

**Community Aspects of the Multicultural Kindergarten at the
Hebrew University of Jerusalem**

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Thematic importance: Various studies on educational setting have focused on the community space. However, there is a lack of studies that examine the perceptions of community aspects and the community space of kindergartens. Children viewpoint is especially missing.

Introduction and objectives: This qualitative case study seeks to document the perspectives of children regarding the community aspects of the Multicultural Kindergarten located at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The research questions were: What are the children's, the parent's, the university workers' and staff perceptions regarding community aspects of the kindergarten as a part of the university community?

Method: The research design employed various methods: A focus group including five staff members, eight interviews with university staff, fifteen questionnaires filled out by kindergarten's parents. The methodology for collecting data from the ten of the kindergarten's children, included drawing maps of the kindergarten spaces, photographing during trips around campus and discussions in small groups.

Results:

The findings of the study centered around four themes: **1. meetings in the university space:** dealt with perceptions of influences and connections that take place within the campus space: the effects of the university on the children, and the effects of the multicultural kindergarten on the university. **2. Factors influencing the sense of community belonging among members:** three factors the participants identified as influencing the sense of community belonging: (1) the campus space as a 'neighborhood space'; (2) the community support system; (3) trips and joint events. **3. Participation and sharing as a community component:** according to the participants' beliefs both adults and children have a full right to participate in the community. The willingness to hear every individual voice regardless of their age, role, and professional knowledge, creates a meeting space in which the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

Conclusions and implications:

The study presents a holistic and multidimensional understanding of community perceptions in the multicultural garden. The integration of children in the study was done in recognition of the ability and importance of sharing the children's voice. The incorporation of several tools in the process of children's participation in research makes it possible to deepen their participation, make their voice and point of view known and have an impact on their educational experience. All this in order to realize their development, the formation of their identity, their active involvement in society and their basic right to be active partners in their lives.

At the practice level, the research findings may lead to the development of tools that will help early childhood educators identify children's contribution to society and empower children's participation in adult-perceived spaces belonging to the 'real world'.

It is recommended to conduct a study in other educational frameworks that work with early childhood and take an active part in the community, based on an educational concept that believes in the importance of connecting between kindergarten and community.