dialogue, the kindergarten teachers, perhaps for the first time during the training, report not only to successes or problems in the kindergarten, but also to routine, simple problems. The discussion raises issues that the kindergarten teachers may have been afraid to say earlier so that they wouldn't be accused of intolerance or racism. The dialogue opened with Nili's question – let's assume that I discovered that, in Congo, working with play dough entails stepping on it, and I do not allow that here. Am I contradicting the values of respecting another culture? And if so, is that okay?

Dikla: "It's okay, because there has to be some order. He's not a single child; we have 35 other children too."

Lilach: "A kindergarten teacher in Congo would pick up a stick and beat him."

Bat Chen: "The children who come to the kindergarten, once they realize that we don't hit them, if we do not have control, they don't respect you."

Dikla: "I know they came here from the jungles. From the babysitter. The parents say that the child cries if he doesn't come to the kindergarten. He looks forward to it. Our method in kindergarten is correct for them too."

Nilly: "Forget whether or not it is right for them. What did you mean when you said jungle, that represents how we see them."

Dikla: "I meant that they have no games. All they do is watch television."

Nilly: "We have value by which we judge others. We will call another reality a jungle, because it does not seem to be as good. It is important that we put things on the table, in order to get off our very high horse."

The free manner, in which the kindergarten teachers speak, exposes them in two places. On the one hand, it exposes them as people trapped within a stereotypical world of images, mainly toward African children, who raise associations of jungles. On the other hand, the reference to the jungle is also an empathetic reference to the children's distress – "They have no toys, [they] watch television all the time". The jungle, on the one hand, offers negative stereotypical lines to describe the cultural lives of the African children, however, at the same time, it empathetically depicts the reality of their social lives as children of labor immigrants, forced to spend most of their day without parental supervision, due to the fact that their parents work for low wages from morning until night.

Further into the discussion, the kindergarten teachers wondered how they could bridge the gap between requirements and needs of the system, kindergarten teachers and the children:

Sarit: "In general, we have a policy set for us and we serve those who set it. We follow the instructions. They told us what children should do at each age."

Nilly: "Is there a difference between the expectations of the systems and yours? Do you have expectations that are detached from those of the system?"

Sarit: "My expectations from the children at this age is for values. It is important to me that they are tolerant, helpful, cooperative, respectful of others that they are good citizens, responsible for certain things... this year, I chose to teach the issue of recycling and through this topic I convey values. But I constantly have to make sure that they are ready for first grade. The child must meet the expectations. Me too. The expectations are measured when the children are enrolled. It is important to me that the child meets the expectations".

...

Dikla: "I personally have not values, measures and objectives. Love, hugs and acceptance can yield achievements. I don't care what people say about me, what I did with them. I would like to note something of the differences – [demonstrates how the children enter and exit the bathroom]."

Hedva: "They don't flush the toilet. That's basic, it drives me crazy."

Dikla: "The idea of freedom, my body is a public domain."

Here too, the discussion exposes a dialectic reality. On the one hand, the kindergarten teachers admit that they find it difficult to accept the children's behavior, which they relate to the cultural difference between them and the children. On the other hand, they reveal just how committed they are to the children and how much effort they invest in an attempt to find the middle road between the needs of the children, which are often emotional, and the demands of the system, which will eventually determine the children's future in Israel. With Nili's help, the kindergarten teachers distinguish between their expectations and those of the system and admit that they do not only work out of constraints, but out of choice as well, with the moderators encouraging them to be aware of their choices at every stage and take responsibility for them.

Further in this session, the moderators wish to address a theme that was recurrent during the sessions, i.e. that multiculturalism is simple diversity between people and not only between cultures. This time, the moderators related to the behavior of children who are not children of labor immigrants.

Avi: "Other kindergartens that we work with have mothers who bring bottles for their children and the kindergarten teacher says that there's a rule against coming in with a bottle. And that had nothing to do with a jungle culture or anything; those were the kindergarten teacher's rules. So what happens? Let's say that it takes between a week and a year, but eventually all of the children understand your rules as the kindergarten teacher."

Here, Avi emphasizes that the difference between kindergarten teacher rules and children's behaviors naturally exists in every kindergarten and that the negotiation of the cultural values of the teacher and those of the children is not unique to their kindergartens just because of the national and religious heterogeneity therein.

Accepting the framework dictated by the kindergarten teacher, derive of her own needs and the manner in which she understands the weighting of her needs, those of the children and of the system, enables Avi and Nilly to discuss diversity and difference within these limits, as depicted by the following dialogue:

Nilly: "In order for us to get out of this chaos, we design our behavioral culture within the kindergarten, based on our behavior. This may contradict the respect to the culture and traditions of the other. I want to encourage you for doing this as you

deem correct, because you have to survive, you must meet expectations, and you live in a certain reality. Do not be afraid, just tell yourself that in order to avoid getting into internal turmoil... and still, I would like to make room for the different identities and lifestyles. I want to prevent an internal conflict for me. How can I make room for the different identities although I designed the kindergarten according to mine?"

Dikla: "An example: During lunch, I decided that each child could bring whatever he wants, although Israeli kindergartens forbid dairy and meat. At my kindergarten, everything goes, so long as they eat."

Several kindergarten teachers in the group: "They're used to eating meat in the morning."

Avi: "So what did you do? You said that, according to my rules, we only eat at 10:00, but you can eat whatever you bring."

Lilach: "I let them dance a lot. And they dance, I don't intervene. They have a dance that, to an outsider, looks scary... it's aggressive, especially the African dance. With their bottoms out. And I let them."

Nilly: "What enables you to allow them to do that?"

Lilach: "The music, respect and love."

Nilly: "What you did earlier enables you to make room for the scary, the unknown... it took you 3 months to arrange the kindergarten. From this safe place, where your rules work, you can allow diversity, the unknown, even if it seems odd and scary. I have the power because I have created a place of security."

Lilach: "Right, exactly. It wouldn't be that way at the beginning of the year."

Avi: "Because you know that, today, you have some control. That your rules are more or less clear to all of the children."

Again, we could see the complex bind that the kindergarten teachers are in, exposed only when the discussion meets their needs and touches on a concrete matter, as it did during this session. On the one hand, the dance by the African children was perceived as "aggressive", on the other hand, the kindergarten teacher found it important to allow it and accept it with love.

This session, described in detail, actually demonstrates the peak of the seminar process due to the fact that it created a synthesis between the message of "multiculturalism as a daily practice" and the resistance that the kindergarten teachers expressed regarding the ability to implement this practice.

In conclusion of the training process:

The kindergarten teachers were initially asked to adjust to the fact that the training is in workshop format, but they very quickly discovered the advantages of this method because the acquaintance with the other kindergarten teachers and the fact that the group can be used for support fulfilled a true need of theirs. However, both they and the facilitators wished to achieve additional seminar objectives. The moderators wanted to teach multicultural practice that can be applied in the kindergarten. The kindergarten teachers often found it difficult to find a connection between the group dynamic and discussions and between the kindergarten reality. They hoped for more concrete tools. They often responded with resistance derived from the sense that the training undermines their professionalism as the only kindergarten teachers in Israel working with children of labor immigrants as well as from the sense that the moderators fail to understand the intense difficulties under which they operate and the intense effort that they invest at work. Despite their resistance, the moderators continued to teach listening and personal reflection. When the moderators demonstrated, through their work, a multicultural worm method, it had a great impact and the resistance subsided with time. The process reached a climax when the facilitators granted legitimacy to the teachers' need to set clear limits of work in the kindergarten, defining the multicultural practice as one that takes place within a framework and not outside of it. Both this discussion and those that concretely addressed events from the kindergarten atmosphere enabled the teachers to lower the defenses that they arrived with in many of the sessions. While relating to their concrete reality, they exposed their dialectic perspectives toward the children. On the one hand, they revealed judgmental perspectives toward the children's cultures and, on the other hand, they demonstrated the need and desire to respect the children and their culture, grant them love, support and assistance in the complex place that they are in.

4 Changing Perspectives among the Kindergarten Teachers

At the end of the training, the kindergarten teachers were asked to rate various statements presented in a questionnaire regarding changing perspectives. The findings derived from the analysis of this questionnaire demonstrate that the kindergarten teachers granted high ratings to statements of "I learned to identify feelings that influence my personal perspectives", "I learned that it is okay to be outside of the consensus" and "I learned how to create a more sensitive multicultural atmosphere in the kindergarten than in the past". On the other hand, the following statements were rated very low: "I learned that I am sometimes influenced by stereotypes and bias" and "I learned that it is difficult for me to change my stereotypical attitudes".

In other words, the kindergarten teachers, through the questionnaire, testified to change, but denied that they are currently aware of an internal attitude that contradicts declarations of accepting the other.

In addition, most of the kindergarten teachers interviewed, reported that the workshop did not significantly change them, but rather broadened a scope that already existed and was kept by them from the start:

Bat Chen, in response to a question of whether the training changed anything in relation to her work as a kindergarten teacher:

"I don't think it changed anything. I knew what I was in for and that is what I asked for. I had an option and I chose this population. I fell in love with this population".

Susana:

"I think I have undergone a process in the six years that I have been working with this population. This training cannot put me through the same process, but it did develop it".

Dana:

"The training was very nice in terms of a social gathering. I didn't learn anything else beyond that. I did not undergo any process that I was supposed to".

Lilach, in response to a question on whether the training contributed to her understanding of diversity:

"No, because I come from a place where the "different" people are not different, they're children like all other children, and that is evident in the playground, that they are just like the others. As humans, we have the same feelings. So the workshop didn't teach me

anything new in that aspect”.

When taking a deeper look into the teachers’ statements during the sessions and interviews, one can actually see changes in attitudes.

The most prominent change appears in the new interpretation given to “multiculturalism”. Thus, for example, Hedva stated the following at the interim feedback session:

“The term multiculturalism was completely different to me, Africans, Russians, Filipino. And you suddenly opened it up more in the direction of identities. Multiculturalism actually exists everywhere and not only in our kindergartens”.

Bat Chen:

The workshop made me understand things and see them differently, in terms of diversity in cultures in general, for us, whether it is the different statuses of people in life, its content, regardless of the kindergarten, as we saw in various role plays and simulations on different situations that we are in.”

Susana:

“What is diversity? What I took from the workshop is that everyone of us is different. We’re all different”.

Dikla:

“At first, I didn’t understand the point. I suddenly understood that the workshop is about seeing how willing I am to accept other things and cope with them, with diversity really and that we are all different, yet similar.”

The teachers’ statements in this case relate both to group diversity and individual diversity, an aspect which fits the moderators’ objectives, who wished to emphasize both the power structure of society among different groups and the diversity derived of differences between individuals.

In addition, a change was evident in the use of personal reflection as a professional tool. Thus, for example, Bat Chen states that the seminar gave her:

“A different perspective on things... since it is different cultures, there are things that I interpret as I know them, but they perceive them differently... so sometimes, based on what I learned and know, I behave in a certain manner that may not be right because they relate to it differently. So I wait for the moment and try to understand the other and then

take the correct step”.

Hedva:

“We sometimes place labels and stigmas like any other person and it made me think twice before doing it... it was more relevant with the parents”.

Sarit:

“When I organized the identities – I thought, what is oriental, listening to music, cooking oriental dishes and I said that, in all, I’m not sure that we know what multiculturalism is, because I cannot even contain my own identities, so how can I contain those of others. In all, we do what is convenient and hang on to symbols and say that we’re practicing multiculturalism”.

Further into the same discussion, Sarit said:

I save time and now the other side has to prove himself”.

In other words, following the activity in the sessions, Sarit reached the conclusion that the kindergarten teachers’ work is one in which there is a big difference between the declarative and the practical levels, since there is a difficulty in applying multicultural practice and the easiest thing to do is hang on to symbols and say that “now the other side has to prove himself”.

Although they felt that the workshop lacked practical tools for kindergarten work, the kindergarten teachers’ statements reveal kindergarten applications.

A while after the training ended, Hedva was asked how it contributed to her work in the kindergarten. In response, she said:

“The overall effort to see the child in the picture, that he doesn’t have to do what everyone does. He can be an individual within the group, if he feels a bit different, let him flow within his feelings, if he wants to do things a bit differently, give him the opportunity to maintain his self within the group”.

Susana, after a while, in response to a question of whether anything from the workshop echoed back to her when working in the kindergarten, said:

“Yes. Of course... it always does, all of the situations, the openness... understanding that there are children who come with their own baggage. If you are open to the seminar, then

you apply what you've learned."

Dana, at the interim feedback session:

"I will take with me several things. I am learning to listen to the children more. I say – all of the answers are correct. That is something I took from Nili, there is no wrong answer. They looked at me as if I fell from a tree. I said, all of the answers are correct and you may say anything. You are all nice, you are all cute, start talking. I took the second story of the boy who kicked and I have a boy just like that. If things don't go his way, he starts kicking, destroying and even sometimes hits me. We spoke of how to express anger and he was going wild next to me. When he heard that I was opening the issue for discussion, he sat down. He suddenly stopped kicking and said – I am kicking because Omot hit me in the yard... We said that if we talk to each other and share, we can help, and he talked and his anger subsided. Happily, I ended the day without a fight".

Dana's feedback demonstrates a change in attitude – "I learned from Nilly, there is no incorrect answer" – and the implementation of this change in the kindergarten. According to Dana, she managed to prevent violence when applying this perspective.

In conclusion: Regarding the change in attitudes, we see that, on the one hand, the kindergarten teachers report that their attitudes were always free of stereotypes and bias. On the other hand, the teachers report a change in the understanding of multiculturalism and the weight of personal reflection as a tool guiding us toward working with diversity in the kindergarten. The difference between these two levels of discourse can be settled when considering the types of resistance set forth above – throughout the training, the kindergarten teachers emphasized that they invest great efforts in the children, both on the professional and personal level, while absolutely accepting them regardless of origin and under very harsh working conditions. Any attempt to undermine this framework was thwarted. Therefore, the expression of change attitudes must be sought within this framework and not outside of it. Thus, we can integrate Dana's statement, who says that "I didn't learn anything", with her report of "I am learning to listen to the children more".

5 Kindergarten Teachers' Satisfaction with the Seminar

1. Satisfaction with the moderators and seminar atmosphere

In a questionnaire distributed at the end of the seminar, the kindergarten teachers were asked "What did you especially like about the seminar?" All teachers who responded to this question related to the training structure and noted that it promoted a pleasant atmosphere and better acquaintance among the kindergarten teachers. They noted that they greatly enjoyed the "group"; "the flow and openness"; "the moderators and atmosphere"; "respect to each and every one of us"; "the interesting workshop content"; and "the games that Avi introduced".

The interim feedback also related to the group atmosphere.

Lilach:

"I attended many trainings, there is no hypocrisy here. There are places where people think of what others will say about them, here everyone has her own truth. I don't know maybe it's unique to the neighborhood, their charming, all of them, I love you all."

This sentiment was found in most interviews conducted with the kindergarten teachers after the seminar ended. In response to the question "what was it like to work with the facilitators?" the kindergarten teachers answered:

Bat Chen:

"They were very pleasant, there was a good and pleasant environment and they contributed to that as well".

Hedva:

"Very pleasant, professional".

Dikla:

"I would be very happy to attend a continuation with Nilly and Avi, they are simply amazing."

In response to question regarding the training atmosphere, the kindergarten teachers said:

Lilach:

"The training was very good, very cathartic. In social terms, the girls are great, I didn't feel like there were walls between us... beyond knowledge, it provided the opportunity to talk, spill our hearts out. You saw a great deal of empathy, I didn't feel like there was any hypocrisy... we really vented, and most importantly, I felt that the moderators did too. It was a very empathetic environment, very understanding, non judgmental, coming from a place of understanding, feeling and appreciating."

Hedva, after a while:

"It enabled us to wind down, talk about things that bothered us. Knowing that there is someone that can relate and understand".

Bat Chen:

"It was a very pleasant experience. The sessions were nice. Different from other trainings, where we just sit, listen and learn. This was more experiential."

2.Satisfaction with the Studied Material

A.Multiculturalism as a daily practice:

Mostly, the kindergarten teachers expressed their satisfaction with studying multiculturalism as a daily practice, whether they reported an enhancement of already existing knowledge or a new learning process.

Dikla:

"I feel very connected. The sessions enhance what I do anyway, perhaps it is because I learned and underwent various processes over the years. I felt different in the group, enhancing my need to accept. I personally think that the seminar is amazing. I'm taking a lot from here."

Ruti:

"I think it's a huge cause, it's great. You took a global problem and looked at us from within, it's so difficult because people don't want to change, they are afraid of change, and you are trying to do it, I think you are succeeding, but it is a long process."

Tami:

"It develops me, to accept the other, get to know the group, discussion culture,

listening to each other”.

Yael:

“I received a great deal although I was taught to accept the other as a child, but I learned new thing here and there are things that can be applied in the kindergarten as well.”

B. Practical tools

The kindergarten teachers expressed a high level of satisfaction with “My Story” and the “Ze-Zo” play. The expressions presented in previous sections demonstrate that “My Story” achieved more positive reactions than the play, although the questionnaire demonstrated that the play garnered higher satisfaction than the story. The questionnaire demonstrates that “My Story” was rated 4.5 in the satisfaction scale, while the play was rated 4.9. However, according to the questionnaire, 8 of 11 kindergarten teachers thought that the book could immensely enable the children connect to their unique emotional world and 2 others thought it could do so to a large extent. 6 kindergarten teachers thought that this could be done by the play to an immense extent, while 3 others thought it could do so to a large extent. This finding fits the expressions presented in previous sections. In any event, the two tools were mostly embraced by the kindergarten teachers, who considered them to be important professional tools.

And yet, the greatest discrepancy reported by the kindergarten teachers, between their expectations and the training, related to the acquisition of concrete tools for working in the kindergarten. The difference between the message of “multiculturalism is a daily practice” and the absence of practical daily tools, created a sense of deficiency. This deficiency was sometimes accepted with understanding, and sometimes with frustration.

Lilach:

“We didn’t receive many practical tools, but I felt that Nilly knows what she is talking about. However, we did not receive practical tools of what to do and how to do it. But that didn’t bother me because I took other things that were just as wonderful. I felt that I was having fun.”

Dana:

“We’re here to learn and not just listen to each other’s problems”.

Bat Chen:

"I thought we'd learn about different nations. Get to know cultures."

Dana:

"I do multiculturalism in my kindergarten, I expect to be provided tools."

Summary:

In general, the seminar obtained high levels of satisfaction. The facilitators, the atmosphere and the learning were very welcomed. Consistent dissatisfaction was derived from the lack of practical tools for translating the general message of "multiculturalism as a daily practice" into practical tools.

6Evaluating Training Objectives Vis a Vis the Process

- A.**Listening:** The facilitators succeeded in demonstrating listening skills in various opportunities. The kindergarten teachers repeatedly reported that the group has become a safe space where they can express themselves and even present their difficulties to the group. Furthermore, kindergarten teacher reported that when dealing with a potentially violent situation by listening, it lead to a calmer atmosphere in the kindergarten. In addition, they reported that they make more room for personal expression by the children.
- B.The kindergarten teachers reported that the use of "My Story" and the accompanying question asking technique helped them **get acquainted with the children's world** outside of the kindergarten and to connect to the realities that were less exposed in the kindergarten before.
- C.According to the kindergarten teachers, the message of "**From Particular to Universal**" was received at various levels. Kindergarten teachers reported that the workshop helped them understand that the real meaning of diversity and multiculturalism is paying attention to the diversity of each individual. In addition, expressions of the application of this approach appeared during the sessions, when discussion of a unique emotional moment promoted, upon mediation from the facilitators, identification with unique instances experienced by others. The facilitators' identification with the kindergarten teachers' difficulty enabled them to lead the teachers to a connection between their emotions and those of the children.
- D.**The adjustment of daily kindergarten topics to multicultural practice** was concretely discussed in the context of Israeli holidays and family issues and when it was applied by the kindergarten teachers, the program was very successful and led to a sense of professional satisfaction.
- E.The kindergarten teachers achieved a level of listening to various opinions on conflict oriented issues, while creating a **discussion and listening to other perspectives** (for example, in relation to racism toward Russians, Sephardim, homo-lesbian parenting, Arabs, born again religious individuals).
- F.The kindergarten teachers reported that the group sessions contributed to their empowerment as individuals and as kindergarten teachers. In addition to mutual empowerment, the kindergarten teachers felt encouragement from the facilitators whenever they emphasized that the application of multiculturalism in the kindergarten does not require them to give up what is good and right for them as kindergarten

teachers.

7 Recommendations

It seems that, in relation to the facilitators' objectives, the training was successful and there was a great deal of learning enabling the kindergarten teachers to apply multicultural practice in the kindergarten by applying techniques of listening studied in the training and techniques for teaching "regular" topics through a multicultural filter. This learning process could have been even deeper and below are several recommendations in this regard.

The difficulties raised in the workshop resulted from its often vague nature and from the difficulty of linking theory and practice, or personal reflection and group dynamics with the events taking place in the kindergarten. These difficulties lead to two major recommendations:

A. It seems that **increasing the dosage of practical tools** for working in the kindergarten may contribute to diminishing the vagueness of the training and decreasing resistance from the participants.

B. **A work plan for dealing with events in the kindergarten setting** should be developed. This will achieve several objectives: first, the transition from ventilation to training activities can be facilitated. Secondly, the kindergarten teachers will be able to get a sense that the training concretely relates to their kindergarten reality. Thirdly, by methodically analyzing the events from the kindergarten and working toward obtaining various solutions to the same event, the multicultural approaches taught during the seminar can be concretely applied. Fourthly, the discussion of instances taken from the kindergarten reality enables the kindergarten teachers to express the attitudes that continue to be encoded while the discussion is abstract, and to discuss them among themselves and with the moderators.

C. The facilitators **should apply the kindergarten teachers' experience and use it to leverage the training.** The kindergarten teachers occasionally presented examples that demonstrated some kind of implementation of multicultural practices. A work plan must be formulated, which is more related to the kindergarten contents and which learns more of the strategies that they use and how to improve them.

8 Appendix – Questionnaire Analysis

Training feedback questionnaire: Developing a Multicultural Kindergarten Environment, Tel Aviv

No. of completed questionnaires: 11

Clarification: In terms of the number of questionnaires – the questionnaire has no statistical value. It's important is that it is another, anonymous, method for "capturing" the feelings of the participants upon completing the course.

Summary of findings: High ratings were given to the group atmosphere, the workshop structure and its repercussions, the acquired tools – the book and the play, and the extent of personal development during the workshop.

Lower ratings were related to the acquisition of practical tools for working in the kindergarten itself. In this context, there were big differences between the actual training and the expectations of the kindergarten teachers thereof.

It seems that the tools that were indeed acquired, the practical experience in the kindergarten was successful.

9 kindergarten teachers were interested in a follow up seminar, 8 of which expressed this interest for the near future (summer or next year).

Almost all kindergarten teachers would recommend the training for teaching studies and for their colleagues.

It is important for us to understand how you define the objectives of the training and the extent to which they were reached

8 women answered this question.

5 women defined getting acquainted with the group members as the objective and noted that this objective was achieved to a large (2) or great (3) extent.

4 women defined acquaintance or self acceptance as an objective, and noted that this objective was achieved to a great (3) or medium (1) extent.

3 women defined getting acquainted with other identities or diversity in the population as the objective and noted that it was achieved to a great (2) or large (1) extent.

6 women spoke of accepting others/tolerance/openness and mentioned that this objective was achieved to a great (4) or large (2) extent.

2 women stated that general knowledge/generality as an objective, was their objective and that it was achieved to a great (1) or medium extent.

One woman defined practical tools as her objective and noted that this objective was achieved to a medium extent.

In light of the listed objectives, provide an example for activities that helped achieve them.

3 women answered this question.

Kindergarten teacher A stated that the identity cards helped her achieve the objective of "What is diversity in the population"; the group interaction helped her achieve the objective of "Accepting the other" and the activities on stereotypes and identities helped her achieve the objective of "Self Acquaintance".

Kindergarten teacher B noted that the workshop structure of the training and the openness that accompanied it, helped her achieve the objective of "getting to know the kindergarten teachers in the neighborhood"; the working assumption that each group is diverse, including the group of teachers, helped achieve "intellectual openness", and the activity with identities helped achieve the objective of "getting to know identities".

The answers provided by kindergarten teacher C were not clear, seeing that they described

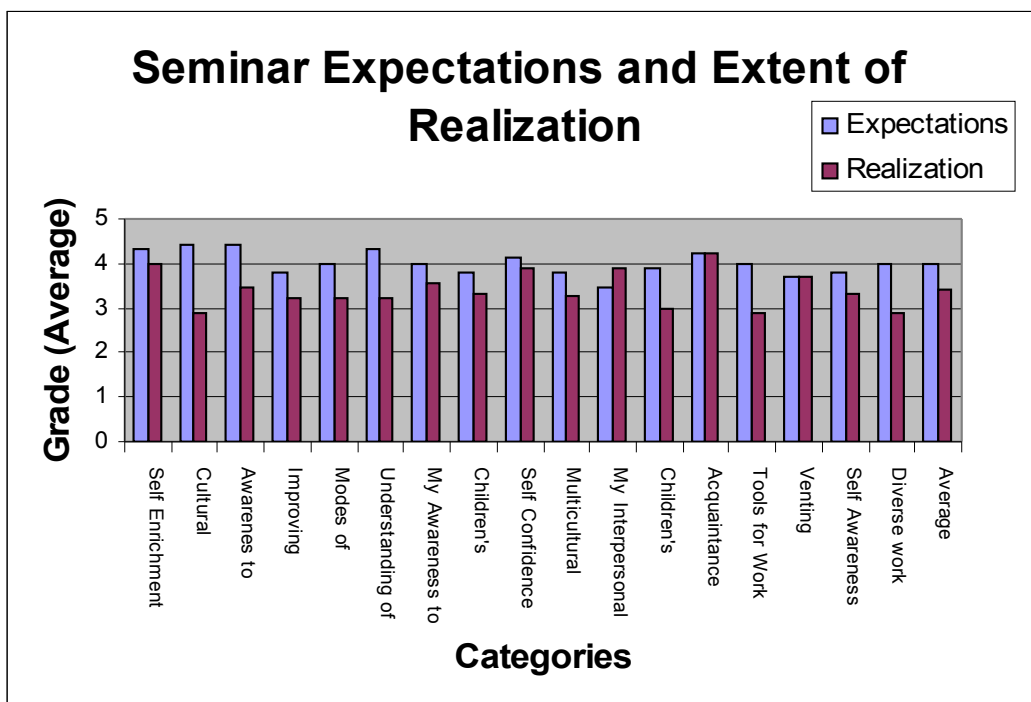
an expectation for something that did not exist in the group – the presentation of a summary from one class to the next and the assignment of homework.

What were your expectations of the training and to what extent were they realized?

9 kindergarten teachers filled in the expectation and realization questionnaire. The graph below depicts the average results of their answers.

In the questionnaire, the scale ranges from "A Very Small Extent" to "A Very Great Extent". These measures are presented as 1-5 in the graph, where 1 = a very small extent and 5 = a very great extent.

The categories are presented by keywords, and they are presented in the order in which they appear in the questionnaire.



The graph demonstrates that the highest correlation between the expectations and their realization was evident in two areas: getting acquainted with colleagues and venting.

The correlations were also high for "improving self esteem", "increasing self awareness to my identity", "self enrichment", "developing my awareness to thought patterns, stereotypes and biases", "personal experience in a multicultural social setting", "improving my interpersonal communications".

The lowest correlation between expectations and their realization was found in "improving my knowledge of customs of foreign cultures", "acquiring diverse teaching tools for improving my work in the kindergarten", and "a deeper understanding of adapting learning topics to various populations".

In conclusion, high correlations were reported in issues relating to improving ties with kindergarten teachers and self improvement. Low correlations were reported in relation to issues of practical work in the kindergarten.

Did you expect more from the program, compared to what you got?

7 women responded: To a great extent

3 women responded: To a medium extent

One woman responded: To a little extent

What did you especially like?

All of the kindergarten teachers who answered this question (10) spoke of the workshop nature that enabled a pleasant environment and a better acquaintance with the other kindergarten teachers ("the workshop setting", "the group", "the flow and openness", "the facilitators and atmosphere", "respect for every one of us", "the workshop thing", "the games that Avi presented").

What would you change?

6 kindergarten teachers answered this question.

3 would change nothing.

1 would add practical tools.

1 would add information on different cultures, holidays, etc.

1 would add work on specific instances and how to deal with them.

Was the program teaching method varied?

To a very large extent – 4

To a large extent – 5

To a medium extent – 2

The following table consolidates the average figure for the teachers' answer to the following instruction:

The following statements relate to the different sessions. Please note the extent to which you agree with each of them.

The scale for the table ranged from "to a very large extent" to "to a very little extent". In the table below: 5 = To a very large extent and 1 = To a very little extent.

The questionnaire was filled by 11 kindergarten teachers.

Statements	Average
Dealt with relevant issues relating to the development of a multicultural kindergarten environment.	3.4
The rate of progress was too slow	2.7
The atmosphere was pleasant	4.7
I felt confident to speak of personal issues.	4.5
I felt that the facilitators expect me to think in certain directions.	2.8
The distribution of time within the activity was balanced and correct.	3.9
The activities were always interesting and helpful.	4.1
The identity composition of the participant group was conducive to personal learning.	4.3
I didn't know what was expected of me.	2.2

The table demonstrates that the atmosphere and ability to express personal feelings rated highest.

High ratings were also related to the statements – "the activities were always interesting and helpful" and "the division of time between the activities was balanced and correct".

"Negative" statements achieved the lowest ratings (I didn't know what was expected of me, I felt that the facilitators expected me to think in certain directions).

The following table consolidates the average figure for the teachers' answer to the following instruction:

How satisfied are you with each of the program components? Address each statement and express the extent to which you agree.

The scale for the table ranged from “to a very large extent” to “to a very little extent”. In the table below: 5 = To a very large extent and 1 = To a very little extent.

The questionnaire was filled by 11 kindergarten teachers.

Statements	Average
The theoretical studies within the seminar	3.4
The workshop part of the seminar	4.6
The personal training received	3.9
“My Story” book	4.5
“Ze-Zo” play	4.9
Initial implementation of the program in the kindergarten	3.9
The kindergarten teachers’ guide	4.1
Personal written assignments.	4.2

The table demonstrates that the play, the workshop component and the book were granted the highest ratings.

High ratings were also given to the kindergarten teachers’ guide and the written assignments.

Further high ratings were given to the personal training and the initial implementation in the kindergarten.

The lowest grade was given to theoretical learning – 3.4, i.e. this is the component with which satisfaction is above medium.

To what extent can using “My Story” help children connect to their emotional and unique world?

To a very large extent – 8

To a large extent – 2

To a little extent - 1

To what extent can watching “Ze-Zo” help children connect to their emotional and unique world?

To a very large extent – 6

To a large extent – 3

To a little extent - 2

The following table consolidates the average figure for the teachers’ answer to the following instruction:

What is your opinion of the program, as you performed it in your kindergarten? Address each statement and express the extent to which you agree.

The scale for the table ranged from “to a very large extent” to “to a very little extent”. In the table below: 5 = To a very large extent and 1 = To a very little extent.

The questionnaire was filled by 11 kindergarten teachers.

Statements	Average
I learned a great deal from using the program tools	4.3
I enjoyed my first attempts to implement the program in the kindergarten	4.1
The children expressed an interest in the tools presented to them.	4.1
The program is beginning to impact the atmosphere in my kindergarten.	3.6
I did not receive sufficient training for implementing the program in my kindergarten.	2.7
The children’s parents are interested in the program.	2.7
Implementing the program takes up too much of my time	1.9

The table demonstrates that the implementation in the kindergarten was rated high. The lower ratings were granted to “negative” statements, such as “I did not receive sufficient training”, but also to the statement dealing with parental interest.

Do you have any more comments on the implementation of the program?

3 kindergarten teachers responded:

Kindergarten teacher A: "The course should be continued, it is too short for such an important objective".

Kindergarten teacher B: "The program is great, it has wonderful music. The atmosphere is pleasant and the participants are charming".

Kindergarten teacher C: "Despite my experience, I underwent a successful and enjoyable learning process, leading to reinforcement of my work methods".

Did you face difficulties?

The kindergarten teachers who responded (9) gave a negative answer.

The following table consolidates the average figure for the teachers' answer to the following instruction:

To what extent did the program contribute to you in each of the following topics? Address each statement and express the extent to which you agree.

The scale for the table ranged from "to a very large extent" to "to a very little extent". In the table below: 5 = To a very large extent and 1 = To a very little extent.

The questionnaire was filled by 11 kindergarten teachers.

Statements	Average
I learned to recognize emotions that influence my personal attitudes.	4.2
I learned that it is okay to be outside of the consensus.	4
I learned how to create a more sensitive multicultural environment in the kindergarten, compared to the past.	3.9
I learned to control the emotions that influence my attitudes.	3.8
I gained confidence with various ordeals in the kindergarten.	3.7
I was given tools to identify stereotypes in the kindergarten environment.	3.5
I understood the connection between theory and practice.	3.5
I was given tools with which I could change the attitude toward others in the kindergarten.	3.5
I learned that I am sometimes influenced by stereotypes and bias	2.5
I learned that it is difficult for me to change my stereotypical attitudes.	1.9

The table demonstrates that most of the statements were agreed with, except for those dealing with the participants' failure to change. The statements dealing with self change achieved especially high ratings.

General Concluding Questions

To what extent did you attend the sessions?

Most of them – 9 kindergarten teachers

All of them – 2 kindergarten teachers

(reasons for failing to attend – illness, personal constraints, family events, travel).

Did the physical conditions meet your expectations?

To a very large extent – 7

To a large extent – 2

To a medium extent – 1

To a little extent – 1

What can be done to improve the program next year?

4 kindergarten teachers answered this question:

Kindergarten teacher A: Add more practical tools, like the books and the play.

Kindergarten teacher B: Add more case studies and directions on dealing with them.

Kindergarten teacher C: Add experiential activities and plays.

Kindergarten teacher D: State in advance that the training is workshop oriented and that learning is independent. Each participant learns from his point of reference and using the emotional resources that he is willing to sacrifice.

To what extent would you recommend the program to your friends?

To a very large extent – 6

To a large extent – 4

To a little extent – 1

Would you be interested in a continuation to the course?

Yes – 9

No – 0

When?

Next year – 7

In the summer – 1

In a few years – 1

How many sessions would you like in the next course?

3 kindergarten teachers responded – 10 sessions

One kindergarten teacher – A full year

The rest did not answer this question.

What issues would you like to address?

Kindergarten teacher A: Some Judaism, youth, friendship.

Kindergarten teacher B: Everything interests me.

Kindergarten teacher C: More practice, providing content for working in a multicultural society.

Kindergarten teacher D: More theory and further workshops.

When studying teaching, were you introduced to the topic studied in the course?

No – 9

Yes - 1

Do you think that a similar training should be integrated within the education college program?

Yes – 9.

Do you have any additional comments you wish to share?

Kindergarten teacher A: Good luck.

Kindergarten teacher B: Yes, you're charming. Thank you and goodbye.

Kindergarten teacher C: I enjoyed the pleasant atmosphere, and the professionalism of the facilitators. The play was excellent. I hope to see you again next year.

Kindergarten teacher D: Thank you for this wonderful training, it was very pleasant. The closeness, friendship, understanding and tolerance were great. Good luck in the future, I hope we meet again next year.