

INSPIRATION FOR PRESCHOOL TEACHERS: CONTENT ANALYSIS OF CZECH FACEBOOK GROUP

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Abstract

According to Britannica Dictionary inspiration is: “something that makes someone want to do something or that gives someone an idea about what to do or create” (@2023). Inspiration is one of the most important things in the teaching profession, teachers are always looking for new inspiration and ideas, what to do in their classrooms. And when the teachers lack inspiration, they try to find it, not in the books anymore, but on the internet. In this study the content of the biggest Czech Facebook group for preschool teacher “Inspiration for preschool teachers” (nearly 40 000 members) was analyzed. Because according to the Czech Statistical Office (2022) there are only 33 156 preschool teachers in the Czech Republic, only the posts that were clearly from preschool teachers were included in this research.

The main goal was to identify what kind of inspiration the teachers are looking for on Facebook, and what kind of inspiration are the teachers sharing in this group. From 623 posts (month and a half of posts) the following themes and characteristics were identified: Planning (activities in general, songs, fairy tales & rhymes, art, movement games, group activities, literacy, dramatization, math and themes). Equipment (art supplies, IT supplies, decorations, furniture, specific pictures or books), External programmes; Education. With the most common theme being questions about planning, specifically activities in general, when the teachers have a given theme and are asking for any activity related to this theme.

From the second research question “what kind of inspiration are the teachers sharing” were following themes and categories identified: Activities (art, math, literacy, inquiry-based learning, movement activities, graphomotoric, dramatization, polytechnic, group activities, songs). Education; External programmes, Materials and Decorations.

Keywords: *Inspiration, Facebook, preschool teachers, Czech Republic.*

1. Introduction

Being a teacher means constantly looking for new inspiration, constantly looking for new ways how to engage students, looking for new methods, materials or activities. The role of the teacher is constantly expanding, as are the necessary competences that a teacher must master. Teachers have new and additional responsibilities that they did not have a few years ago, and new problems appear every day for which they were not prepared (e.g. the Covid-19 epidemic or the war in Ukraine).

According to the Decree no.317/2005 Coll: “Teachers in the Czech Republic are obliged to continue to educate, deepen, renew and supplement his/her qualifications during the period of his/her teaching activity, i.e. even after completing his/her studies to obtain a professional qualification.”

Just as new problems emerge, so do new possibilities and opportunities that teachers can use to confront these problems. For this research we use the factor of inspiration - as an important factor that helps in problem solving. This is because when one is inspired, one can come up with more positive solutions. (Buheji & Ahmed, 2017). Inspiration is defined as “something that makes someone want to do something or that gives someone an idea about what to do or create.” (Britannica Dictionary, @2023) Or as “a breathing in or infusion of some idea, purpose, etc. into the mind; the suggestion, awakening, or creation of some feeling or impulse, especially of an exalted kind” in the Oxford English Dictionary (Simpson & Weiner, 1989, p. 1036). For teachers, inspiration is important not only because they need inspiration for the new teaching methods and ideas how to motivate their students, but also inspiration matters “since it fulfills an important aspect of our life essentials, be it our personal needs and/or professional growth and development. Inspiration has also a positive impact on our psychological well-being and life satisfaction.” (Buheji, Saif & Jahrami, 2014, p.22)

Nowadays teachers tend to look for inspiration to online space. For example, in the study of Janicke-Bowles et al. (2019), 64% of U.S. participants reported that they have been inspired by media content at least a few times a week, and they were also motivated to seek out more inspiring content. Even though there are many different places where to look for inspiration, the teachers still frequently use Facebook.

The Facebook group “Inspiration for preschool teachers”, which was selected for this research, has more than 40 000 members, and is quite active with approximately 35 post per day. For comparison, there are only 33 156 preschool teachers in the Czech Republic, according to the Czech Statistical Office (2022). In Turkish research (Sumuer, Esferb & Yildirim, 2014) was found that 71.9% of preschool teachers have been actively using Facebook for more than 3 years. In the research on music teachers’ perception on professional Facebook groups for teachers (2017) 97.7% check their Facebook account at least once a day. Sumuer, Esferb & Yildirim (2014, p.548) also proved that “although the teachers did not tend to have a high intensity of Facebook use, they were more likely to integrate Facebook into their daily routine, use frequently in a day, spent a considerable amount of time on, had contact with a large number of friends through and had a regular access to via computers and mobile phones. Teachers mostly used Facebook primarily for social engagement, entertainment and information.” In a study of teachers' perceptions of a professional Facebook group (Rhodes, 2017, p. 91), they found that the most common activity in the group was usually "reading other people's posts" (89.8%). The next most common activity was "searching for and reading old posts (49.8%). Most participants rarely or never posted their own posts (77.7%) or commented on other people's posts (51%).

Although we do not have data on how often and in what way Czech kindergarten teachers use Facebook, we can say that according to foreign research, the number of Facebook group members (which is still increasing) and the frequency of posts in the studied group, Facebook is a popular medium for sharing and finding inspiration. Scientifically, the question of how many Czech teachers use Facebook and how often was only briefly mentioned in the bachelor thesis (Ottová, 2018), where it was found that 90% of preschool teachers use Facebook to find inspiration for art activities.

2. Methodology

The aim of this research was to find out what kind of inspiration teachers seek and share in the Facebook group: “Inspiration for preschool teachers.” We tried to find out what kind of things teachers are proud of - and not afraid to share. And what teachers struggle with the most - and therefore seek help (inspiration). A mixed (qualitative and quantitative) research method was used for this research.

At the first phase of the research, we looked at the Facebook group and we analyzed around 200 posts (and went through almost 500) to refine what we would be looking for and to prepare a first draft of categories. After we have refined the first draft of categories, we prepared an excel spreadsheet with metrics to count the posts that correspond to each category.

During the research, we analyzed 623 posts that were posted in the Facebook group over a month and a half period. We had to go through many more posts than we analyzed because 2/3 of the posts in the groups are posts from various vendors that are selling their materials or worksheets. We wanted to analyze more posts, but nowadays Facebook has a limit of how many posts can be viewed at one time, and we couldn't surpass the number. That's also why we only analyzed posts created within a month and a half period, because we couldn't view older posts without using the "search" feature. We also tried to use only posts created by preschool teachers. We looked to see if the person who posted the question/shared the image was a preschool teacher, if this information was clearly written in the question, if it was posted on their Facebook profile, or if the image was clearly taken from the kindergarten. Posts in which teachers did not share or seek inspiration were also not considered.

The posts were coded immediately upon reading and the codes were counted manually (using an excel spreadsheet and hand-made meters). The codes were condensed, reconstructed and grouped into themes. The themes were then summarized into categories. The categories were re-arranged multiple times, to find out the right meaning of each one and to be sure the category contains only the relevant themes.

The results are presented in a graphs and in percentages of how many times the code appeared. Post citations are added to better understand the meaning of each category.

Research questions:

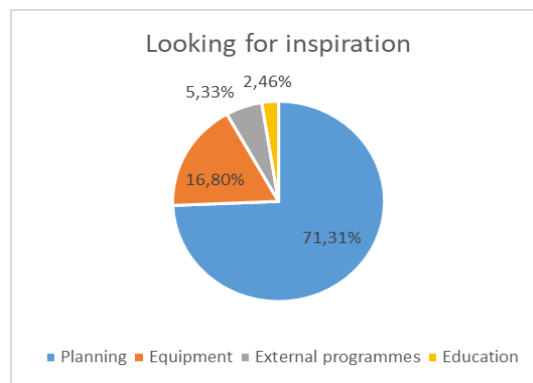
1. What kind of inspiration are teachers looking for on Facebook group?
2. What kind of inspiration are teachers sharing in Facebook group?

3. Results

First important finding from the research is that 60,08% of the post were sharing the inspiration and 39.2% were looking for inspiration. This may be due to the satisfaction that comes from sharing one's work with other teachers "because they would like to help others who have similar information needs, or they are interested in a selfless good deed" (Oh & Son, 2015, p. 2057).

3.1. What kind of inspiration are teachers looking for on Facebook group?

Figure 1. Looking for inspiration 1.



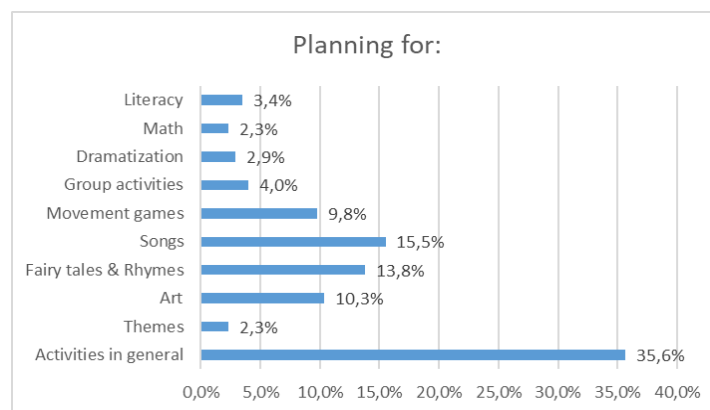
What kind of inspiration were the teachers looking for can be divided into four categories: Planning (71,3%), Equipment (16,8%), External programmes (5.33%) and Education (2.46%).

The category **Equipment** contained questions about art supplies, IT supplies, decorations, furniture, specific pictures or books: "Hello. I have a question about tablets in kindergarten. Does anyone have and if so where do you download the files.... Thank you very much"

In the category **External programmes** there were teachers looking for good external programmes that are pre-approved by the other teachers in the group. "Good afternoon, does anyone have a tip for an afternoon program for kindergarten children. Thinking of a pre-school graduation event. Some kind of animator with dancing, competitions or something like that? Zlín or Olomouc region. Thank you."

In the category "**Education**" the teachers were asking for tips for interesting online or offline seminars/courses about some theme. "Hello, can I ask you a question: do you have a tip for a course for teachers, longer, focused on PE, health exercises, etc. for preschoolers? Thank you."

Figure 2. Planning 1.



The category **Planning** - being the most featured (71,31%) can be divided into 10 more concrete categories: Activities in general (35,6%), Songs (15,5%), Fairy Tales & Rhymes (13,8%), Art (10,3%), Movement games (9,8%), Group activities (4%), Literacy (3,4%), Dramatization (2,9%), Math (2,3%), Themes (2,3%).

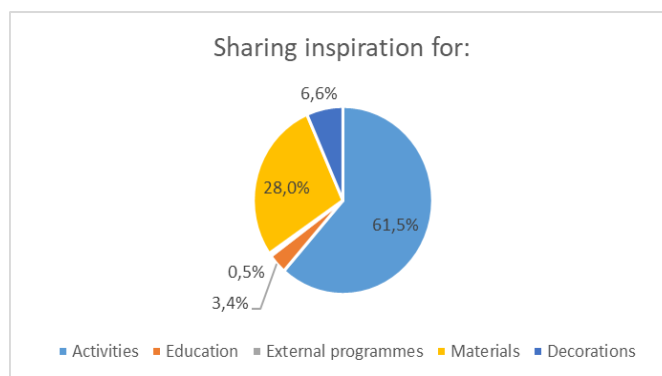
This category contains two types of situations when teachers are looking for inspiration. The first one is that the teachers are looking for tips for any activity in general. according to some theme, or according to children's age. "Hello, next week's topic is Space, Stars, Sun... I'd be happy for any ideas, be it art,

movement, rational, poems, songs, anything you can think of. I can't think of much, I've never had this theme before, so I'd like to be inspired by more experienced ones. Thank you very much”

The second situation is that the teachers are looking for inspiration for more specific and concrete types of activities (for art, movement game, song etc.) “Please give me inspiration for movement games... or "monkey track" for children 2-4 years old? Thank you very much.” “Hello, I would like to ask for a recommendation of a song on the theme of meadow (in summer), wild flowers. Thank you very much.”

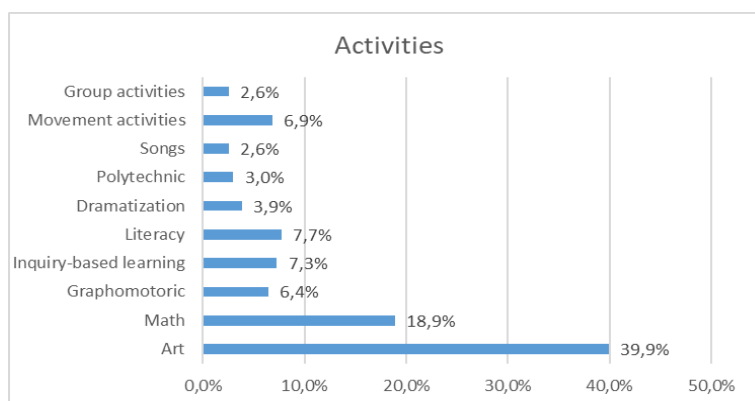
3.2. What kind of inspiration are teachers sharing in Facebook group?

Figure 3. Sharing inspiration.



From the graph we can see that most of the teachers are sharing inspiration for **Activities (61,5%)**. It is logical, that the teachers mostly share inspiration for the activities - it is something they have done in their own classroom. It's also what other teachers in the Facebook group most often search for.

Figure 4. Activities.



The activities which are the teachers mostly sharing the inspiration for are: Art (39.9%), Math (18.9%), Literacy (7.7%), Inquiry-based learning (7.3%), Movement activities (6.9%), Graphomotoric (6.4%), Dramatization (3.9%), Polytechnic (3%), Group activities (2.6%), Songs (2.6%). The most typical post in the group is a picture of some product that the kids made and teachers are sharing how they have done it. “Our Easter baskets ... or how to use empty tissue boxes”. “Simple eggs that even 3-year-olds could handle. Marbling, balling, sponging.”

Great number of teachers were also **sharing materials (28%)** - being their own collections of materials or worksheets they made. Category Materials also included tips for interesting pictures or books: “I highly recommend the hatchery for kids, it's great fun and the result. The kids are thrilled, plus it's very educational.”

In the category of “**External programmes**” (3.4%) they shared tips for good providers of external programmes: “We had a wonderful trip to the Insect Kingdom today, big thanks to Mrs Eva, the children were enthusiastic, lovely interactive talk with music and movement. And we could all touch the insects. I recommend.”

And in the category “**Education**” (0.5%) they shared tips for online or offline seminars in which they participated. “I definitely recommend this course. I took it myself and it helped me a lot. The lecturer is very inspiring, has many years of experience, has published and works in inspection.”

In the last category, “**Decorations**” (6.6%) the teachers are sharing what decorations they made for their classroom (teachers alone, without kids), or how their classroom is decorated.

4. Conclusions

Answer to the first research question: "What kind of inspiration do teachers look for in a Facebook group?" is that most teachers a) look for inspiration for any activity that is related to a topic they have in mind, or b) look for inspiration for a specific activity (most often songs, art activities, stories and rhymes, and movement games), (71.31%). Teachers also look for inspiration for Equipment (16.8%), External Programs (5.33%) or Education (2.6%).

The answer for the second research question “What kind of inspiration are teachers sharing in Facebook group?” is that the teachers are mostly sharing inspiration for activities (61.5%), for materials (28%), for decorations (6.6%) for external programmes (3.4%) and education (0.5%).

We can say that, as in Lantz-Andresson, Peterson, Hillman, Lundin & Rensfeldt research (2017), the most prominent theme in the research was requesting and giving tips.

One of the important findings of the research is that in 60.08% of the posts people shared inspiration and in 39.2% they were looking for inspiration. This also corresponds with the Oh & Syn research (2015) that Facebook users are highly motivated to share their information because they would like to help others who have similar information needs or they care about selfless good deeds.

The results of this research can help us better prepare future teachers for their profession - by understanding what inspiration they are looking for, we can prepare them for better classrooms and give them what they will need in their teaching profession. We can also identify ways to create more effective professional development opportunities - as part of mandatory "continuing education for teaching staff."

Also, the data found here can be used to create new educational technologies or methods - depending on what teachers are struggling with most. If a mentoring teacher wants to improve and offer student teachers what they are looking for, they need to know, or at least suspect, what is happening in Facebook groups as well. As Lieberman & Pointer-Mace's (2010, p. 77) research states, professional development opportunities are: "fragmented, disjointed, and irrelevant to the real problem of their classroom practice."

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