

How Do Preschool Teachers Define Self-Regulation?

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Abstract

Research on the neurobiology of self-regulation shows that a lot of important changes in self-regulation happen during preschool years. Therefore, preschool teachers play an essential part in the development of self-regulation. When it comes to self-regulation and the methods of promoting it in their daily practice, teachers who lack sufficient knowledge and expertise may rely on their implicit assumptions, intuition, and myths rather than the research that is available to them. Given the importance of encouraging self-regulation in young children, the purpose of this research was to investigate the ways in which preschool teachers in Turkey define self-regulation. In this qualitative study, we conducted 30 semi-structured interviews with preschool teachers in Istanbul who were working with children aged four years old (n=15) and five years old (n=15). The interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis. According to the results of our study, teachers make connections between executive functions, emotional-motivational regulation, and metacognition when discussing self-regulation. However, despite mentioning inhibitory control and cognitive flexibility, it was discovered that the participating preschool teachers did not mention working memory, which is considered an important executive function by several researchers. Since a child's ability to learn is limited by his or her working memory, it is important for teachers to be aware of this so they can take the right steps to make it less likely that a child will fail. In both initial and ongoing teacher education, working memory should be emphasized.

Keywords: self-regulation, executive functions, emotional regulation, metacognition, preschool teachers