



## The Curriculum Referred to Development and Learning Standards and the Correlation Between Them

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### Abstract

*The competencies set out in the Curriculum Framework are derived from the overall goals of preschool education and determine the key learning outcomes that children should achieve progressively and consistently throughout the preschool education system, in line with the Standards of Development and of Child Learning 3-6 years old. Standards describe the behaviors, skills, and knowledge that children of this age group should have or be able to demonstrate. Standards define what children can and are able to do, say and show as they grow, develop and move from one age group to another. The definition of standards, indicators, and strategies for their fulfillment, aims at educating and transmitting the human values and the best qualities of the Albanian people, such as national pride, cooperation, assistance, respect for others, empathy, honesty, love, will, perseverance, emotion management, tolerance, understanding, diversity, etc. The development and learning standards of children aged 3-6 have been designed with the new competency-based approach in mind. Having children at the center and being designed for them, this document presents the opportunities and achievements of children at specific age periods, in every field of development. The primary purpose of the standards is to support the better development of preschool children.*

**Keywords:** Curriculum, confirmation of standards and competencies

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Standards in preschool education

All areas of development and learning are important. Development and learning processes follow each other and are influenced by various economic, social, and cultural factors. Development and learning come as a result of the child reaching maturity at a certain age with the experience gained during growth. Children learn in different ways, but play and exploration remain the main activities from which children of this age group learn.

The drafting of the standards document is based on the following principles, which convey the belief of experts:

Belief 1. Child learning and development are multidimensional.

Areas of development are closely interrelated. This means that the development of the child in one area affects his / her development in other areas as well. Therefore, areas of development can not be considered isolated from each other; they intersect and, where the intersection occurs, development also occurs.

Their dynamic interaction should be taken into account by the adult, in order to give the child the opportunity to develop his potential.

Belief 2. The child is potentially endowed with special abilities.

All children are potentially capable of achieving positive outcomes in their development. Regardless of their backgrounds and experiences, preschool teachers work in accordance with the development and learning opportunities of children, but also by providing challenging experiences, through which the developmental progress and the interest of each

child to learn are encouraged, and acquire new knowledge and skills.

It is important for adults to understand that, for all young children, there must be high expectations in order for them to reach their full potential. If adults have low expectations for children, the results will also be smaller, risking stunting their potential development.

Belief 3. Children are individuals, developing at different rates.

Every child is unique, grows, and develops their skills based on individual rhythm. Preschool teachers need to be well aware of the unique developmental characteristics of preschool age and tailor the curriculum to meet the needs of each child. Some children may have identified delays in a particular area of development, learning disabilities, or disabilities.

Preschool teachers adapt the expectations set out in the preschool standards in line with the development of these children. This does not mean that other standards need to be set for these children. Developmental and learning standards are the same for all children, but the path, manner, and time it takes to meet them varies from child to child.

Belief 4. Children demonstrate knowledge, skills, and competencies in every area of development.

Not all children in the same age group should be expected to meet the standards at the same time or to demonstrate the skills and competencies they possess at the same level of development. Children may show that they are more inclined and more developed in some areas of development, while they may indicate that they have difficulties or a slower development in other areas of development. Seen in this light, preschool teachers need to recognize each child's individuality, plan and develop activities, point to strengths, and help him/her to progress in the most challenging areas (in those that have more difficulty). Through this strategy, children will make small progress steps towards meeting the standards of preschool education in each area, including those areas in which they present difficulties.

Belief 5. Children learn through interaction.

Children develop and learn best by coping. In this confrontation, the adult is only orienting and does not hinder the initiatives and creativity of children, on the contrary, constantly encourages them in this direction, creating a more motivating environment. It is suggested that the challenges be spontaneous and as natural as possible, as learning stems from the child's own life experience.

Belief 6. Parents are the child's first teachers.

Parents are the child's first and foremost teachers and, as such, they have the opportunity and power to help their children grow, be educated, and develop in a healthy way. Therefore, their involvement in all aspects of the child's life, including pre-school education, is very important. Only in this way, do children have the opportunity to fully display their potential in life and develop their language, social, physical, mental, creative, and intellectual skills.

Belief 7. Children learn best when they feel safe.

When the relationships that children build are secure and stable, when family-garden interaction is positive, then children grow up healthy in all aspects. Early childhood is an important period in the life of every child. Studies have shown that children start preparing for school much earlier than when they are five years old. Early stimuli and interventions are very important and irreplaceable in children and, their effect is strongly reflected in later stages of development.

On the other hand, all children have the potential to reach most of the standards for a given age, certainly with appropriate stimulation, encouragement, support, and guidance. In other words, for a child to grow and develop, he needs not only protection, food, and health care, but also interaction, encouragement, security, love, and the learning process through exploring the environment in which he grows up.

## *1.2 Organization and structure of standards*

The child develops as a whole, so overestimating or underestimating any developmental area is wrong, because the child does not develop in a fragmented way. Therefore, even the division between the fields in this document is mostly formal. The development and learning standards of children 3-6 years old address the following areas of development:

### *1.3 Health, physical well-being, and motor development*

Standards in this area relate to indicators of physical development of children 3-6 years old. These indicators themselves are related to children's abilities to use the muscles of the hands, eye-hand coordination, and large muscles, through which children perform touching and manipulation with various objects, perform walking, movement, and other physical activities. Also, the standards in this field are related to healthy hygiene practices, which are treated as routine procedures in the daily regimen of children aged 3-6 years, such as nutrition, self-care, etc.

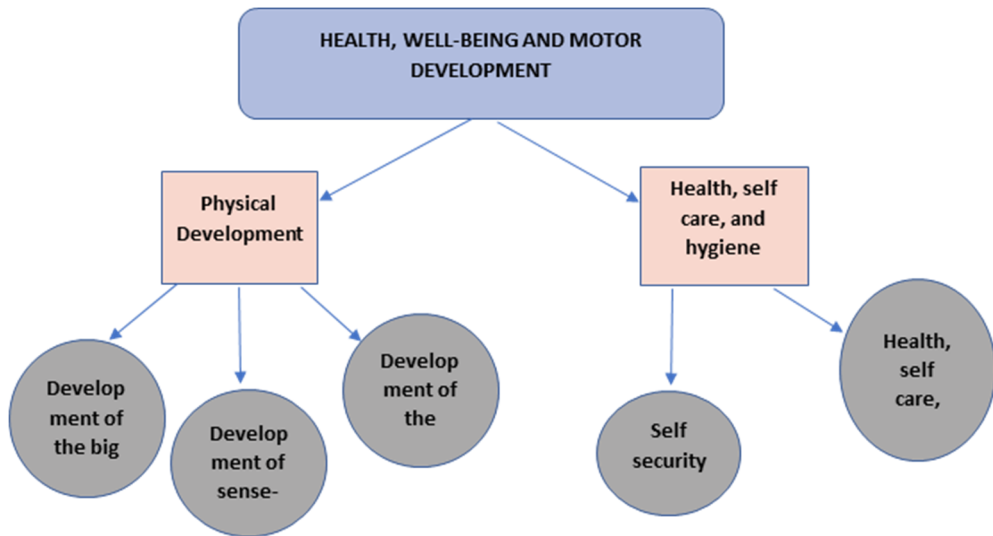


Figure 1: Health, physical well-being, and motor development

#### 1.4 Social and emotional development

Standards in this area include behaviors and actions that reflect the growth and emotional development of children, and their ability to communicate and build relationships with peers, teachers, and other adults.

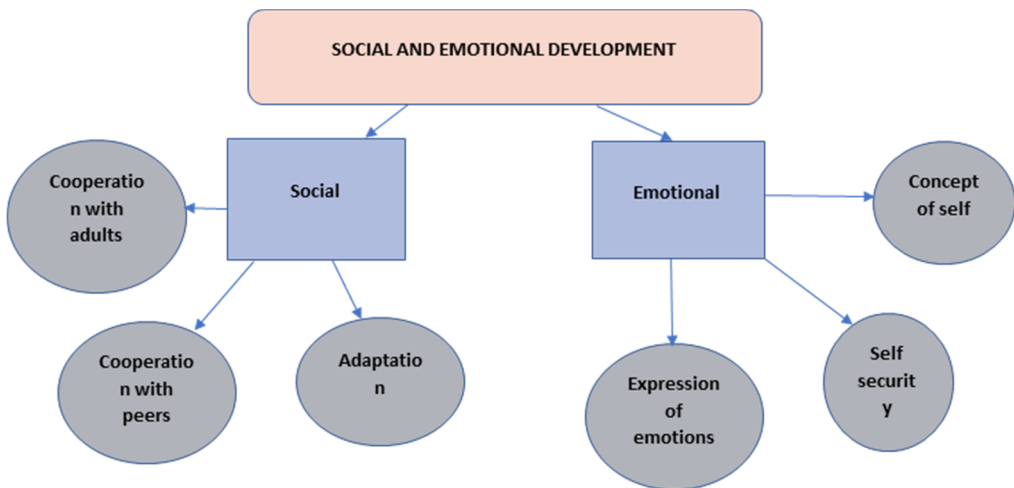


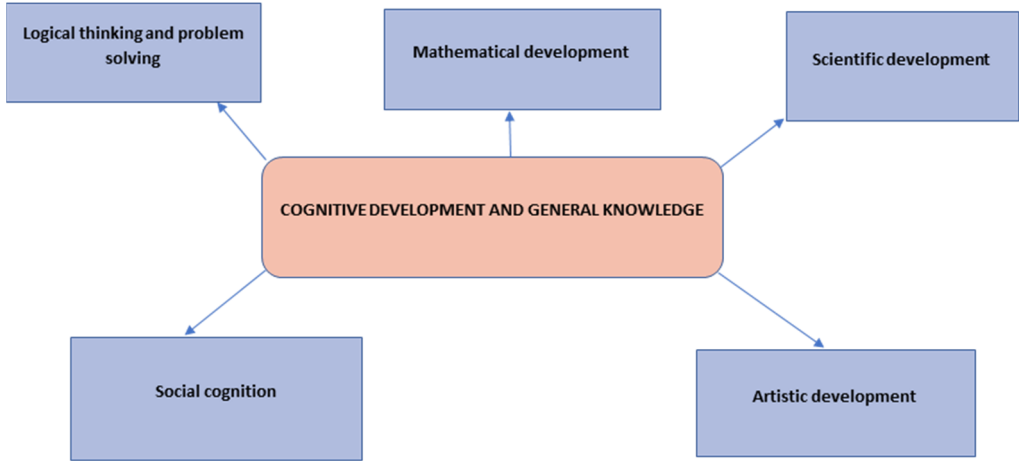
Figure 2: Social and emotional development

#### 1.5 Cognitive development and general knowledge.

The standards in this field are related to the cognitive processes, which enable each child to learn and gain knowledge about the world around him. Children's skills in terms of cognitive development are related to children's abilities to remember, understand and use the language of symbols and signs, to collect and use information.

Standards indicators define how a child engages in a learning activity, learning concepts, forming ideas, and creating

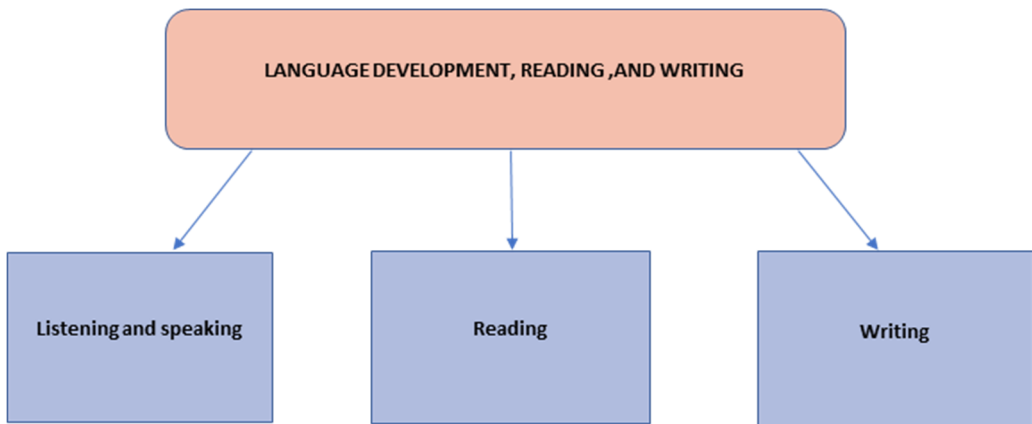
symbols, through self-undertaken activities.



**Figure 3:** Cognitive development and general knowledge

#### 1.6 Language development, reading, and writing

The standards in this field reflect the main knowledge and skills that the child acquires with growth and development in relation to expression, communication with others, reading, and writing. The focus of this area is the skills that children have to express themselves, their ideas and thoughts; mastery of vocabulary, letter recognition, the spelling of sounds, ability to distinguish spoken and written language, etc.



**Figure 4:** Language development, reading, and writing

#### 1.7 Approach to learning

Standards in this area focus on behaviors, actions, prerequisites, and basic attitudes that the child acquires as he or she grows, acquires learning experiences, and relationships with others. These activities, stimulated by the child himself, within the social context in which he belongs, make it possible for him to naturally engage in interesting experiences, take responsibility, develop observation skills, curiosity, and the desire to know everything around him.

Also, the activities in which the child is involved, help him to build meaning for the world around him, stay focused, and develop the desire to learn, through the emergence of curiosity, sense of responsibility, initiative to create and receive decisions, and through perseverance. If such skills are developed in early childhood, then we will "produce" children ready to go to school and face the new learning experiences it offers.

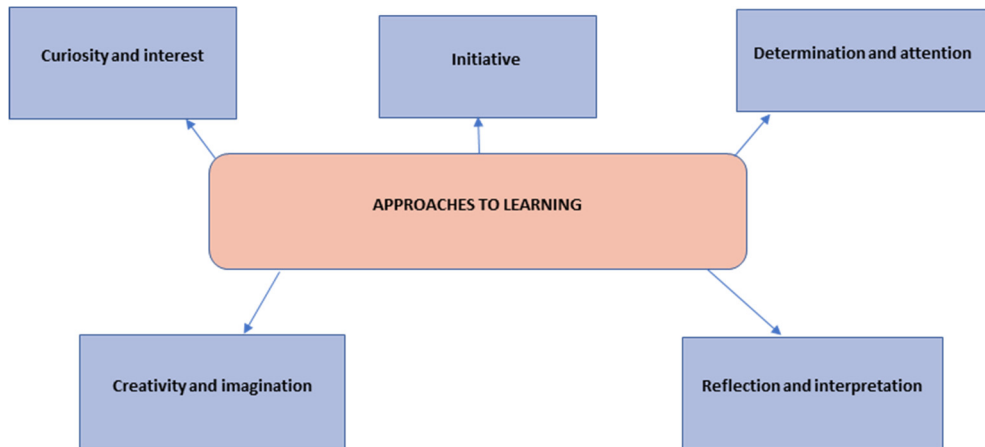


Figure 5: Approach to learning

## 2. Learning and Development in Early Childhood

Learning areas are the basis for organizing the teaching and educational process in preschool institutions. In preschool education, we work with 6 areas:

1. Field "Languages and communication"
2. Field "Mathematics"
3. Field "Natural Sciences"
4. Field "Society and environment"
5. Field "Arts"
6. Field "Physical education, sports and health"

Each of the learning areas consists of one or more subjects, which are constructed in such a way as to meet the standard indicators for each development area. The indicators of the standards coincide with the expected results, which the children should show at the end of a preschool group.

### 2.1 Language and communication

Language is a precious human resource. It enables people to discover themselves, to know the world around them, build relationships with others, express feelings, give life to their dreams and tendencies, enrich their emotional world, develop a sense of beauty, solve problems, as well as to present the knowledge and ideas they have about various issues. The subject of Albanian language is part of the field "Language and communication". This course is related to the standards of the field "Language Development". This field enables children to develop and use languages as communication tools in daily life, as well as in their learning and social activities, ie to develop language competencies.

Language competencies are built and developed throughout life, but preschool age is crucial to children's achievement. The speed and ease with which young children learn to speak the language, without being taught by anyone else, is one of the wonders of nature. For example, from the age of 3 to 5, children learn approximately 50 new words a month, and sentence length increases each year. It is the duty of educational institutions to enrich and develop children's language knowledge and skills, especially during the first years of life.

Young children love to talk. They like to listen to stories read aloud in small groups or in the presence of adults. They also like to exchange favorite books, "read" books, and retell stories. In this way, language learning takes place within

a social and cultural context. The social environment offers children more than just words and meanings. Children think and act in socially acceptable ways. Children also learn about society while learning the language.

Knowledge and skills of spoken language form the basis for further development of reading and writing skills. A big and important step in a child's life is the beginning of learning to write. In the early years, the child has writing that resembles scribbles in a circular shape. The child then tries to turn these scribbles into more regular shapes and recognize the letters. The activities, in which the child is able to write on the surface vertically, give him the opportunity to position the wrist well, and to use the finger muscles well, instead of the arm muscles. The child should be able to write on different surfaces and with different materials. Initially, they make the letters very large, but, later, they will gradually decrease. The first letters may require each letter to consume a separate sheet. However, writing activities should not be lengthy and should be filled with opportunities for the child to calm down. Writing can be scary for children of this age, so activities need to be carefully planned in order to help children have a positive attitude towards writing from the first steps.

As can be seen, a quality preschool education is an important prerequisite not only for the success of children in school, but also in life, so it is the duty of teachers of this cycle to enable the construction and development of competencies for lifelong learning.

## 2.2 Mathematics

Young children are naturally curious and develop mathematical ideas from an early age. They want to understand the environment around them through observation, and interactions at home and in the community. Learning math takes place in daily activities, playing, showing, touching, or helping others. These activities help children develop the number and understanding of space. Curiosities about math are stimulated when children compare quantities, look for patterns, distinguish objects, building blocks, and so on.

An important element in the development of practical mathematics is the connection to the child's own experiences. The child's learning environment should appreciate and respect the diversity of children's experiences, so that they feel as "comfortable" as possible with mathematics and are encouraged to ask as many questions as possible, developing their curiosity. Mathematics is the science whose universal language helps the child to understand and act on the reality he lives. This makes him make an important contribution to the intellectual development

of the child and to the formation of his identity. Through mathematics, the child develops experiences from the simplest to the most complex and from the most concrete to the most abstract. Through learning mathematics, the child acquires knowledge about numbers, figures, space, measures, etc.

The field of mathematics is related to the standards of the field "Development of cognition and general knowledge". Indicators of the subfield "Mathematical Development" serve as learning outcomes for each of the age groups 3-4, 4-5, and 5-6 years.

## 2.3 Natural sciences

Science is an intellectual and practical activity, which includes the systematic study of the structure and behavior of the physical and natural world through observations and experiments. The competencies that this field develops serve individuals individually, socially, and economically.

The field of science in pre-university education, helps in the scientific formation of children, through the construction of the first scientific knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to investigate, solve problems, make decisions, learn throughout life, and ask questions satisfying their curiosity. Learning experiences in science provide students with many opportunities to understand, explore, analyze, evaluate, synthesize, to appreciate the relationships between science, technology, society, and the environment, which influence everyday life.

Through practical activities, experiments, and various games, children experience the pleasure of scientific discovery and satisfy curiosity about the world around them. They develop critical and creative thinking skills and challenge themselves to ask questions and reach familiar but new conclusions. The field "Natural Sciences" is related to the standards of the field "Cognitive development and general knowledge". Indicators of the subfield "Scientific Development" serve as learning outcomes for each of the three groups of preschool education.

## 2.4 Society and Environment

The field "Society and environment" enables children to be active citizens, informed and responsible for themselves, the

group, and society. Through this field, children develop the necessary competencies to play their role as members of a multicultural and democratic society in an increasingly interdependent world.

The field "Society and environment" is related to the standards of the field "Social and personal development", the indicators of which serve as learning outcomes for all three groups of preschool.

## 2.5 Arts

The field of arts is important for the formation of children from preschool age because this field is included dimensions of musical, visual, motor, expressive, intellectual, and emotional culture, on which culture and society interact.

This field gives children the opportunity to get to know and develop artistic knowledge through play, understanding how sounds, colors, shapes, words, and movements work. All these are learned, formed, and cultivated through concrete discoveries from everyday life, sound, and rhythmic elements from the environment, which try and experience them in different forms through listening, creating, singing; shapes, colors, and other visual phenomena; applying different rhythms through combination with movement; expression of emotions through speech, etc.

The field "Arts" is related to the standards of the field "Cognitive development and general knowledge". Indicators of the subfield "Artistic development" serve as learning outcomes for each age group.

## 2.6 Physical education, sports, and health

This field enables children aged 3-6 to gain competencies to maintain their health and the health of others, self-respect, and protect the body from possible damage during exercise with physical activity and sports. Physical activity helps children improve physical and coordination skills, personal and interpersonal, by growing up healthy. Through physical activity, children have the opportunity to participate in a variety of physical activities and games individually or in groups. The field "Physical education, sports, and health" is related to the standards of the field "Health, physical well-being, and motor development". Indicators for each standard serve as learning outcomes for children aged 3-4, 4-5, and 5-6 years.

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