

# Social Status and Professional Development of Early Childhood and Preschool Teacher Profession: Sociological and Pedagogical Theoretical Frame

Lidija Vujičić, Željko Boneta and Željka Ivković  
Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka

## **Abstract**

*This paper theoretically and empirically deals with the relationship between the concepts of social status and professional development of early childhood and preschool teachers' profession, while discussing the possibility of complementing two dominantly sociological and pedagogical traditions from which they derived. Low social status of early childhood and preschool teacher profession has not been significantly improved, neither in the context of continuous emerging of new professions in the late modernity, neither in the context of flourishing of different approaches to professional development. For this reason, we were interested in determining the attitudes of early childhood and preschool teachers about the position and relevance of their profession in our society, as well as whether there is a connection between the mentioned attitudes and early childhood and preschool teachers' attitudes to professional development. We conducted a survey in December 2013 on the sample of N=270 early childhood and preschool teachers in the area of Zagreb and Rijeka. The results showed that early childhood and preschool teachers believe they perform an extremely responsible job which is professionally and materially undermined in our society. However, the results also showed that there is a certain connection between positive cultures of educational institutions, professional development of early childhood and preschool teachers and their positive perception of the social status of early childhood and preschool teacher profession. This connection should be explored further since it opens a space for*

*discussion about the possibilities in shifting the social status of the profession by implementing the action from below, in a micro-context.*

**Key words:** *early childhood and preschool education; early childhood and preschool teacher's perspective; early childhood and preschool teacher profession; professional development; professionalism; social status*

## Introduction

Sociological textbooks usually define professions descriptively, according to the *trait approach* which is also known as the *taxonomic approach*. According to that definition, profession is an occupation of high social status based on a body of knowledge, and is characterized by: abstract, complex, secretive and specialized knowledge; monopoly on expertise; autonomy; authority over clients and subordinated professions; the recognition of the general public; professional organization; altruism; developed ethic codes (Šporer, 1990; Hodson & Sullivan, 2008). Structural functionalism fits the characteristics of a profession into the meritocratic concept of social positions distribution, according to which every profession has a social status equivalent with its contribution to the successful functioning of society. "Occupations with very esoteric and complex knowledge and expertise of great importance to society were usually seen as being granted a high position in the social system with state sanction in return for protecting the public and/or clients" (Saks, 2012, p. 2). In other words, professions are guarantors for maintaining the key functional precondition – fundamental values in society. Neo-Marxist interpretation criticizes this approach and focuses on the question of the power of a certain profession in the context of its socio-economic position in society. Neo-Weberian perspective also connects the status of a profession with its position in the distribution of power, but focuses on the analysis of the patterns of cultural consumption (Chan, 2010) and the process of competition on the market where professional organizations make it difficult for and/or prevent laity from entering the field of profession (*social closure*) (Saks, 2012). Interactionist approach analyses the micro-level of social relations inside and between individual professions by which their social reputation is defined. Functionalism, therefore, considers that the different amount of reputation belonging to a certain occupation is a consequence of its social importance. Based on the degree of development of certain characteristics, all occupations may be positioned on the continuum of occupations, from *semi-professions* to professions. Profession of early childhood and preschool education is ranked as a semi-profession (along with social workers, teachers, nurses, etc.) whose performance requires only the Bachelor's degree, because the profession is not based on the specialized body of knowledge and has a low level of autonomy and control over its field (Etzioni, 1969, according to Abbott & Meerabeau, 2003). As if Etzioni's diagnoses defined the early childhood and preschool teacher profession as not overly challenging for long-term sociological analyses: as far as we know, the early childhood and preschool teacher profession is the subject of only one text which

analyses it coming from the previously listed characteristics of a profession, published over a quarter of a decade ago (Katz, 1987). It is significant that early childhood and preschool teachers are not mentioned even in the sociological study of occupations oriented towards caregiving (Abbott & Meerabeau, 2003). We can conclude that neglecting early childhood and preschool teacher profession in the sociological analyses is an indirect indicator of its fairly low social status.

While dominant sociological approaches (primarily functionalism and Marxism) highlight structural conditions, or better said limitations, thus positioning early childhood and preschool teacher profession in the existing configuration of professions and complicating their shift in the social status, contemporary socio-constructivist approach in pedagogy tries to determine the elements of culture of an educational institution and strategic tools which are available for the individual in a certain micro-context (in our case, early childhood and preschools teacher), and which can present particular channels through which it is possible to influence not only the personal professional status, but also the social status of early childhood and preschool teacher profession in general.

One of those elements of culture, or rather requirements toward cultures of educational institutions, is that those cultures have to implement innovations to be able to successfully keep up with the changes surrounding them (Preskill & Torres 1999; Kikoski & Kikoski, 2004, as cited in Kimonen et al., 2005). Similarly, Fullan (2007) highlights deep theoretical and evolutionary reasons for believing that the society would be stronger if education enabled people to learn and work together on accomplishing higher objectives which would be acceptable for both individual and collective good. He emphasizes learning which encourages diversity, not homogeneity, includes different kinds of intelligence and different learning styles. He also emphasizes that theoretical knowledge should be verified in practice, and integrated again in the environment in which the community learns. In other words, the function or the meaning of learning becomes “doing the right things in the environment in which we work“ (Fullan, 2007, p. 302). Fullan states that when more people start doing the right things in their own environment, immersed in the changes of their context, a new capacity for changes will emerge by which many contexts will really start changing. For example, in the organizational theory, Senge et al. (2003, p. 38) emphasize “The research of the ways in which the innovation disperses in large organizations continually showed the importance of informal networks and professional communities. Those networks were more important than formal managerial structures because they enabled employees to learn new ideas, apply them and exchange practical advice and lessons“. In other words, educational institutions that are directed towards the professional development support employee networks, common sense of purpose and orientation to learning and research (Vujičić, 2008). According to Given et al. (2010), the cooperative, participatory professional development is theoretically framed in the literature on “communities of practice“

(Wenger, 1998), “professional learning communities” (Dufour & Eaker, 1998, 2002; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001), “communities of early childhood and preschool teachers for learning” (Horn, 2005), and “early childhood and preschool teacher research” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999). Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999, p. 289) see those communities as places that “support early childhood and preschool teachers in generating existing knowledge, discuss and question their own practice, and interpret and question theory and research of others” (according to Given et al., 2010, p. 37).

The vision of professional development is directed toward the early childhood and preschool teacher qualified for reflecting and evaluating the educational process, and the one who will be able to critically think and provide preconditions for the development of every single child. To successfully assume all those new roles, they are expected to be open and ready for changes, motivated for lifelong learning, research of personal practice, developing the culture of dialogue and cooperation for more quality and efficient professional development.

Since, in the theoretical background, we tried to combine sociological approach with social status and contemporary pedagogical approach with professional development of early childhood and preschool teacher profession, the objectives of our research were the following: to research the perception of early childhood and preschool teachers about the social status of their profession, to investigate the level of motivation of early childhood and preschool teachers for professional development, and to determine whether there is a connection between early childhood and preschool teachers’ attitudes about the social status of their profession and the motivation of early childhood and preschool teachers for professional development.

## **Sample and Methodology**

Survey was conducted in Zagreb and Rijeka (cities in north-western Croatia) in December 2013, on a sample of N=270 early childhood and preschool teachers. The research was anonymous and voluntary. Early childhood and preschool teachers from eight kindergartens in Zagreb (Radost, Matija Gubec, Ivana Brlić-Mažuranić, Vrapče, Izvor, Jarun, Srednjaci and Trešnjevka) and seven kindergartens in Rijeka (Zvončić, Srdoči, Krijesnica, Mirta, Turnić, Zvonimir Cviić and Potok) were surveyed.

### ***Measuring Instruments***

For the purpose of the research, a questionnaire was constructed that involved two adapted instruments which Hargreaves et al. (2006) used in their analysis of the status of teacher profession in England: *Scale of social status of early childhood and preschool teacher profession* (6 out of 18 items will be presented in this paper) and *Professional development index* (subscale *Teaching as constructive learning*, also 6 items). It is an additive scale (index) in which the higher score on the scale indicates the higher acceptance of items. Other instruments included socio-demographic

indicators: gender (dichotomous variable), age (open question), level of education (three categories: high school, Bachelor's degree and Master's degree or higher), years of work experience (open question) and work promotion (three categories: early childhood and preschool teacher, early childhood and preschool teacher-mentor and early childhood and preschool teacher-advisor).

The data were analyzed with the statistical package SPSS Version 20. T-test for independent samples, ANOVA and bivariate correlation were used in the analysis.

## Results and Discussion

All the participants in the research were female; the youngest was 23 and the oldest 63 years old, with the average age 43.33 years (Table 1). Some of the participants just began working as early childhood and preschool teachers, while some already had 42 years of working experience. Most of the early childhood and preschool teachers had graduated from college (equivalent to today's Bachelor's degree), which is the consequence of the changes in the legally prescribed level of education necessary to enter the profession that took place in Croatia in the last forty years, as well as recently opened possibility to continue the education at the Master's level, for instance, at the Faculty of Teacher Education at the University of Rijeka.

A smaller number of participants was promoted into higher titles (17.5%) so, considering that the promotions were enabled in 1997, an open question is raised: is this fact related with lower social status of the early childhood and preschool teacher profession or is it the consequence of the traditional approach in early childhood and preschool teacher profession?

Table 1  
*The sample structure*

Gender		City	
Male	0.0 %	Zagreb	75.5 %
Female	100.0%	Rijeka	24.5 %
<b>Level of education</b>		<b>Work promotion</b>	
High school	14.3%	Early childhood and preschool teacher	82.5 %
College	75.5%	Early childhood and preschool teacher-mentor	15.2 %
Faculty	10.2%	Early childhood and preschool teacher-advisor	2.3 %
<b>Years of work experience (<math>\bar{x}</math> <math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>	20.23 y.	<b>Age (<math>\bar{x}</math> <math>\bar{x}</math>)</b>	43.33 y.
Min-Max	1 y. - 42 y.	Min-Max	23 y.- 63 y.

Eight out of ten subjects reported satisfaction with their job, every sixth was indecisive, and every twentieth not satisfied (Table 2).

Table 2  
*General satisfaction with work in early childhood and preschool teacher profession*

Variable (%)	Not satisfied at all	Mostly unsatisfied	Neither satisfied, nor unsatisfied	Mostly satisfied	Completely satisfied	$\bar{x}$	SD
Generally, how satisfied are you with your job?	.4	3.9	17.4	71.0	7.3	3.81	.634

Therefore, it may be concluded that subjects are generally satisfied with their job. The majority is mostly, and minority completely satisfied.

Table 3

*The status of early childhood and preschool education profession in the society*

Variable (%)	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree nor disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree	$\bar{x}$	SD
Early childhood and preschool teacher profession enjoys great non-financial rewards or high status.	56.5	22.5	13.0	3.1	5.0	1.77	1.103
Early childhood and preschool teacher profession performs work of great social interest.	-	1.1	3.7	13.9	81.3	4.75	.574
Broader community has trust in the work early childhood and preschool teacher profession performs.	5.6	20.1	41.4	28.4	4.5	3.06	.942
The government values early childhood and preschool teacher profession.	36.2	34.0	23.4	6.0	.4	2.00	.935
Parents have respect for early childhood and preschool teacher profession.	10.2	22.2	45.5	19.9	2.3	2.82	.942
There is a mutual respect among colleagues in early childhood and preschool teacher profession.	2.6	10.9	34.2	44.7	7.5	3.44	.880

Almost all of the participants (95.2%) agreed with the item on the social importance of early childhood and preschool teachers' work. The item that the smallest percentage of participants agreed with (8.1%) was that the profession of an early childhood and preschool teacher enjoyed high non-financial rewards or high status. The items most participants disagreed with were those relating to government appreciating early childhood and preschool teacher profession (70.2%) and early childhood and preschool profession having positive media image (52.8%), which was expected since the early childhood and preschool education is not well positioned in legal documents (for example, it is mentioned extremely little in the national frame curriculum) and there is no continuous media coverage of early childhood and preschool teacher profession, nor of the examples of good educational practice or research projects by early childhood and preschool teachers. When considering the question of trust from broader community or respect from parents, early childhood and preschool teachers are the most indecisive. On the one hand, we find reasons for this in the fact that the founders of kindergartens are local authorities who unequally approach

their financing and, accordingly, comprehend the meaning and importance of early childhood and preschool education for a holistic child's development. On the other hand, we witness different accomplishments of educational practices or kindergarten cultures that also incorporate subcultures of parents into their professional growth and development (Vujičić, 2013). The culture of kindergarten is probably also related to the differences in mutual respect among early childhood and preschool teachers, since there are 34.2% indecisive, and 52.2% expressing positive attitudes about it.

In spite of, or even against the persuasion about low social status of the profession, there is a belief in the necessity of continuous professional development (Table 4).

Table 4

Professional development index

Variable (%)	I completely disagree	I mostly disagree	I neither agree, nor disagree	I mostly agree	I completely agree	$\bar{x}$	SD
It is of great importance for me to continue my professional development.	.7	1.1	11.2	31.7	55.2	4.40	.789
I frequently cooperate with other early childhood and preschool teachers to be able to learn more.	.4	1.9	6.4	45.7	45.7	4.34	.716
It is important for me to be creative in my job.	-	-	2.6	29.9	67.5	4.65	.530
I constantly learn new educational methods.	-	1.5	6.7	43.3	48.5	4.39	.680
In my work I use a wide range of educational strategies.	-	.7	9.4	42.3	47.6	4.37	.683
I am capable of coping with complex educational challenges in my job.	.4	.7	11.2	43.1	44.6	4.31	.728
PD index	$\bar{x}$	SD	min	max			
	26.52	2.874	17	30			

All items in the professional development index are accepted by over 85% of the respondents. High ranking of different forms of professional development is probably related with professional socialization at the faculty, and also in the workplace. We assume it is also a matter of strategic adjustment of the profession that is aware of its own social marginalization, this being the reason for the discrepancy between high commitment to professional development and small number of promoted early childhood and preschool teachers. It seems there is an open space for systematic encouragement of early childhood and preschool teachers to *capitalize* work on their own professional development through promotions, further academic education and alike. This is the way to acquire formal, socially relevant, respectable and measurable indicators of higher status.

Further statistical analysis has determined, albeit low, correlations between four variables of the social status of early childhood and preschool profession and the

professional development index. Higher score on the professional development index was found in subjects who: believe there is a *mutual respect among colleagues* in early childhood and preschool profession ( $r=.305, p<.01$ ), consider their *profession socially important* ( $r=.263; p<.01$ ), think that *broader community has trust* in them ( $r=.226; p<.01$ ), and think that *parents have respect for their profession* ( $r=.205, p<.01$ ). Considering that our professional development index includes the item on cooperating with other colleagues for better learning, it was expected that there would be a connection between the index and the item expressing the existence of mutual respect in early childhood and preschool profession. It is also not surprising that there is a connection between the professional development and perceiving one's own profession as socially important, because it seems that early childhood and preschool teachers are primarily intrinsically motivated.

What is interesting is that there is a positive correlation between the professional development index and the items in which the surveyed early childhood and preschool teachers expressed ambivalence (trust of broader community and respect from parents), which we related to different cultures of educational institutions they work in, that is different experiences with local authorities. We might, therefore, argue that positive culture of an educational institution, and also positive structural conditions on local and national level, encourage professional development of early childhood and preschool teachers and their positive professional self-perception in the society.

## Conclusion

We can conclude that early childhood and preschool teachers do not have high status in society, because the society still does not perceive education as “the biggest and hardest problem that stands before a man“ (Kant, 1991, p. 14). Early childhood and preschool profession is based on interdisciplinary corpus of theoretical knowledge of social sciences and humanities, but the question is how much it is socially recognized. Knowledge is transferred in specialized institutions, and higher professional education (that emphasizes the dimension of practice) is sufficient to enter the profession, which puts it into more unfavorable position comparing to professions that demand Master's level of education. Further, the profession is not recognizable by its special (esoteric) language, like in the case of physicians, for example. Construction of publicly appreciated professional subculture is also not encouraged by the Croatian use of the term *auntie* for a female early childhood and preschool teacher, which implies empathy and altruism, but simultaneously does not associate to specialized expertise. The term *auntie* also indicates almost absolute feminization of the profession, and it is a well-known fact that feminized professions generally have lower social status. Altruism is the only criteria that early childhood and preschool profession completely meets and it is an important part of self-perception of professional identity. Two additional obstacles have recently appeared, regarding the professionalization of the early childhood and preschool teacher profession. The first one is the skepticism

towards professional knowledge. "People do not believe any more – or are not ready to accept – the axiom that 'professions know better'" (Clarke & Newman, 2008, p. 44). The second obstacle is explained by Evetts (2008) who noted that there is a crisis of trust, especially in professionals performing in public services because of the negligent performing of duty and occasional scandals, but also because of the demystification of professional knowledge in the period of modernization.

At the same time, research showed that professions that require academic education, but have lower social reputation (early childhood and preschool teachers) are the most conscious of the need for additional education (Boneta & Mrakovčić, 2008). This is advocated by the fact that, over the last three years, graduate studies of early childhood and preschool education have been enrolling students at the faculties in Croatia.

The education at the graduate level is the beginning of the process of redefining their social status, as well as promotion of the responses to new challenges that are placed before the profession. Early childhood and preschool teacher profession in the contemporary society is seen as a complex occupation that necessarily implies reflexive thinking, continuous professional development, autonomy, responsibility, research creativity and personal judgment. Therefore, launching graduate studies of early childhood and preschool education is accompanied by fundamental theoretical reflections regarding qualitatively differently determined roles, meanings and perspectives of professionals working in early childhood and preschool developmental period. In other words, the idea of new professionalism is implicated in launching graduate and postgraduate studies as qualitative breakthroughs in the contemporary view of early childhood and preschool teacher profession.

The common perception of one's own profession as a marginalized profession did not turn into professional apathy or fatalism. Instead, a strong tendency for professional development is noticeable in early childhood and preschool teachers. An open question for further research is to determine the degree to which this tendency relates to the strategy of changing the social status of the profession by professional development, and the degree to which this desire derives from the altruism and non-interest empathy toward their indirect clients (children).

### **Acknowledgement**

The paper was written within the project "The Culture of Educational Institution as a Factor in Co-Construction of Knowledge," financed by the funds supporting scientific research at the University of Rijeka (No. 13.10.2.2.01).

## References

- Abbott, P., & Meerabeau, L. (2003). Professionals, Professionalization and the Caring Professions. In P. Abbott & L. Meerabeau (Eds.), *The Sociology of the Caring Professions* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 1-19). London, Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Boneta, Ž., & Mrakovčić, M. (2008). Profesionalni identiteti i cjeloživotno učenje. In V. Uzelac & L. Vujičić (Eds.), *Cjeloživotno učenje za održivi razvoj*, svezak I (pp. 317-325). Rijeka: Učiteljski fakultet u Rijeci.
- Chan, T. W. (2010). *Social status* /online/. Retrieved on 10<sup>th</sup> February 2014 from [sers.ox.ac.uk/~sfos0006/papers/status2.pdf](http://sers.ox.ac.uk/~sfos0006/papers/status2.pdf)
- Clark, J., & Newman, J. (2009). Elusive publics: knowledge, power and public service reform. In S. Gewirtz, P. Mahony, I. Hextall & A. Cribb (Eds.), *Changing Teacher Professionalism. International trends, challenges and ways forward* (pp. 43 – 53). New York: Routledge.
- Evetts, J. (2009). The management of professionalism: a contemporary paradox. In S. Gewirtz, P. Mahony, I. Hextall & A. Cribb (Eds.), *Changing Teacher Professionalism. International trends, challenges and ways forward* (pp. 18 – 30). New York: Routledge.
- Fullan, M. (2007). *The New Meaning of Educational Change* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). New York and London: Teachers College Columbia University.
- Given, H., Kub, L., LeeKeenan, D., Mardell, B., Redditt, S., & Twombly, S. (2010). Changing School Culture: Using Documentation to Support Collaborative Inquiry. *Theory Into Practice*, 49(1), 36-4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00405840903435733>
- Hargreaves, L., Cunningham, M., Everton, T., Hansen, A., Hopper, B., McIntyre, D., Maddock, M., Mukherjee, J., Pell, T., Rouse, M., Turner, P., & Wilson, L. (2006). *Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession: Views from Inside and Outside the Profession. Interim Findings from the Teacher Status Project. Research Report*. Nottingham: University of Cambridge & University of Leicester /online/. Retrieved on 19<sup>th</sup> March 2013 from <https://www.education.gov.uk/.../RR755.pdf>
- Hodson, R., & Sullivan, Teresa, A. (2008). *The Social Organization of Work*, (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Belmont: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Kant, I. (1991). *Vaspitanje dece*. Beograd: Bata.
- Katz, L. G. (1987). The Nature of Professions: Where Is Early Childhood Education? In L. G. Katz (Ed.), *Current Topics in Early Childhood Education* /online/. Retrieved on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2012 from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED281908.pdf>
- Kimonen, E., & Nevalainen, R. (2005). Active learning in the process of educational change. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 21(6), 623–635. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2005.05.003>
- Mayall, B. (2001). The sociology of childhood in relation to children's rights. *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, 8 (3), 243–259. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/15718180020494640>
- Meerabeau, L., & Abbott, P. (2003). Reflections. In P. Abbott & L. Meerabeau (Eds.), *The Sociology of the Caring Professions* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.) (pp. 255-262). London, Philadelphia: Taylor and Francis Group.
- Saks, M. (2012). Defining a profession: The Role of Knowledge and Expertise. *Professions & Professionalism*, 2(1), 1-10. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7577/pp.v2i1.151>

- Senge, P. M., Kleiner, A., Roberts, C., Ross, R, Roth, G., & Smith, B. (2003). *Ples promjene. Izazovi u razvoju učećih organizacija*. Zagreb: Mozaik knjiga.
- Šporer, Ž. (1990). *Sociologija profesija. Ogled o društvenoj uvjetovanosti profesionalizacije*. Zagreb: Sociološko društvo Hrvatske.
- Vujičić, L. (2008). Research and Improvement of One's own Practice – Way to Development of Teachers'/preschool teachers' Practical Competence. In I. Žogla (Ed.), *Teacher of the 21st century: Quality Education for Quality Teaching* (pp. 184-194). Riga: University of Latvia Press.
- Vujičić, L., Čepić, R., & Pejić Papak, P. (2010). Afirmation of the Concept of New Professionalism in the Education of Preschool Teachers: Croatian Experiences. In G. L. Chova, M. D. Belenguer & T. I. Candel (Eds.), *EDULEARN10 Proceedings* (pp. 242-250). Barcelona: IATED.
- Vujičić, L. (2013). Researching and Changing Kindergarten Culture and the Quality of Educational Practice. In M. Despotović, & E. Hebib (Eds.), *Contemporary Issues of Education Quality* (pp. 347-363). Beograd: Faculty of Philosophy University of Belgrade, Institute for Pedagogy and Andragogy, Serbia; Faculty of Adult Education and HRD, University of Pecs.

---

**Lidija Vujičić**

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka  
Sveučilišna avenija 6, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia  
lidija@ufri.hr

**Željko Boneta**

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka  
Sveučilišna avenija 6, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia  
zeljko@ufri.hr

**Željka Ivković**

Faculty of Teacher Education, University of Rijeka  
Sveučilišna avenija 6, 51000 Rijeka, Croatia  
zivkovic@ufri.hr

# Društveni status i profesionalni razvoj profesije odgajatelja rane i predškolske dobi

---

## **Sažetak**

*Rad se na teorijskoj i empirijskoj razini bavi odnosom koncepata društvenog statusa i profesionalnog razvoja odgajateljske profesije. Problematizira se mogućnost dopunjavanja dominantno sociološke i pedagoške tradicije iz kojih su proistekli. Nizak društveni status odgajateljske profesije nije bitno poboljšan ni u kontekstu neprestanog nastajanja novih profesija u društvu kasne modernosti, ni u kontekstu bujanja različitih pristupa profesionalnom razvoju. Zato nas je zanimalo kakvi su stavovi odgajatelja o položaju i ugledu njihove profesije u našem društvu te postoji li povezanost navedenih stavova s odnosom odgajatelja prema profesionalnom razvoju. U prosincu 2013. godine metodom ankete provedeno je istraživanje na uzorku od N=270 odgajatelja ranog i predškolskog odgoja i obrazovanja na području Zagreba i Rijeke. Rezultati su pokazali da odgajatelji smatraju da obavljaju iznimno odgovoran posao koji je profesionalno, statusno i materijalno podcijenjen u našem društvu. Međutim, iz rezultata proizlazi da postoji i određena povezanost između pozitivnih kultura odgojno-obrazovnih ustanova, profesionalnog razvoja odgajatelja i njegove pozitivnije percepcije društvenog statusa odgajateljske profesije. Ta bi povezanost trebala biti dodatno istražena budući da otvara prostor za raspravu o mogućnostima promjene društvenog statusa profesije djelovanjem odozdo, u mikrokontekstu.*

**Ključne riječi:** društveni status; odgajateljska perspektiva; odgajateljska profesija; profesionalizam; profesionalni razvoj; rani i predškolski odgoj i obrazovanje.