

KINDERGARTEN AND FAMILY TOGETHER FOR THE EDUCATION OF AUTHONOMY OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

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Abstract: *The research we have conducted, approaches the collaboration between kindergarten and family to increase the child's autonomy. The first contact the child has with the kindergarten is very important. In the context of his or her previous age and experiences, it may be more important than the start of school. Now is the time to acquire skills, knowledge, and set the skills that will ensure a good development throughout his/her school life.*

Key words: *kindergarten; skills; knowledge; child;*

1. Argument

The novelty that the current reform of education promotes is the creation of optimal conditions for collaboration between family and teachers in education, but this collaboration should be regarded as a means to develop the children's autonomy.

As a result of this, it is useful to fill in the parents' knowledge about the particularities of child development and the education received in an organized environment, reflected in an effective partnership between the kindergarten and the family.

It is well known that parents are the first to influence their children through education, but the kindergarten also contributes to a great extent because it provides an adequate environment for pre-schoolers, makes it possible for children to socialize, facilitating an age-appropriate education. At pre-school age, the child becomes aware of the physical and mental changes that influence him directly and socially. These changes are acquired in relationship with the others, while the child gradually integrates into a group or in an environment different than the family.

This collaboration between the two factors is analysed by the current research that reflects the fact that the attendance of the kindergarten, the

collaboration between the family and the educators, the family's and the educators' will result in children who have acquired certain competencies. Children will use these skills in the activities they conduct autonomously, becoming values for themselves but also for the others.

2. Research Methodology

The pre-schoolers' collaboration with the people around them, whether adults or colleagues, is beneficial by manifesting autonomy in various situations and activities. After a certain period of time, the activity they conduct with other people becomes self-conscious, motivated, rational, they begin to see the intention and give arguments. The child complies with certain rules that become common for cohabitation in a particular group because he observes that those around him have certain interests. It inevitably begins to participate in negotiations, talks, but also compromises, if necessary. We have tried to:

- identify the importance of a collaboration between family and kindergarten;
- study the extent to which the autonomous manifestations of pre-school children increase after attending kindergarten;
- the parents' and teachers' degree of involvement in the development of autonomy at pre-school children.

Thus, we have implied that:

- If the family and kindergarten provide support and assistance when children ask for it, their achievements will increase as well as their self-esteem and autonomy.
- If children constantly attend kindergarten, they will begin to understand the need to follow common rules.

Consistent use of verbal encouragement, discussions and activities in partnership with parents (sessions, individual meetings, participation in activities), the initiation of games involving all children to stimulate communication and cooperation between them ("We decide together!"), activities carried out in smaller or larger groups (role games, field activities), encouraging the exposition of their own opinions (morning meeting), performing repetitive activities (routines).

Safety and comfort skills; balance between attachment and exploration; developing autonomy and emotional balance; finding independently solutions to the problems encountered; increasing self-esteem; intrinsic motivation.

The research sample consisted of: the parents of the children attending the small group at the Peciú Nou Kindergarten, Timiș County. The

number of the parents from the two groups under investigation is 53, of which 2 are single-parent families, one child is raised by maternal grandparents. The subjects investigated come from rural areas. The number of children is 28, of which 11 girls and 17 boys aged 3 to 4 years. We have chosen ways to support research, to eliminate any mistakes in interpreting and processing the results. To confirm the previously formulated hypotheses, we used the survey method and systemic observation method.

We used the questionnaire to collect data on the importance of family-kindergarten collaboration, on how kindergarten attendance increases the autonomy of pre-school children, how parental styles influence the development of self-esteem, how the daily routine helps the child to increase the comfort and safety.

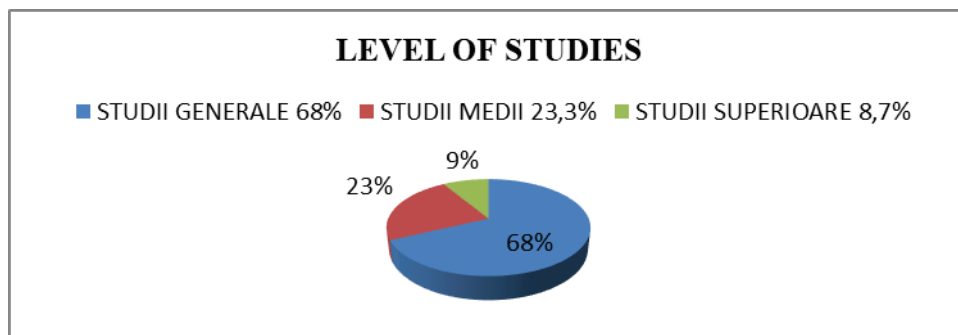
First, we applied the first questionnaire (appendix 1) to the parents after the first 2 weeks of kindergarten and after the children got used to this environment.

Some theoretical prerequisites of the research are confirmed after analysing the answers. We have drawn the following conclusions:

- the questionnaire was largely completed by mothers, which shows that mothers are more involved in educating their own children, i.e. 80% and only in 20% of cases both parents are involved.

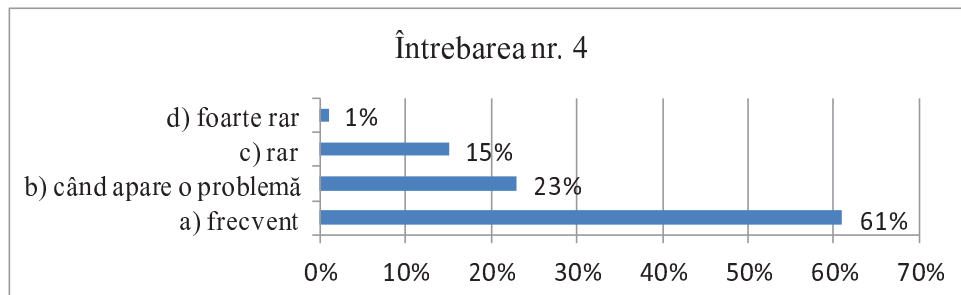
- most parents are aware of their role in educating their own children, so they are very involved and spend enough time doing various activities with them; 80% are single-child families.

The concern for child education is influenced by the parents' education level, so parents with higher education are more aware of their role as educators, while parents with general and secondary education are less interested in education. They regard it as a thing that does not require too much preparation, they often take over the educational model of their own parents. The percentage of their level of studies is as follows:



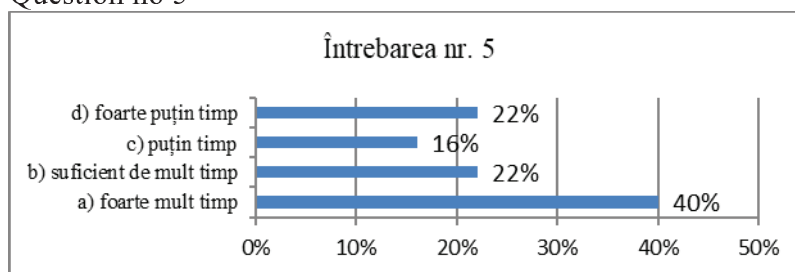
There were 14 questions in the questionnaire, most of them being multiple choice questions or questions with open answer. We will further analyse the answers received for questions no 4.

Question no 4



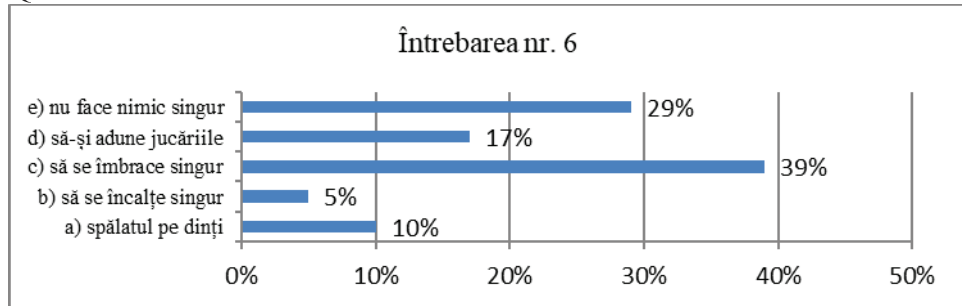
These data reveal that most parents regard the issue of education quite seriously and prefer to act in time to correct negative behaviours that their children might have. Discussing education is important because parents must select the best educational methods and both parents should agree upon them.

Question no 5



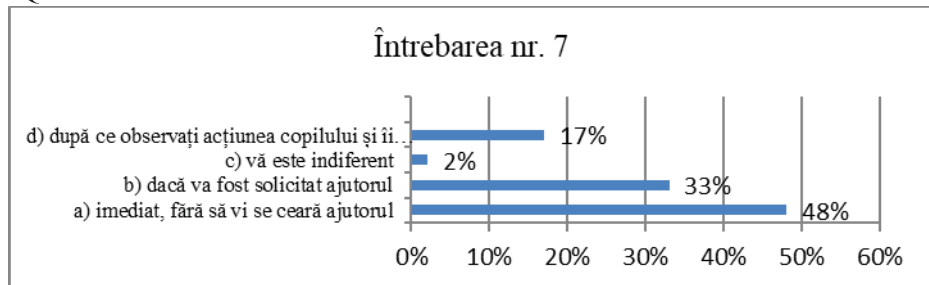
Knowing the child is directly related to the time spent with him, but also to the quality of this time. The fact that parents do not have time for their own children leads to their lack of knowledge of their needs and the impossibility to solve any issues their children could face. This affects the child's harmonious and balanced development. The highest percentage of this question highlighted that 40% spend time with their own children, but in situations when parents spend very little time with their children, i.e. 22%, the child's development will have many gaps, will result in less autonomy and self-esteem as well as in personality issues.

Question no 6



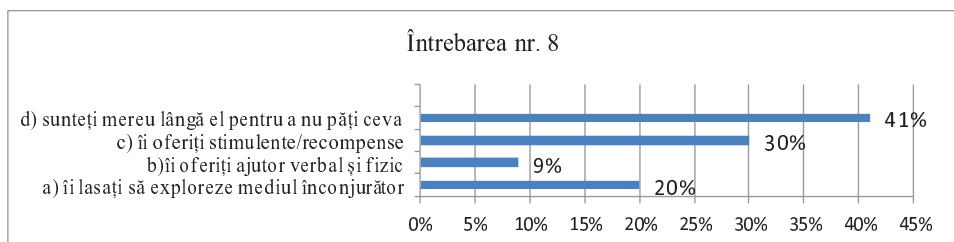
This question was asked to figure out how much parents encourage their children to perform activities that are repeated on a daily basis and to find out if they are taught to do them, they could do them independently. Children should be guided and encouraged to do these activities that will not make them dependent on an adult at any time in their lives. Any child can do something, and the fact that 29% of parents do not encourage such behaviour will unconditionally cause permanent attachment, a feeling of dissatisfaction, and the child's adjustment to other environments will be difficult.

Question no 7



After centralizing the parents' responses, we have noticed that in most situations, children are not encouraged to act independently to find solutions, only with the help of parents. Parents feel the need to get involved in everything and even do things instead of the child.

Question no 8

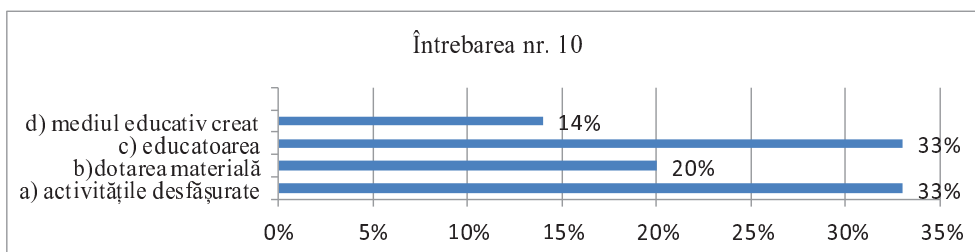


41% of parents think that being always "behind the child" i.e. supporting the child will keep them out of trouble and away from problems. Parents confuse physical safety with letting the child grow emotionally, become independent in carrying out certain activities. Guidance given to children means developing their autonomy, letting them discover what there are capable of doing alone, but without passing the limits of safety. That's why the parent has to supervise the child, but not control him constantly and prevent him from discovering himself.

Question no 9

100% of parents admit the importance of attending the kindergarten, and in terms of motivation, they emphasize that the main role of the kindergarten is to prepare the child for school, also contributing to their socialization.

Question no 10



Parents' responses attributed an equal percentage to the activities carried out in the kindergarten and to the teacher because they considered that an activity cannot be carried out without the teacher's involvement. But the increase in pre-schoolers' autonomy is closely related to the endowment of the kindergarten, space, materials used and manipulated by children.

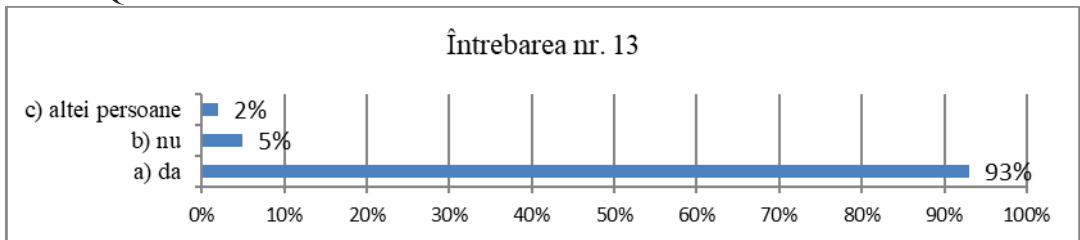
Question no 11

All parents responded that they would be involved in the kindergarten activities if they had been asked to. Parents would assist in carrying out certain activities as they are aware of the importance of child integration and the educational value of the kindergarten.

Question no 12

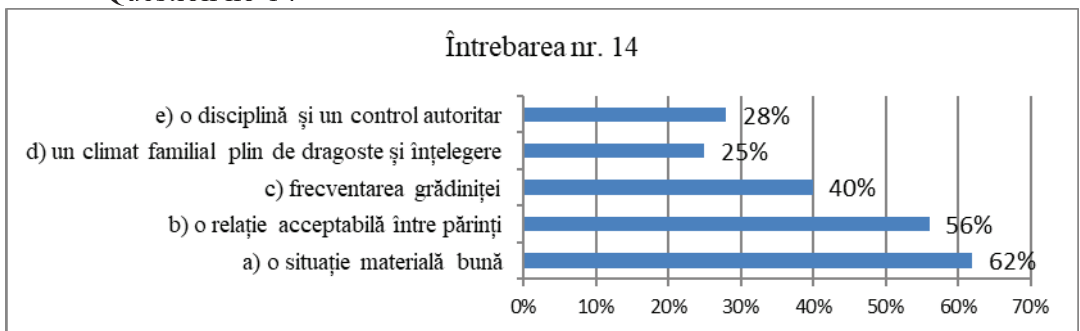
Parents' answers were among the most diverse. Many want their children to make friends in the kindergarten, learn many poems and songs, not be so "mumbles", play alone, learn to eat alone.

Question no 13



93% of parents believe that the teacher can give advice provide advice on how to educate their children. Teachers have the common goal of providing unconditional support, through direct and indirect intervention. A real collaboration between family and teachers will undoubtedly lead to the development of child`s self-esteem and its independence.

Question no 14



Most of those who filled in the questionnaire have chosen the answers a), b), c), prioritizing the material situation, even before a love and understanding based relationship. I think that to some extent this answer is justified by the precarious economic situation of many families in rural areas and the parents` desire to ensure good living conditions for their own children. Important is also the start of kindergarten and the contact with children of their age.

Kindergarten, at first glance seems to be a place where children are gathered to play or a place where children are supervised by certain people, and parents can leave them here to go to work. In fact, it is not like that. Here is the right environment to understand what it means to relate to people other than family. The foundation of what is going to happen and the changes that will occur is set in the first years of his life. Here, children learn that everything in the universe is governed by rules that we must obey them. A day structured according to a specific schedule teaches the little ones to be organized. But most progress will be made in terms of socialization, communication, engagement in various activities, focus on completing a

particular task, cooperation and equal opportunities. The role of the kindergarten through its teachers is an extension of the family, and the teacher and parents have to complement one another.

At any time of the day and during any activity, teachers should use encouragement and praise. Any successful action of a child has been rewarded with praise and encouragement. I avoided praising the child, and emphasized what s/he did. Thus, I have stimulated other children to try to make the same puzzle or stick the same flower. Every successfully completed task has led to increased self-esteem and a sense of fulfilment.

3. Discussions

Even though I have addressed children aged 3-4, I have not hesitated to use communication at any time. I tried to explain any action so that they would understand it. Because group cohabitation required rules, I did not hesitate to talk with them to explain to them the positive parts of their application. I've also made these rules known to parents, recommending them to apply them at home. The rules were chosen together with them: "We listen to each other!", "We are friendly!", "We ask for the beautiful toy!". For starters, these were the first rules. Other rules were introduced throughout the year: "We leave order at the playground!", "We go nicely to the bathroom!", "We eat nice and clean!", "We wash our hands!", "We are polite!". Any compliance with the rules has been strengthened by praise and encouragement. The children were helped at first to carry out the actions that led to the observance of the rules, then to be able to do them on their own.

4. Activities conducted in partnership with the parents

I informed parents at the first meeting that during the counselling hours I am available and can talk to them. We can have individual discussions to solve problems that arise in relation to pre-schoolers. We designed a plan of activities that I thought was appropriate for parents.

I have included in the daily program the so-called "other" sessions, because the pre-school age did not allow me to make a classical celebration where the children are actors and the parents spectators. For example, at the celebration marking the start of the winter holidays all were actors and spectators. We created a cosy atmosphere where parents and their children made decorations, and at the same time we sang carols. The appearance of Santa Claus was a natural moment that created joy for everyone. Each child accompanied by his or her own parent stood on Santa's knees, recited a poem and was rewarded. In such an atmosphere, no child felt abandoned, having the parent's support.

Another type of activity developed in partnership with parents was the "Hats Parade". Children together with their parents made a hat of organic materials. The purpose of the activity was to create an opportunity for

parents to do various activities with their children. The activity ended with a parade where the child accompanied by the parent presented his hat.

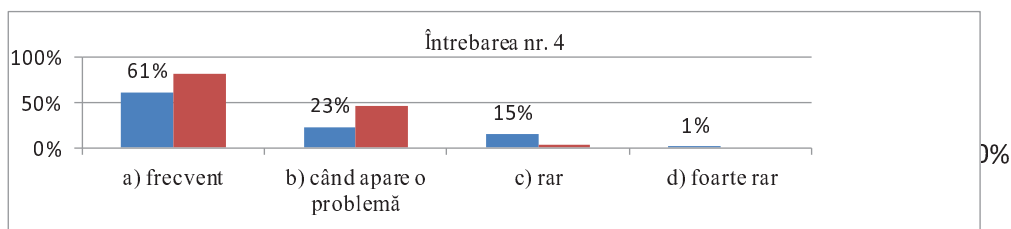
5. Research results

In the final stage, we applied the questionnaire to the parents (Annex 2). We observed if the activities carried out during the school year by teachers, family and counselling services led to a manifestation of autonomy in pre-school children.

We have started from the hypothesis that if the family and the kindergarten provide support and assistance when the child asks for it, his success and self-esteem will increase as well as the degree of autonomy. Constant attendance of kindergarten will lead to an optimal integration in various collectives, the child becomes more sociable, will respect rules of cohabitation by understanding their usefulness.

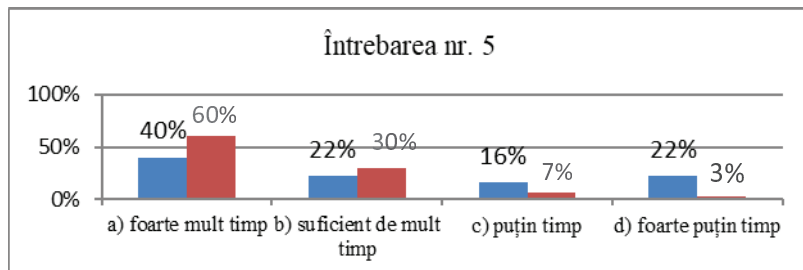
Comparing the parents' answers to questionnaire 1 and questionnaire 2, we found that they validate the research hypothesis. I will compare only the questions where changes occurred and which confirm my assumptions. If in the first questionnaire the parents answered the questions hypothetically in certain situations, in the second parents had to think about the real situations that they and their children had experienced during the school year.

For question no 4, the hierarchy changed as follows:

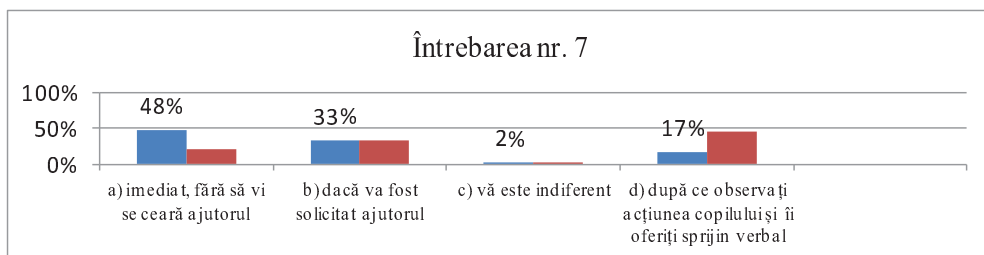


The interest in solving problems that occurred in children's education has increased. Parents discuss the issue and seek solutions together. Real communication between the two parents will lead to an optimal solution and most importantly, parents will agree with it.

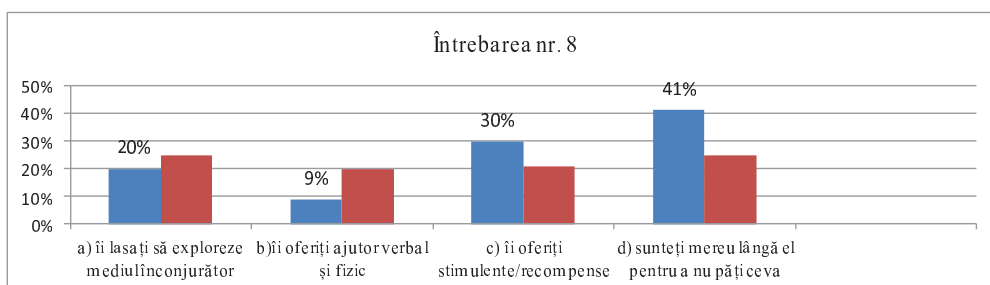
According to the answers given to question number 5, the time spent with their own children has increased. I also noticed an increase in the time spent by the children with their fathers. This is a gratifying thing because the education of children was put in the vast majority of cases in the hands of their mothers. Even if we live in times when both parents go to work, they do not have to neglect the child's education and this is only done if they spend time with them and try to know them as well as possible.



Question no. 7 aimed at changing the parents' behaviour when it comes to offering help immediately when the pre-schooler encounters difficulties in carrying out tasks. Parents have understood that pre-schoolers will increase their autonomy if they are encouraged and taught how to do certain things at the expense of taking over their tasks.

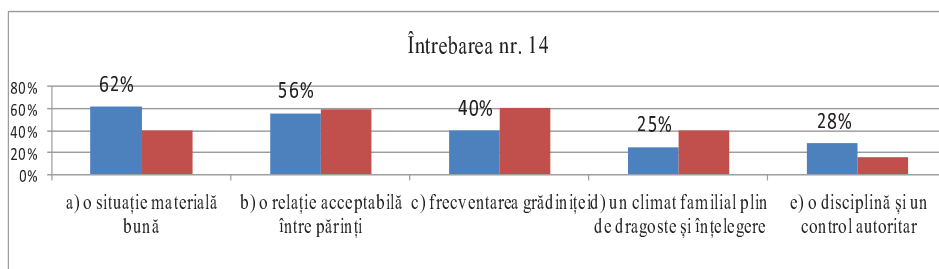


The balance between offering the opportunity to explore the environment and ensuring physical security is beneficial to the child and its development in a harmonious way, as observed in the comparison to questions no. 8. There is no need to eliminate the need to communicate permanently with the preschool child, to explain everything that s/he discovers in order to be able to distinguish between what is certain and what could physically damage him/her.



These facts are reflected in the following chart:

For questions 14 the situation was the following:



The parents' first choices were variants b), c) while d) and a) share the same percentage. Parents have begun to realize that a good material situation cannot substitute the time spent with their children when the relationships between parents is harmonious and the relationship between them and children develops in a positive direction.

6. Conclusions

Throughout the paper, we wanted to show that the foundation of a healthy society must be a balanced family that is actively involved in the preschooler's education. The way parents view education influences children negatively or positively, so there is a need for each parent to offer genuine education and a positive influence, to have the courage to talk to specialists who can correct mistakes in education, everything for the development of a healthy and harmonious personality as well as autonomy.

As a result of the activities that took place during the school year, the parents' involvement and the repeated encouragement given to their children, based on the discussions with parents and on the comparison of the two questionnaires, we noticed that parents need professional guidance to offer positive education to their children. Today's parents want optimal conditions for the development of their own children and know and have the courage to ask for guidance. They are willing to learn and apply methods promoted by kindergarten teachers to educate their children. So, there are resources and sources to be used to support the family for this activity of high social responsibility.

Throughout this paper, we have tried to highlight the special importance of the kindergarten and the family in the child's life for the development of an autonomous behaviour. The educational role of the family cannot be substituted by any institution, but kindergarten and the teacher continue and complement the education received at home. Practicing a correct education by knowing the requirements recommends using and adapting the methods to each child's peculiarities and traits.

A collaborative relationship between kindergarten-family-child will have positive long-term effects on each child leading to emotional well-being. Kindergarten and family have the same common goal of creating a

harmonious personality and autonomy, enabling them to make the right choices, to be confident in their own strengths, be able to look for solutions and manage age-specific issues properly.

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