# A PRE-SCHOOL CHILD'S SCHOOL DIARY FROM THE LENS OF A PROFESSIONAL EDUCATOR: CASE OF PREPARATORY EDUCATION IN CHOUHADA HAMOUM PUBLIC SCHOOL IN ALGERIA

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## Abstract

The present work deals with preschool education taking the case of a five-year old child learning in the Chouhadaa Hamoum Primary School, Béjaia. The study questions the new practices used in the primary schools adopted in Algeria right from 2008 vis-à-vis preschool children. Programme and educational practices are also tackled in the analysis of data. The chosen method is qualitative analysis using a dialogical approach adopted from Sullivan (2012). For these, many techniques were used to collect data namely observation, diaries of the child and the mother, and interviews. In the analysis, we focused on dialogue and we considered subjectivity through bureaucratic as well as charisma approaches. Results showed that pre-schooling seems to be beneficial since instruction was facilitated, instructors do sometimes communicate with parents to solve children's problems, and the programmes as well as the materials should be re-considered by stakeholders as advocated by the interviewed teachers.

*Keywords:* Preparatory education, pre-schooling, dialogical approach, Yanis diaries, interview, Algeria, Chohadaa Hamoum Public Scool

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## 1. Introduction

Pre-schooling education is becoming a standing issue and it has even become the springboard to academic success, as evidenced by its generalization to all social strata in developed countries. These countries have understood that the child's school progress depends essentially on cognitive skills before the age of six. In our work, we are employing terms like teacher, instructor or educator to refer to the person who is taking care of the pre-school children in the classroom. It is not evident to find an exact term that describes this job as there exist what Chartier and Geneix (2007, p. 7) coined to the problem of "untranslatable" terms from one country to another, from one language to another and from one culture to another. Here, we do not refer to the use of the word "teacher" to translate its scholastic connotation but to the pedagogic function. In our country, we employ the French term "pedagogue" who *"seeks to address the child as a whole, a child with a body, a mind, emotions, a creativity, a history and a social identity."* (Moss & Petrie, 2002 as cited in Chartier & Geneix, 2007, p. 25). Compulsory schooling has begun at the age of six years in France, Switzerland and United States (Chartier & Geneix, 2007) and this is also the case in Algeria. Pre-school education is based on the knowledge, skills and experience in the child. It is based on the game and a positive approach to life. The methods used and the proposed activities must as far as possible be varied to avoid monotony. The other important aspect is the support given to the personal initiative of the child and its consolidation throughout the programmed activities. In Algeria, there was a gradual re-opening, from 1980, of district kindergartens or nursery schools and infant classes under the care of teachers appointed by the Ministry of National Education, the availability of preschool facilities remains smaller and restricted to urban areas (Zoubida Senouci, 1992, as cited in Chartier & Geneix, 2007). In the Algerian context, an effort has been made by the government to introduce preparatory education in 2008. In 2011, preparatory teaching covered 73% of enrolled children (Sofi, 2011). The government released 600 billion centime to cover the need of an important demand at a national level (Sofi, 2011). The broad guidelines of the pre-school education programme are based, according to concerned officials, on respect for the child's individuality and on the importance of active learning and work as a team. The taught programme does not share education in separate materials or hours of lessons. It however has different objectives and interests which are: language and communication, notions of mathematics, language and interaction, morality, religion, nature and the environment, health, physical and motor development as well as art and culture (Sofi 2011). The school should not, then, put focus on discipline in an explicit way but should rather encourage

interpersonal relations. We can be best served by Sullivan's (1953) interpersonal theory of psychiatry. Wagner said that for Sullivan, relationships are primary because personality is a hypothetical entity that cannot be observed or studied apart from interpersonal situations wherein it is made manifest. He added that the only way personality can be known is through the medium of interpersonal interactions. Hence, in pre-schooling education, the child should feel that the class is part of his surrounding through a positive atmosphere. We can suggest what Algozzine, Wang, and Violette (2011, p. 4) call Positive Behaviour Support (PBS); which is intended to improve the climate of schools using *"systems approach to enhancing the capacity"*. The importance here for children is straightforward since it is difficult to learn when you are spending more time in discipline-related interactions than in those related / to learning academic content (Miles & Stipek, 2006 cited in Ibid). In pre-schooling education in Algeria, the syllabus is based on language and arithmetic. However, the former point is so critical because there are many children who do not master Arabic and this can be an issue for discussion. According to Benrabah (1999), language is the place where it is constructed the most profound of individual and the collective personality and it is the mirror of identity. In the Algerian educational policy, the Arabic language does not mirror the Algerian's identity and does not reflect all its society and culture. Pluralism of languages in Algeria expresses the real pluralism of its society (Benrabah, 1999).

## 2. Problem Statement

The first day of school for a five-year old child is so crucial after the separation from the home to a more academic place like the classroom. The researcher was concerned about how this pre-schooling experience would happen after the failures Yanis encountered in the kindergarten stage. First, in his first three years of life, Yanis did not quit the home as his caretakers were the mother and -when she goes out for work- the aunt used to do. Once the parents decided to enroll him in a kindergarten; parents tried to choose an appropriate and well-reputed one. The first contact with the director was positive and she showed some kind of competence and knowledge in children's concerns. However, Yanis seemed to live a traumatic experience right from the first day. He used to come home starving, crying, peeing. During a whole week, parents were obliged to reassure him one hour before going out. Yanis was restless, used to see nightmares and wet his bed as well. Parents decided to stop taking him to the kindergarten and found a woman working as caretaker at home. This was successful for him. What made parents enquire was that Yanis had no problem in socializing with other children and was very fluent in his speech. He started to talk at the age of 18

months. Here, a dialogue was held with Yanis to know the reason. The main reason behind the trauma he lived in the first day was that the director had no integration process. Children who are newly subscribed are directly mixed with the older and more experienced children. We focused on the issue that it was his first separation fromthe home. Yanis was afraid from the assistant lady "Naouel" who shouted on themand knocked strongly on the table; accidently the table where Yanis seated. Finally, Yanis has always been willing to be with children all the time. This issue is more likely to make the school as an agreeable experience if his teacher facilitates the matter. Now, linking Yanis to the preparatory education and the situation of pre-schooling in Algeria is quite important. What was a bit enquiring was that Yanis first language is Kabyle. The mother introduced some French but the official programme is in Arabic.

All of the above issues made the problem stated as follows:

*How can the pre-school stage (including programmes, assessment, socializing, teaching materials and techniques, the child-instructor and parent-instructor interaction) help in the success of social and academic integration for pre-school children?*

## 3. Research Questions

- Is pre-schooling in Algeria successful in preparing the child for primary education?

- Does the selected programme suit the child's cognitive ability, need, age and interest?

- Is there any interaction between parents, children and instructors?

- What are the advantages of introducing pre-schooling in the Algerian public primary school? What are the problems children in Béjaia face once in their pre-school classes?

## 4. Purpose of the Study

The study, having a purely qualitative dimension, aims at establishing the link between the pre-school programme introduced in Algeria since 2008 and the child's integration in the school milieu. In addition, our aim is based on teaching practices from experienced teachers' standpoints. Finally, exploring the child's diary from the eyes of the mother who is an educator is also tackled in order to study the factors that might influence the child's first schooling experience starting from the home to the school daily experiences.

The above issues, when put together, can offer a thorough analysis of the child's pre-schooling experience taking Yanis and his surrounding as a case.

## 5. Research Methods

In the present work, we have opted for a purely qualitative method since we started the theme's feasibility with an informal observation and carried on the investigation with semi-structured interviews with first the pre-school child Yanis; and then the two instructors that teach in the Chohada Hamoumprimary school in this study. We interviewed the two teachers who teach the two pre-school classes in order to gather qualitative data about the state of pre-schooling in primary education in the Algerian context. We visited the school on May, 8th, 2013 at 1.30 p.m. after permission from the director of the school and the two educators. Each interview lasted one hour. In our qualitative study, we tried to hint to the dialogical approach when approaching our qualitative data. Choosing Sullivan's dialogical approach seems for us adequate and relevant to the present research context. First, the main essence of the method of qualitative data analysis in this dialogical approach is considering subjectivity. In our work, the child in question is the researcher's child and there is the risk of subjectivity here. Hence, using Sullivan's new approach that puts focus on both subjectivity and dialogue can lessen the risk of biasing the analysis through subjective considerations. In this study, we opted for dialogue with Yanis all along the academic year on the one hand, and with his teacher on the other. In the analysis, the author made use of charisma where some kind of subjectivity and personal style and judgments were used; that is one of the reasons behind adopting the dialogical approach. The researcher, being involved in Yanis diaries; usually useddialogue with the child and with the teacher as routine actions. This dialogue was considered and Yanis' experiences during the academic year were reported in the analysis.

## 6. Findings

We have adopted a thick description when presenting the methodology, the participants and the context of research. This is achieved through the detailed descriptions of the social context including Yanis diaries with his mother and the school namely the teacher who became a permanent subject in Yanis' talk with his mother. Thick Description is not simply a matter of amassing relevant detail. Rather, to thickly describe social action is actually to begin to interpret it by recording the circumstances, meanings, intentions,

strategies, motivations and so on that characterize a particular episode" (Schwandt, 2001, as cited in Chin Lin, 2013, p. 255).

### 6.1. Yanis' diaries and the educator's observations

Before starting the presentation of Yanis diaries through the lens of the educator, we need to clarify the way we are presenting such details. First, we have adopted bureaucratic approach when involving data systematically and identifying the 'key moments' or utterances that can conceivably (Sullivan, 2012) throw light on our question regarding Yanis schooling and the role of parents and the school in doing so. Yanis is a five years old child, whose first day of schooling was so successful. It was September, 4th, 2012 where his mother accompanied him right before this important day. She has undertaken his schooling as a project and started preparing her child to socializing and being responsible. Her awareness as a specialized educationalist and who worked on educational psychology, together with her personal experience with her child pushed her to be engaged and concentrated on her child's schooling. In this, she reported in her diaries:

> *"The first day was a Sunday. I awoke up early (at 6.30 am) in order to prepare myself and my child for this great and decisive day. I have lived an incredible stress as if I am to pass a test. It was a decisive moment whether my child accepts school or experiences a trauma. Yanis awoke up early as well and he was prepared to go to school. In fact, it was not the first time he visits the school. He accompanied me three times when enquiring about enrollment, depositing the file and other staff. This was also done on purpose because I wanted him to know the place that would be his social life and identity for five years. I relied on an approach based on familiarizing my child and explaining every single detail related to the school. I believe that this has really succeeded since Yanis was eager and impatient to go to school." The Mother*

In our analysis, we can in no sense detach the child from the mother when coming to schooling especially that we are considering subjectivity in our qualitative analysis. Let us consider (Youell, 2006) who put focus on the role played by the parents and other family members in fostering a desire to learn. When Yanis' mother followed her child before schooling, she aimed at fostering in him the desire to learn and like the school. Idri (2006) pointed out that the individual is at the first stage of life attached to the mother and she related this developmental stage as a key of the identification of the self as well as the emotional and the affective stability of the child.

Once in the school, Yanis characterized a willingness to go to school. Yanis was enrolled in the Chohadaa Hammoum public school. The school has two pre-school classes and lunch meals are freely served to children.

Talking of the school's feeding services is important here. One of the observations made in Yanis diaries right from the first was his pleasure when talking of the school's canteen. Each time the mother invited Yanis to eat something in the break time, he used to refuse by saying: *"I ate in the school"* with a determined tone. This can be referred to the 'dialogical self' where Yanis took an 'I position' that struggle for dominance depending on the context and the relationship with others (Sullivan, 2012, p. 17). The context is the school and Yanis seems to struggle for dominance to transmit the message to his mother (the other) who is a foreigner to his school. In addition, such free school services as food, health checkup, holiday's parties are helpful to get the child integrated in the school's social milieu since the first aim behind school is socializing the child. Activities offered by the school were diverse and timing was also carefully chosen.

Cases in point are the painting of a sheep and decorating the picture with cotton for the Aid El Ad'ha's feast where a sheep is slaughtered in this religious feast. This was in 10/24/2012. Yanis brought the painting and the mother explained its meaning and occasion. To give importance to the piece he fulfilled, the mother pressed it against the refrigerator in the kitchen. From that moment, all paintings were brought by Yanis and glued as well.

Another kind of socializing activities is the magician. Public schools have integrated this activity for children for a symbolic price (20Da) equivalent to the amount of money to buy a sweet. Yanis was excited but did not say much about the activities. This activity was introduced during the first semester; that is on November, 27th, 2012.

This shows that the school adopts a progressive integration programme for pre-school children in order to motivate them, integrate them with other children from advanced classes in the primary school and establish a link between the school and social life.

Days later, a dialogue was held between Yanis and the mother intentionally. The mother asked her child about his impressions about the school and the class. Yanis tells his experience:

> *"I like "Almoualima[1]", I also like thetwo girls[2]. I like Islam, Mehdi, Anis I also like Yasmine, but do not like Aissa who is troublesomein school. I do not like Kahina*

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[1] " Almoualima" is an Arabic term that refers to the instructor.

[2] The teacher usually uses the term " Aide-maternelle" to refer to these two ladies working part-time to help the educators accompany children.

*because she beats me. I like Redha, with Assia. I like…..like, like, Moualima. I like*
*everything in school except the children I mentioned."* (November, 30th, 2012)

If we try to analyze Yanis' discrourse from his diary, we can refer to the dialogical dimension advocated by Sullivan. Focusing on dialogue in our analysis leads us consider Yanis utterances about the school. It is not enoug h to consider terms of discourse (outside-in) in this case where Yanis as the author (the self) is close to the mother as the hero (the other) (chronotope), and consider the emotional register but also considering Yanis feelings and voice, which is singular and controls the hero in this utterance. The utterance shows how successful the school is for Yanis and how he looks at his classmates individually and with their characteristics. Yanis looks at the educator as a symbol he repeated twice that he likes her.

### 6.2. Clown in the school; a key issue in Yanis' experiences

In December, 15th 2012, Yanis was aggressive and refused to talk about the school event although the mother was eager to listen to him since she was informed by the school personnel about the event. The mother tried hard to let him talk and tell what happened. She expected him to be happy and tell and re-tell the event. It took her more than four hours trying to convince him either explicitly or implicitly. She held a hypothesis in mind and tried to verify it. The hypothesis she stated was that the "Clown" used a language that Yanis does not master well; that is Arabic. In Algeria, many ethnic groups exist that use different languages. In addition, we belong to the Kabyle ethnic group; the original and the native people of North Africa. Arabic is the official language of Algeria. As parents, we stick to use the native language at home since Arabic will be learned in school. There was an Arabisation policy held by the government to get rid of the French existence in the Algerian identity although Algeria is not Arab in its root. This has engendered what the Marxist theory of man calls "alienation" because the Algerian was deprived from his identity, as he becomes a stranger from his self (Benrabah, 1999, p. 79). In this concern, we can quote:

> *Ben Bella affirms in three times: 'We are Arabs!' With this declaration, the future*
> *president announces the color: from now on, Algeria would be Arab and Muslim and*
> *the national language, the classical Arabic. The research of 'authenticity' passes*
> *across the sole dimensions Arab and Muslim at the expense of berberophone and*
> *francophone (Ibid)*

The mother just had a talk with Yanis. Instead of asking the question she repeated many times: "*What did the clown do for you? Did you like him?"* she asked the question

otherwise holding a negative connotation to the event: *"Didn't you like today's clown? What didn't you like in him? Just tell me why you did not enjoy the clown?* Here reactions changed. Yanis showed agreement that it was boring. She, then, asked him: *"Which language the clown used?"* He replied with anger, shouting on the mother: *"He was talking in Arabic and I did not understand what he's saying".* Here, the mother confirmed her hypothesis and the event seemed a negative experience instead of enjoying this educational activity in the school.

Yanis seems to experience an affective choc since the use of the Arabic language by the clown; an experience that was supposed to be positive; but was brutal and extraordinary for Yanis. Such a psychological phenomenon results according to Dacco (1973) from the appearance of extraordinary circumstances that make the child unable to adapt. This circumstance for Yanis was the use of Arabic that he could not understand. If we consider Austin's (1962) theory and the behavior Yanis showed, we can read clearly Yanis's feelings associated with language. His refusal to talk at the beginning was an action, but when he replied with anger, he referred to the inability to understand Arabic. In this event, Yanis as the author (the self) did not allow his mother (the hero) to take part of his event that easily the thing that made the chronotope distant.

Having such an experience shed light on the problematic issue of Arabization in the non-Arabic speaking communities in Algeria. Although the clown was an activity introduced for socializing, this was not successful since the school invited one from Algiers using Arabic. However, the school's variety in terms of activities is also beneficial for children. On December, 20th and in preparing for the winter break, Yanis came happy and told his mother that they were offered many drinks like lemonade and juice and biscuit in the class. The instructor told them that they could take as much as they could. This is a quite important action since other socializing activities do exist in the preparatory stage of the school. The instructor seemed also very close to these children since she used a very common language as if they were sharing a party and enjoying time together. Yanis brought his copybooks and textbooks. He had two textbooks, two copybooks and one copybook for drawing. Parents should visualize, sign the mand give them back. Parents discovered that Yanis was not very good in coloring and drawing, average in writing but excellent in reasoning, logic and numbers. The first semester is quite salient since children should be accompanied to facilitate their integration. Yanis, during the other remaining semesters, had his own social interests bound to school and the mother continued following his progress with the teacher. To sum up, we can be best served by Vygotski's view that the child is also studied as the builder of

his or her own maturation, gradually interiorizing his or her dialogue with the outside world, the source of his or her internal thoughts (as cited in Chartier and Geneix, 2007, p. 13).

### 6.3. The Semi-structured Interviews

#### 6.3.1. Interview 1:

The first interviewee is a 48 years old female teacher who has 23 years of experience in teaching in primary school and 3 years in teaching pre-school classes. We refer this participant to K. B. For her, the pre-school is not obligatory for children and the schools should take into account the reception ability and th e required materials to enroll children in.

The instructor puts focus in her speech on the role of the mother in following her child. She has emphasized that the mother should first take care of her child before he comes to the school even at the level of hygiene, eating, education, etc.

While considering the syllabus designed for pre-schooling, the instructor considers it not suitable to the children's cognitive abilities and interests. She insisted on the programme she considers unsuitable in the sense that children need more training about the language through visual means; things that do not exist. To side her view, we can refer to Yanis reaction from the clown's activity. Yanis showed resistance to the clown and this was an unsuccessful experience for a child whose first language is kabyle. Yanis was not able to understand Arabic; a language introduced for the majority of Kabyle children in school as an official language. Hence, the instructor's analysis of the situation is quite reasonable and reflects the reality of the region. The government considers Arabic the official language, but many Kabyle families use Kabyle at home in order to keep their mother tongue alive. We can quote from the instructor:

> "The programme is not suitable like they need something about language, visual means which are crucial for children mainly in Béjaia; from Kabyleto Arabic. There are no media to facilitate… children are unable to follow without concrete images and figures" K.B.

The educator raises an important issue in how to provide input to children at this age range on the one hand and children who are more likely non-proficient in Arabic on the other. According to Peterson (2011: 52-3): *"I will argue that two other types of learning discussed by Bhatt and Quinn—learning from temporal context and exposure to holistic images—are also likely to be instances of facilitation".* The instructor said that the textbooks were designed in 2008. They are free. They are helpful but not sufficient especially when thinking of bilingual education. The biggest worry for this instructor is the usual change in

the textbooks. She made reference to changing a good textbook without knowing why and how the stakeholders decide to do so although she estimated it to be good in terms of "*Arabic and mathematics*". Here, we need to raise a very critical point about programme evaluation and implementation. Teachers should also take part of. The interviewee descried the syllabus as based on the alphabets and numbers until Number 9. In addition, classifications are also made to initiate the child to mathematics. However, this syllabus is put in a textbook that needs more illustrations, more colours, and more pictures. In addition, big format pictures are also needed for classroom use as the need rises for the teacher's guide; which are not yet provided. Here, the instructor is quite reasonable since she is referring to the need of using what we call "instructional scaffolding" which is necessary for children and for their learning (Echevaria et al., 2004, p. 87). This strategy is helpful since the educator uses graphic organizers as a pre-reading tool to prepare children for the content of the textbook chapters. In the textbook itself, many reading activities are introduced (e.g. on pages 16-17, 28-29, 46-47, 58-59 and 70-71) where one page is devoted to reading and one page to the picture (Saoud-Fettah, Azzouz and Merknassi, 2013).

Another crucial issue explained by the teacher is the problem of the number of children per class. Each class in the Chohadaa Hammoum Schoolcontains 26 children, but she considered the number high. Additionally, working conditions are not suitable for the child and for the teacher. Cases in point are the tables that are not adequate to the child, the technological means are not available like DVD, computers, etc. The instructor related teaching pre- schooling to tools because she teaches what the programme contains in the morning but prefers the afternoon for various activities such as play activities, modeling, drawing, singing. This is accurate because the current approaches to early childhood education remain to an enormous extent impregnated in terms of playful educational material, the taking into account of learning rhythms, and the "ho listic" conception of a development where emotions, socialization and intellectual acquisitions are inseparable (Chartier & Geneix, 2007).

The interviewee has also tackled the past method when there was no pre-schooling. She said:

> *In the past, we used to have a 'preparation stage' in the first year of education, but now with pre- schooling; there's no need for that. If well done, pre-schooling is positive but there should be more focus on learning the language and mathematics. K.B.*

Difficulties instructors encounter are diverse. For instance, the interviewee gave the example of children who show resistance to school and cry. They generally influence the group. In Yanis diaries, he was at the beginning eager to go to school but after a week, he refused to go and the mother was obliged to accompany him into the classroom. This crisis lasted for three days. When enquiring about the reason, there was a girl who had a sever crisis against coming to school and accusing the teacher (K.B.) to try to kill her. This severe state when watching the girl crying and resisting the class, many children were influenced among whom was Yanis although the girl was not from the same class. Thanks to the collaboration between the instructor L.L. and the mother that Yanis could get re- integrated into his class. There is no doubt how one should interpret the establishment of many "parent support" systems, in which infant care structures play a central role (Chartier & Geneix, 2007). Unfortunately, such a system does not exist in our Algerian educational context for pre-school children.

When talking of problematic children, the researcher asked about the use of punishment. The instructor showed

disagreement with what parents do. For her, she uses punishment to manage the classroom and children as part of reinforcement techniques. Children tell their parents who, in turn, react and encourage even their children to lie (according to the interviewee). The instructor believes that she looks at children in terms of a future generation; but the problem is that there is no cooperation between parents and the instructor to build this generation. It is usually on the basis of the most "difficult" situations that professionals have realized that children could not be looked after in ways that would be beneficial to them without the partnership of the family (Chartier & Geneix, 2007). For her, every child has a unique way of treatment because they differ in terms of personality and education. The interviewee added that we should balance between punishment and reward like offering school materials (she showed some of them in her folder) for the children who do well but nothing offered for the reverse. Getting no reward is in itself a punishment.

### 6.3.2. Interviewee 2:

The second interviewee is a 52 years old female teacher who has 28 years of experience in teaching in primary school and 2 years in teaching pre-school classes. We refer this participant to L.L. For her, the pre-school is advantageous for children if taken seriously. She added that pre-school is not obligatory but officially integrated for children of the age of five. This is not part of the reform actually, but textbooks changed as far as the division of

the files is concerned. However, L.L. mentioned the case of a minority of children who had not the chance to have their pre-schooling. She said that though few they are, but we meet a serious problem in schooling (their first year primary education). In 2011, 73% of children took profit of pre-schooling. Hence, there exists a rate of children who could not attend preparatory classes. Such children show psychological complexes compared to other children since they were not integrated before, they were not initiated to reading and writing. In this case, the "pedagogue" plays the role of the counselor and much time should be devoted to these children in the classroom mainly at the beginning.

The age of pre-schooling is appropriate but L.L. evoked the children with linguistic deficiency. She provided an example of a child who was not able to talk at all and this created a big problem to get him integrated and even if he tries to talk, he feels a kind of complex in front of his classmates. The pedagogue played here an important role by devoting time and helping him speak since he might be considered as a disabled child as she categorized him by pointing out:

> *If the child suffers from a disability, he should not be enrolled in pre-schooling at the age of five but at the age of six instead. L.L.*

However, there is no evidence that this child is part of children with "Special Educational Needs". The decision to postpone the integration of this child and separate him from his age group cannot be merely decided by an educator or a director or even parents but specialized professionals in early childhood should have their say here. Sometimes, *the question of children "with special educational needs"* reminds us that preschool structures should enable children of mixed development and needs to live together, should foster exchanges between different children, and ensure that the institution truly caters to the respective capacities of each child Chartier and Geneix (2007, p. 32). For this child, L.L. claimed that with her effort and the time devoted to this child, he could develop his speaking abilities. Hence, we can notice how can pre-schooling be helpful to get children with different abilities and different personalities integrated and prepared for schooling. We need also to hint at the necessity of including professionals in early childhood education at the pre-schooling stage. Many decisions need the diagnosis of a professional and this case is an example. Hence, collaboration between parents and professionals is then thought to ensure a coherence that is felt to be necessary for the child's "harmonious development" (Chartier & Geneix, 2007).

At this stage of pre-schooling, the child discovers a new world. All good practices are acquired and it is the best place for socialization. According to L.L., the child starts to

differentiate between the school and the home when getting separated from the mother and he can distinguish lately the difference between the home and the school.

This instructor takes socializing as the primary objective in pre-schooling education and puts focus on parental separation in order to succeed her job.

The instructor put focus on the programme she judges incomplete as many of its elements are missing. This programme is not rich. For instance, she illustrated through teaching alphabets where 28 letters exist in Arabic but the textbook is based only on 19. The educator estimates that there is enough time for language and arithmetic; why should we limit the child to 19 letters? In her teaching method, she follows the syllabus in the morning but let the afternoon for action: activities, modeling, drawing, etc. This method as one might notice is similar to the one of teacher K.B.

The place of the family is so crucial (Algozzine, Wang, & Violette, 2011; Chartier & Geneix, 2007; Idri, 2006). In this, she shifted to the role of parents to make this stage successful. She related parents' and teachers' erroneous conceptions to the risk of misleading the child. In this, we can quote from her:

*People take it in an easy-going way. Parents and teachers think that pre-school is just for playing. The child will develop a negative and wrong idea about school if we put in mind that they are allowed everything like eating in the classroom, being absent regularly, etc. It's wrong because we need to diminish their freedom step by step to change their habits and survey every detail to develop in them good practices. L.L.*

The interviewee in her talk relates the success of pre-schooling to the teacher and, the, parents since this stage is basic for education. It can actually be considered as a *'scaffolding stage'* where the educator provides support in the form of modeling, prompts, explicit explanations and concrete demonstrations; a term adopted from the Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximate Development (ZPD) where focus is put on what the child can do alone and what can do with the assistance of a more experienced person. In scaffolding techniques, the child is offered support at the beginning and the provided amount of assistance diminishes as the child acquires experience through multiple practice activities (Vacca, 2000, as cited in Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2004). The instructor L.L. referred to the importance of pre- schooling stage as a basis for the first year education. If the child was not appropriately followed and supported in the preparatory education, this would more likely because there was an important gap when starting his primary education. In this concern, she pointed out:

*Pre-schooling is the basis of education. If not appropriately done, the teacher in the first year primary school considers that children were taught the basics. If parents do not cooperate, the teacher cannot know about the problems children have; and the child is the victim in this case. L.L.*

When asking about her teaching approaches, methods, her relation with the child; L.L. emphasized the role of dialogue and communication as the basis of everything. Concerning the child, she generally tries to establish a relationship with him right from the first month to cope with any possible existing fear. She said:

*I discuss with the child and let him talk especially about what hurts him. I show the child how to keep secrets, what to say and what not to say in public through this close interpersonal relationship I build with him. L.L.*

She added that it is difficult to change the child's habits as he cannot keep seated during two hours. Children ask to go out, move around the class. Hence, we need as educators to help children keep positive and organized.

Nevertheless, although the educator uses the reward/punishment practices, she seems successful in the first but the way she punishes seems inadequate. At the beginning of her contact with children, she uses corporal contact like kisses and hugs and she progressively moves to encouraging words like good, very good, nice, etc. She sometimes offers sweet for children who do well. Yet, for punishment, she refers to scoring. She gives feedback and relates this to having a zero; a detail we do not recommend for a pedagogue at the level of pre-schooling especially that scoring is not officially part of the politics. However, she justified this method of punishment through "otherwise, you'll get a zero", "You'll be a zero" because the educator cannot use other ways to punish. The interviewee referred to other methods like not letting them go out for a while until the child finishes his activity, or creating a competitive atmosphere between children.

Contrarily to the first instructor, L.L. does not agree with the use of such technological materials as the DVD and the TV in the classroom although available they are. She estimates this to be inappropriate for the child especially that the school does not provide rich content and relative materials to the syllabus in the DVD's. Instead, the instructor in question prefers using diverse activities like drawing, painting, play of words and numbers in the afternoons.

By the end of her talk about pre-schooling, the programme, teaching methods and techniques; she indicated that she has not blindly followed the programme but instead of finishing the book, she added other missing letters from the alphabets because she does not

want the child to give up later. We may be best served by her saying: *"I am satisfied with what I've reached".*

### 6.4. Teacher L.L. and Yanis:

The second interviewee is Yanis' educator. She faced a number of problems with Yanis because he seemed so attached to family. He used to reject the educator's care of the other children in the class. He could not keep seated for a long time. Yet, the most difficult task with Yanis was his rejection of writing. This problem was taken into consideration by the educator and the mother together. By the end of the second semester in February, 2013, the teacher L.L. was anxious about Yanis' lack of concentration and disturbing behavior when a writing activity is provided. She said: "*I was astonished especially that his parents are educated and follow him, but he refuses to write".* The mother used many strategies before and during the spring break that lasted from March, 21$^{st}$ to April, 7$^{th}$ 2013. The programme was as follows:

Organize Yanis' daily time-table. Yanis starts his school at 10.30 a.m. Before school, Yanis with the help of the mother writes the day's date and repeats a letter many times with words that contain the day's letter.

After school, at 4 p.m., Yanis needs some rest (play-time, eating, watching TV. and using the computer). At 6.30 p.m yanis revises the day's letters and activities done in the school for one hour.

Before sleeping, the mother takes care of his daily hygiene and goes to bed with yanis where she reads a story in French and explains it in Kabyle. Then, before sleeping Yanis and the mother repeat together the "Coranic" short verses in Arabic that Yanis learnt in School and fall asleep.

This plan helped Yanis get progress in writing and helped him manage his fear from writing. The instructor noticed advance in this after the holidays.

## 7. Discussion

When putting the three techniques we have employed together namely, participant observation, Yanis diary through his mother as an educator and a researcher, the two interviews; many elements can appear in the results that complete each other. Through our analysis, we can extract first a number of themes:

### 7.1. Pre-schooling as an indispensable stage

It seems quite evident from the results we could get from the diverse techniques we employed that pre-schooling is a stage we can in no way skip. For Yanis, the school is becoming part of his daily life which is apart away from his home. Yanis started to feel autonomous from his home and that he has his own pre-occupation separate from parents. We can illustrate this by Yanis reaction when he met his mother in his class on May, 8th (the date of the interview). Yanis looked strangely to his mother and said: "What are you doing here?" If we consider the dialogical aspect of this utterance, we can consider voice and intonation here. The voice of the author (Yanis) is singular and controls the hero (the mother) because Yanis is in a powerful situation (his class) that he considers his own property that the mother should not attain and this makes Yanis discourse falls into the "outside-in" category. Another event is what happened to Yanis in the last day of school. Although a party was organized, children were offered drinks, cakes, presents but Yanis came home crying because he did not want to get separated from the class and the teacher for the summer break. He enquired from the mother: "When I go to school for the first year primary education, shall I meet Yasser, my classmates and the Mouaalima?" This utterance make in itself evidence of how pre-schooling can be successful for the child's socialization and autonomy.

### 7.2. Programme evaluation

Both instructors revealed dissatisfaction from the textbooks; one in terms of the provided illustrations she related to more colors and pictures (the case of K.B.) and the other in terms of not including all the letters that exist in Arabic (the case of L.L.). However, in the textbook; its authors pointed out that the manual serves as a helpful guide for the educator to follow the learning process of the each child, diagnose the learning difficulties he encounters and, hence, find out the appropriate strategies to remedy these problems (Saoud-Fettah et al., 2013). If we consider K.B.'s remark about the need for a teacher's guide, the textbook designers noted that the manual is destined to the educator at the first stage who should read aloud to the child, explain content before doing the activities (Ibid). What one can consider here is the inadequacy of this instructor since the authors seem to ignore that many children do not have this ability to understand Arabic; the case of the Kabyle regions and the school we took as a case is part of. How can the instructor read and assure that children identify the sounds of Arabic? Yanis is a good example who lived a crisis when the school invited a clown for fun who used Arabic that was not understood by him. The Arabisation project has

been widely criticized for ignoring the population linguistic diversity (Ben Rabah, 2004, as cited in Rezig, 2011, p. 1329). However, it is not easier to respect this right in countries where complex social or political situations underlie the language used (case of Arabic imposed on the Berber or Tuareg population) (Chartier & Geneix, 2007).

### 7.3. Teachers' roles

Teachers seem to play different roles like care-takers (children are not totally independent at the age of five), as educators (as they need to follow the syllabus) and as pedagogues as they need to take into account the children's emotional, physical, creative, cognitive development and personal well-being. According to the results, both teachers unconsciously use some of the characteristics of what Echevarria et al. (2004, p. 86) refer to verbal and procedural scaffolding. On the one hand, they support children through verbal scaffolding by using language development techniques like paraphrasing, prompting, questioning and elaboration to facilitate children's movement to the first year of schooling. They also use some, but not all of the procedural techniques like using explicit teaching, modeling and practice opportunities with others, coaching and modeling.

### 7.4. Materials' evaluation

Textbooks for children enrolled in preparatory education were designed and produced to socialize them with their new environment, to enable their development through physical activities, to develop in them a degree of autonomy and to prepare them for primary school with a preliminary learning. It was the national commission of programmes that took them in charge based generally on civic and Islamic education, music and drawing (Sofi, 2011). Textbooks, a white board and a TV are the only materials provided by the school. The choice of DVD's is put on the instructor's shoulders that should choose what they estimate appropriate for children.

**Table 1.** Results of the Pre-school Stage

| Yanis | Instructor 1 (K.B.) | Instructor 2 (L.L.) |
|---|---|---|
| - Acquisition of a rich vocabulary, is able to distinguish all letters from the home.<br>- Yanis is conscious that at the age of six, he will go to an upper level; that is the | - Acquisition of Arabic is facilitated.<br>- We attained some level of autonomy in children (They can do things alone).<br>- Children are ready for the school, better organized. | - By the end of the year, there is more understanding of Arabic.<br>- Children are ready for primary education.<br>- Better organization in the children.<br>- Pre-schooling is a mixture of |

| first year primary education.<br>- Yanis now understands that school is not for playing but for learning. | - Children are manageable better than in the beginning.<br>- With pre-schooling, children will follow better in the future.<br>- Pre-schooling is a mixture of learning and playing.<br>- Teacher is more autonomous in pre-school than in other stages of primary education (no time limitation). | learning and playing.<br>- I have not followed the textbook blindly but initiated further letters. |

## 8. Conclusions

According to the findings, many problems are diagnosed in the pre-schooling stage in the Algerian context:

1.Considering pre-schooling as an optional stage for parents and relating it to the reception ability of the public school remains unrealistic. Since the ministry prepared free textbooks and designed a syllabus for this pre-schooling stage, all children should be part of the programme at a national level. The actual stage is more likely to create a problem of homogeneity in terms of knowledge, integration, behaviour, etc. that is due in part of the existence of children who did not have the chance to follow pre-schooling services and in another part there exist children who benefited from private services in kindergartens and pre-schooling at the same time before the age of five (2 to 4 years old). One can then predict the huge difference that can exist between the various categories of different social classes that start to emerge in the Algerian society; Béjaia in our case; though we still can in no way generalise this claim.

2.National programmes are taking into account the Arabic language ignoring the multi-cultural as well the multilingual characteristics of the Algerian society. Bilingual education is not considered in this context and the problem of language seems to occur in the Algerian context mainly in non -Arabic speaking areas like the Kabyle regions, some Chaoui regions, Chenoui region, Tergui regions, etc. especially that Berber is officially accepted as a national language in Algeria. We suggest a socio-linguistic consideration mainly for pre-school programmes based on bilingual education to consider the shift from the mother tongue to the Arabic as an official language. This problem can also arise for even children in regions where the Algerian Arabic is talked because a difference exists between the colloquial language and the classical Arabic. A third phenomenon that can be related to

language introduction is the emergence of a wide number of families that use the French language as the first language at home. Their children can have little or no knowledge about either Arabic or even Kabyle. Issues that make pre-schooling an inevitable step for children that belong to different social backgrounds, different language exposure, different classes to introduce Arabic in a homogeneous way.

3.There should be an organized collaboration between the school personnel, parents and professionals in order to follow the child's development, diagnose his learning difficulties and disabilities if any since collective structures may have a positive effect on the capacity to express positive emotions, if adults engage in an individual relationship with the child (Chartier & Geneix, 2007).

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