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SURVEY OF PARENTS' DISPOSITION TO CO-CREATION WITH THEIR CHILDREN

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Abstract. This article presents an analysis of the results of a survey conducted with parents of 3-to-7-year-old children. The objective of the survey was to study the attitudes of the parents to inclusion in the Happy and Successful Together Project under the Innovation and Competitiveness Operational Programme. Two questionnaires were developed: one for finding out about the parents' expectations for their children's talents, their discovery and development, and the other - for establishing the parents' need for communication and interaction with their children in an atmosphere of cooperation and collaboration. Based on the processing, systematization, and analysis of the primary empirical data, a pilot target group of 34 children was formed to work with on the main objectives of the project.

Keywords: Happy and Successful Together Project; parents' attitudes; children; co-creation

Relevance of the Problem

In our modern society, there is a growing need for people who respond quickly and adequately in various situations, offer and make optimal decisions, for creative individuals with original ideas and innovative thinking, able to create works of art. A number of scientific studies have found that the years of early childhood are sensitive to the discovery and cultivation of skills. Every child is nonpareil, with unique character and talents, with attitudes and abilities for discovering and changing the world. Children love to explore, try, and make their own "discoveries", and as many as they are, so are the various things they prefer to do and can do for a long time without getting bored. Adults seem to be accustomed to these children's activities and, in most cases, they accept them as natural for childhood. But in these seemingly "insignificant" activities lies children's talent, and if not discovered in time, if not encouraged, it could not develop. It has been proven that even if talents exist, they cannot develop if not discovered and if conditions are not created for their development. In this context, significant challenges to responsible parenting can be outlined the overcoming of which presupposes a purposeful "balancing of

the various aspects of upbringing, while demonstrating a high degree of trust in the child” (Konakchieva 2019, p. 24).

Every parent wants to develop their child's potential, to provide them with the best opportunities for personal growth and proof. As D. Chuhovska noted, the main priority of modern parents is to ensure the future of their children. They are ready to invest a lot of time and love in their children and to bear the high financial costs associated with longer periods of education (Chuhovska 2017, p. 277).

Some parents, driven by their ambitions, tend to enrol their children in as many additional activities of interest as the respective kindergarten offers. This desire is later transferred to primary school. In this way, children get satiated with activities which, instead of developing their talents, very often have the opposite effect: children are “tired” of various activities, cannot decide which are interesting to them and which give them pleasure, attend them by obligation, and, at a later age, renounce them. There is another group of parents who believe that in preschool and primary school age children are small, their psyche is very fragile, so it is better for them to play and live their childhood to the fullest, and they can develop their talents when they grow up. Both groups miss the favourable age predispositions to observe, discover, encourage, and develop their children's talents.

Research Parameters of the Survey

The reasons above led us to develop the *Happy and Successful Together* Project under the Innovation and Competitiveness Operational Programme. The idea of the project was:

- to help parents in discovering children's skills and talents;
- to refer them to specialists who will discover and support the development of their children's talents;
- to create an educational environment and conditions that favour the support and development of children's talents;
- to assist parents in choosing additional activities in kindergarten and extracurricular activities in primary school;
- in the time spent together, parents and children to experience satisfaction from togetherness and co-creation, to get to know each other and discover their talents.

Guided by the above and in order to avoid “wandering” in the discovery of talent, we focused on creating a “workshop” where parents can spend part of their leisure time with their children and, through games, communication, and interactivity supported by professionals and specialists in a specially organized educational environment, have the opportunity to “look” at their children and understand what is of interest to them, what activities give them the most pleasure, which of them hold their attention for the longest time and, in this way, discover their interests and talents, encourage them, and develop the talents. “From a psychological point of

view, through the environment, children get to know themselves, their individuality, find their “second life” in the subject culture, in the relationships with other people” (Petrova, 2014).

An essential stage of the project activities was to promote the idea and model among the parents of preschool children, to establish their interest and desire to participate in it, to select and form a pilot target group of children and parents who support the idea of early discovery and development of children's talents.

Organizational Parameters of the Survey

In order to study the attitudes of the parents to inclusion in the *Happy and Successful Together* Project, *two questionnaires* were developed: one for finding out about the parents' expectations for their children's talents, their discovery and development, and the other - for establishing the parents' need for communication and interaction with their children in an atmosphere of cooperation and co-creation.

The survey included 80 parents, whose children visited Slaveyche Kindergarten, Snezhanka Kindergarten, and Druzhba Kindergarten in Pleven.

The objective of Survey 1 was to study the opinion of the parents about the talents of their children, their preferred activities, and their attitude to activities through which they could discover, stimulate, and develop their children's skills.

The purpose of Survey 2 was to study the opinion of the parents about their role in shaping their children's personality.

The questions in both surveys were combined and included both closed and open answers. They were divided in two sections: the first one had an informational character. The answers in the section aimed to obtain information about the name and age of the children and their age group. This information was used only for the specific study, with a view to forming interest groups. The objective of the actual second section of Survey 1 was:

- to find out what the home activities most frequently preferred by the children were;
- to study the parents' opinions about the manifestation of their children's talents and the areas in which the giftedness of the children was manifested;
- to establish to what extent and in what way conditions were provided in the family for the children to express, show, and manifest their talents;
- to determine the parents' attitude to inclusion of their children in specialized workshops for the support and development of the children's individual skills.

Analysis of the Results of the Survey

Essential for the present study was to determine what home activities were preferred by the children and, on the basis of the answers provided by the parents,

to outline the activities in the workshop to be offered to children in order to support the development of their talents.

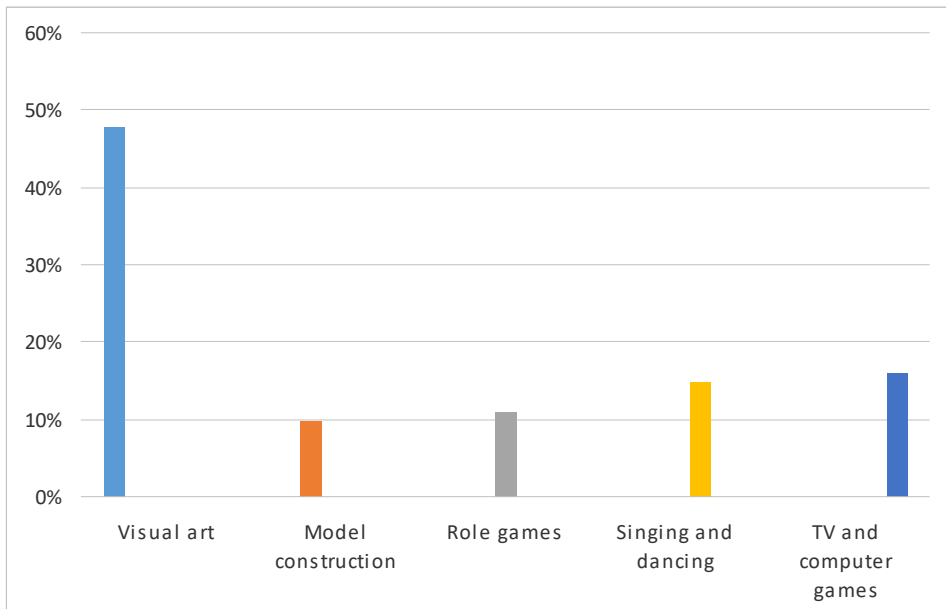


Figure 1. Home Activities Preferred by Children

As Plamen Legkostup pointed out, “In visual arts, the perception of reality is revealed; the perception of works of visual art; the training in drawing, graphics, painting, sculpture, applied decorative arts and model construction” (Legkostup 2000: 99). The increased children's interest in this type of art is explained both by age predispositions and preferences, and by the easy and accessible environment and materials that parents provide to their children. These activities are very useful for them because they help to develop fine motor skills, which largely determine the success of children in primary school. From the answers of the parents interviewed, a close percentage ratio was established between the children's preferences “to watch TV or play computer games” and “model construction” as well as between “role, singing, and dancing activities”. The children's preferences established are a favourable prerequisite for the co-creative activities planned to be included in the workshop.

For the structuring of the interest groups, it is important to understand the parents' views on their children's talents and the area in which they think they are manifested.

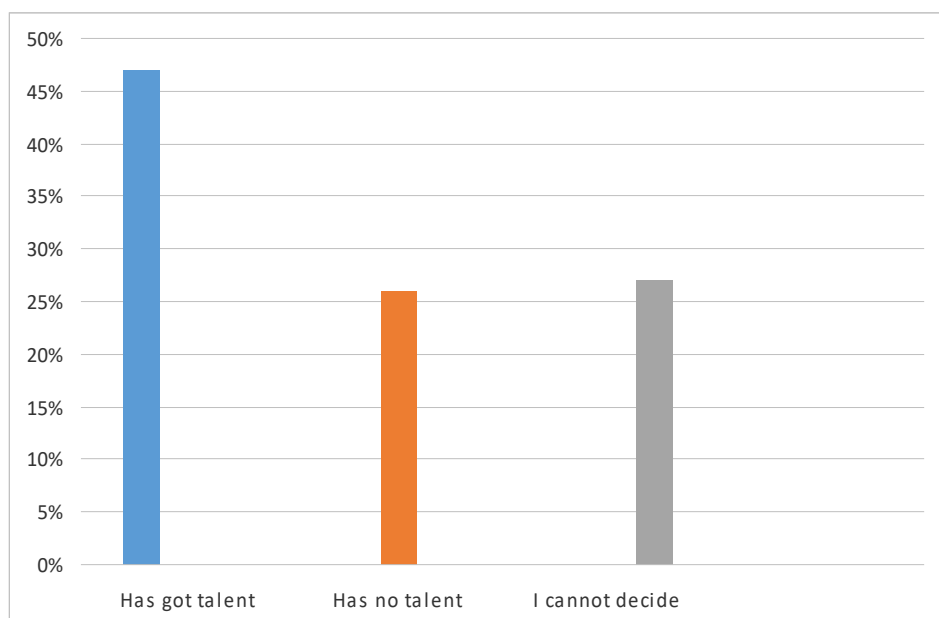


Figure 2. Children's Talents

The results of the survey showed that the vast majority of the respondents (53%) could not decide whether their children had talents to develop in a particular area. The summarized data confirmed our thesis, on the one hand, that most parents are not familiar with their children's talents, do not notice them, cannot find them, which adversely affects their cultivation and future development, and, on the other, the need for early diagnosis and support from specialists to help the children develop their talents.

Of interest for the future work of the “workshop” were the parents' answers about the area in which their children's talents were manifested. Four main areas were suggested to the parents: applied arts, folk singing, folk dancing, and acting, as the future work of the “workshop” was going to be focused on these four areas.

There was an overlap between the answers about the manifestations of the children's talents and the home activities preferred by the children, which made us search for children's talents in a particular area, but the findings are to be proven or refuted after specialists conduct tests and refer the children to the activities proposed in the “workshop”.

It was important to know whether the parents were interested in the creative activities of the children in kindergarten and their awareness of the additional activities proposed in kindergarten. There were very few parents – 20% –

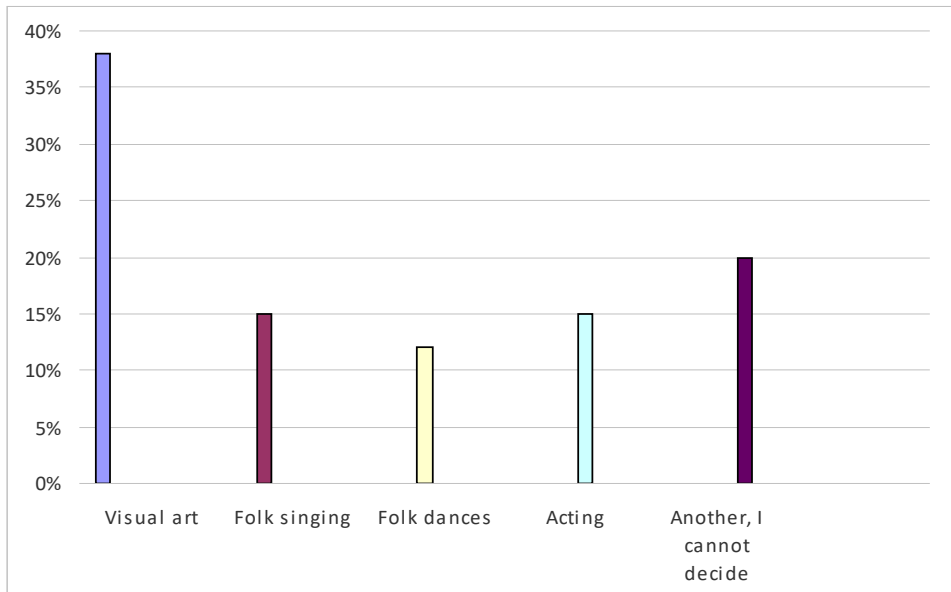


Figure 3. Areas of Children's Talents

who answered that they had talked to the teachers about their children's creative activities. This low percentage is disturbing because it shows parents' ignorance of their children's creative interests and activities. The number of children who did not attend additional activities prevailed (62% did not attend, 38% attended), which shows that the parents were satisfied with the activities proposed in kindergarten and did not consider it necessary for their children to attend additional activities. From the answers of those who answered that their children attended the additional activities, it was established that they had enrolled them in the ones proposed by the kindergarten (mainly sports activities, English, folk dances, modern dances). It was positive that the parents complied with the wishes of their children. The reason for this was the answers to the question of who chose the additional activity:

- the parents and children together – 77% of the respondents;
- the children chose the additional activity independently – 20% of the respondents;
- the parents chose the additional activity – 3% of the respondents.

The answers of the participants in the survey showed and confirmed the established trend that the largest percentage of the respondents (31% of the parents) wanted to develop their children's visual art skills, followed by interest in folk dances (23% of the respondents), singing (22% of the parents), and acting (12% of the respondents). The rest of the participants in the survey indicated a desire

related to sports, model construction, or answered: “*I cannot decide*” or “*whatever the child wants.*”

It was very important for the opening of the future “workshop” to understand whether the parents were interested in developing their children's talents in a specially organized activity led by specialists, and whether they would participate with their children if they were offered such a leisure organization.

The high percentage of the respondents with positive answers (68% of the parents) proved the need for opening a workshop in which, guided by specialists, the children can develop their talents.

Survey 2 was conducted to supplement the information gathered in Survey 1, and clarified how the parents understood and took into account the impact of their family relationships and communication in the co-creation with their children.

It is important for the creation and work of a “workshop” to know the attitude of the parents to children's independence, as this quality is of particular importance for the creativity of the individual. It has been proven that prerequisites for the formation of independence arise approximately between the second and third year of a child's life, when children begin to move around relatively independently and can independently meet some of their basic life needs in the family and other social institutions (a crèche or kindergarten). As E. Ilin claimed, “at the beginning of preschool age – around the third year, and in some children even earlier, depending on the individual characteristics of the temperament, in some of them there is a greater and in others less pronounced aspiration to independence.” (E. Ilyin, 2012). According to L. Trubaychuk, the first manifestations of independence appear even earlier “on the border between the first and second year of a child's life. This is the beginning that marks the path of the formation of independent actions and skills, which gradually become more complicated in the games, in the activities related to the perception of the environment and communication. With the help of adults, the children's independent skills are strengthened, manifested in various activities, and gradually acquire the character of personality traits.” (Trubaychuk 2007, p. 300 – 307).

The author, S. Teplyuk, emphasized the role of parents for the development of children's independence. Parents must purposefully and without postponing develop it, as with each passing day the volume of independent action of children increases, and the help and influence of adults decreases.

The surveyed parents observed and reflected their children's manifestations of independence in the following way.

The data show that a higher percentage of the children showed independence, but taking into account their age (6 – 7 years), such results were unsatisfactory, as in almost all children at this age such a quality must be formed. Independence provides autonomy, and in its structure a significant place is occupied by “two interconnected components: motivational and procedural. The first one reflects

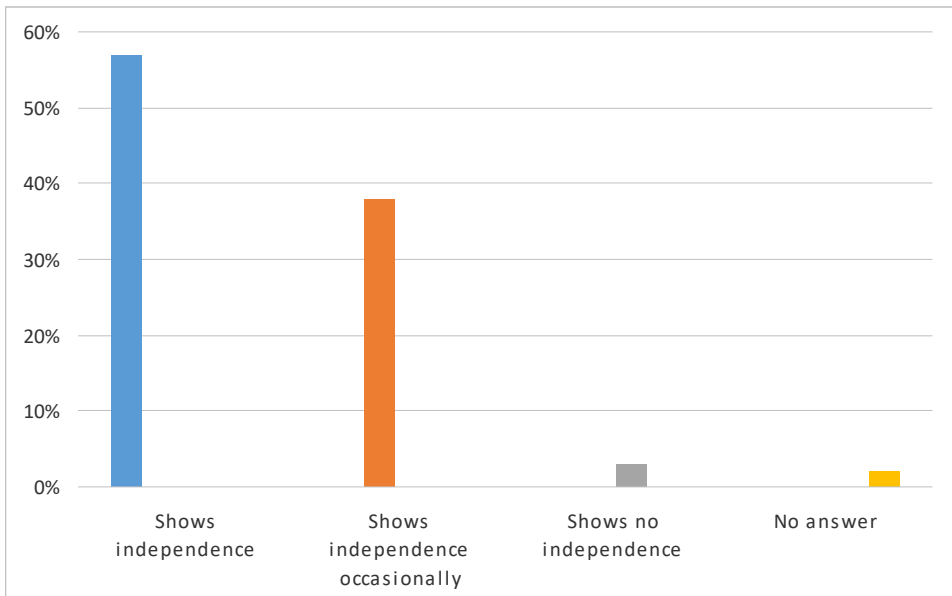


Figure 4. Children's Independence

the desire to explore the world, to discover the new, the knowledge, curiosity, and inquisitiveness that arouse children's interest and make them ask questions, seek answers, act and experiment, i.e. the stimulus for knowledge, development, and independence. The second one is the way of searching, finding, and applying knowledge and skills in new, different situations. These are two interconnected aspects of a single process in which the knowledge and skills acquired stimulate the discovery, accumulation of, and enrichment with new information. This is the motive that encourages the learner to achieve the goals set. Therefore, the presence of conditions that provide opportunities for purposeful, independent goal setting, seeking answers, and achieving the results desired is very important. The essence of intrinsic motivation is the promotion of initiative and independence on which the autonomy of the individual in the educational process develops." (Hristova 2018: 307). The analysis of the answers of the parents interviewed leads to a number of questions: "Are parents aware of the role of independence in the personal formation of preschool children?", "Do they know how to promote children's independent activities?", "Are they aware of the activities in which their children can show independence?", "How can they organize the environment so as to provoke their children's independence?", and other questions related to the competence of parents in the formation of their children's personality.

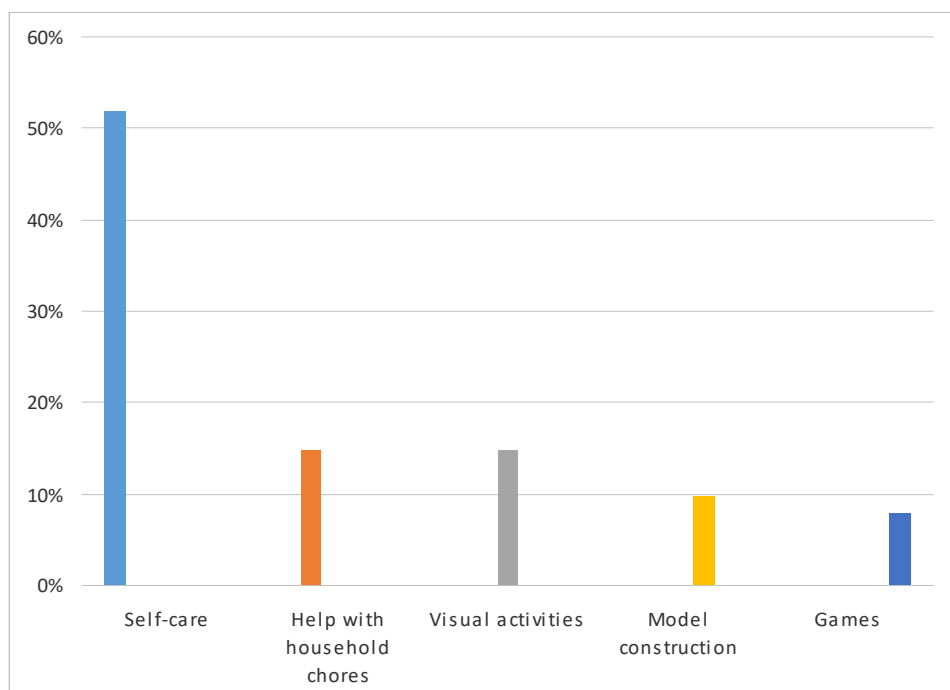


Figure 5. Activities in which Children Show Independence

Prevailing were the answers of the parents who pointed out self-care as an activity in which their children showed independence without seeking help from them, which showed that these basic skills had been formed. Only a few parents mentioned singing and dancing. The small percentage of the parents who associated their children's independence with activities such as visual arts, model construction, games, singing and dancing, accessible to children of this age group, was impressive. This fact raises the question why children do not show independence in these activities? Do their families have the conditions for this? Do parents and children work together?

The next few questions were related to the duration of communication and joint activities of the parents and children.

For most of the participants in the survey, the time that the parents spent with their children was not enough and did not meet their desire and aspiration to communicate, as well as their needs.

- 32% of the respondents “always” found time to be with their children;
- 68% of the respondents “were busy, but tried to find time” to communicate with their children;

It was very good for the upbringing of the children that neither parent answered “I’m very busy, I have almost no time left.”

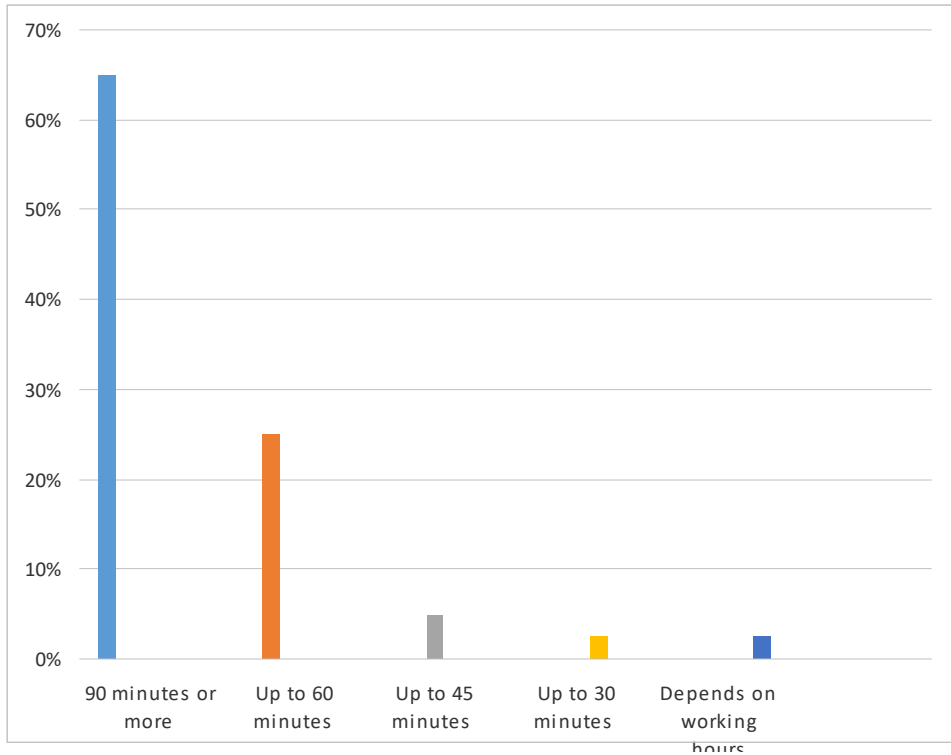


Figure 6. Parents and Children Together

About the time they spent communicating with their children every day, the largest number of the parents (65%) answered “90 minutes or more”, “up to 60 minutes” was the answer of 25% of the parents, 5% of the parents were together with their children for “up to 45 minutes”, 2.5% for “up to 30 minutes”, and 2.5% answered it “depended on working hours”. Important for the formation of the growing child's personality is the time when parents and children are together, as communication between them enriches them, helps them get to know each other, satisfies their needs for shared experiences as well as joint and achieved goals and results.

It is in the interest of our future work to find out what parents most often talk about with their children. Sociological research shows, and it was confirmed by survey data, that parents spend the most time discussing issues related to their

child's behaviour. It is worrying that a small number of parents talk to their children about art, which adversely affects the formation of their artistic culture and worldview.

Regarding the place where “the parents and children spent time at weekends most often”, the answers confirmed that the percentage of those who cultivated a positive attitude and disposition to art was again very small. Those were the parents who talked to their children about theatre, concert, cinema, etc.

The last question in both surveys aimed to establish the attitude of the parents to being with their children in a creative environment outside the home and suitable for their development. The positive response of 90% of the parents who participated in the survey outlined a favourable trend and justified our expectations that they would take the opportunity to discover their children's talents and promote their children's skills in the “workshop” to be opened.

Based on the analysis and summaries of the surveys conducted with the parents, the following conclusions can be made:

1. According to the parents surveyed, visual art activities (drawing, appliqueing, modelling) were the home activities most preferred by their children.

2. The parents believed that their children had talent in a particular area, but found it difficult to discover and develop it.

3. When choosing additional activities for their children, the parents mostly referred to those proposed by the kindergarten and enrolled the children in several of the activities without taking into account their children's interest or talents.

4. The respondents were aware of the importance of communicating with their children and spending more time together and, therefore, did their best to share more time with their children.

5. It was important for the parents to cultivate personal qualities that ensure autonomous development of their children's personality.

6. The respondents attached due importance to the role of art in the upbringing of the preschool children.

The results of the survey showed the parents' interest in developing their children's talents in a specially organized workshop led by specialists, as well as their attitude and desire to participate with their children if they were offered such a form of leisure organization.

The survey confirmed the thesis about the need for opening a “workshop” where in a suitable educational environment, assisted by specialists, they could discover and promote the abilities of their children.

Based on the processing, systematization, and analysis of the primary empirical data, a pilot target group of 34 children was formed. The specialists conducted tests to discover the children's talents and, based on them, four groups were formed:

- applied arts;
- folk singing;

- folk dances;
- acting.

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