

CHARACTERISTICS OF PARENTS WITH STUDENTS REGISTERED IN STEP BY STEP ALTERNATIVE EDUCATIONAL CLASSES

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Abstract: *This study focuses on parents who registered their children in traditional classes or classes teaching according to the Step by Step educational alternative, in order to identify certain social-educational features. The test sample consists of 202 subjects, ulterior divided in order to verify the hypothesis and statistic interpretation of data in 4 smaller test samples, as follows: 54 mothers of students in Step classrooms, 54 fathers of students in Step classrooms, 47 mothers of students in traditional classrooms and 47 fathers of students in traditional classrooms. As result of data interpretation we have identified important statistic differences regarding a series of variables implied within the study between the parents of students registered with one of the two types of classrooms.*

Key words: *Step by Step education, traditional education, social-educational features, parents of students.*

1. Theoretic frame

The words invoked by Viorel Nicolescu, „*the heredity lottery never draws the same number twice*”, underline the idea that every child is unique in its own way. (Nicolescu, V., (2006), page 5)

This is exactly why education should aim individualization at the level of its instructive-educational process and not the levelling of trainees, independent on the method applied.

The alternative education systems are shifting the balance center regarding education, from the teacher, from the exterior of the class towards the interior of the class. More precisely, towards the trainees, trying to sustain and perform at the same time this individualization of trainees considered torches which should be lid.

These educational alternatives coexist together with the traditional education system at the level of entire Europe, our country being involved as well.

Within this European context, after 1990 appear in the Romanian educational system a series of educational alternatives, such as: Waldorf, Step by Step, Montessori, Freinet, Jena.

As shown by Gh. Felea, the most extended educational alternative at the level of Romania is the Step by Step alternative.

Outside the extension area of this educational alternative at the level of Romanian educational system, other arguments leading us to focus on the present study and not the other mentioned above, were:

- the Step by Step alternative classrooms function within traditional schools thus contributing to create a powerful bond between teachers and students who embrace one of the two approach forms of instructive-educational activity;
- Step classrooms function according the same schedule as traditional classes, the approach form of the instructive-educational process is different;
- the extended program spent by the students of Step classrooms in school, the presence in the classroom of two teachers, lead to a better knowledge of students, a better socialization, a better unity, cohesion at classroom level etc.;
- by involving the community and the parents in the instructive-educational process, an opening is created for students outlining a better self-image and an efficient social adaptation but also, the initiation and consolidation of students cooperation;

Based on these arguments the present study focused on identifying possible differences between parents of 3rd grade students in Timișoara, parents who enrolled their children in traditional classrooms respectively Step by Step classrooms.

2. Research design

The study focuses on parents with students included in traditional classrooms and classrooms of the Step by Step alternative.

2.1 Research objectives

The proposed objectives:

1. Identifying certain features of parents guiding their children towards one of the two systems by tracing certain variables of social-educational nature (educational level, professional degree, family income level, daily activity schedule, time spent with their child, number of connection moments with the school per time unit);
2. Identifying the satisfaction level of parents as result of the choice made regarding the enrolling of their child within one of the two educational systems.

2.2 Research hypothesis

1. We assume that, at the level of test samples formed of mothers of students studying in traditional classrooms, respectively Step by Step, we can identify major differences which exemplify an increase for the mothers that enrolled the children in Step classrooms regarding the educational level, the professional degree, the daily activity schedule, the contacts with the institutor, the space assigned to her own child and the satisfaction level regarding the made choice;

2. We assume that at the level of test samples formed of fathers of students studying in traditional classrooms, respectively Step by Step, we can identify major differences which exemplify an increase for the fathers who enrolled the children in Step classrooms, regarding the educational level, the professional degree, the daily activity schedule, the contacts with the institutor, the space assigned to his own child and the satisfaction level regarding the made choice;

3. There are considerable statistic differences between the income levels of families who enrolled the child in traditional classrooms and those who enrolled the child in classrooms functioning according to the Step by Step educational alternative.

2.3 Research methodology

The work plans an ascertaining study aiming to identify different features of parents guiding their children towards the traditional educational system respectively the Step by Step educational alternative;

The research involves multiple test samples, as follows:

- **four test samples** formed of adults (parents – mothers, respectively fathers – of students in traditional classrooms, respectively Step by Step). We distinguish a test sample of mothers of students in 1st Step by Step grades formed of 54 subjects, a test sample of fathers of students in 1st Step by Step grades formed of 54 subjects, a test samples of mothers with students in traditional 1st grades formed of 47 subjects and a test samples of fathers with students in traditional 1st grades formed of 47 subjects.

For performing the study we obtained the parent's approval to participate at the research and we aimed:

- the identification of social-educational data of parents.
Therefor we applied a questionnaire with 7 items;

3 Interpretation of the research result

In order to test the proposed hypothesis the SPSS program was applied, performing comparisons by means of the t test method for test samples. Below, we detail the gathered results.

Regarding the first hypothesis, the data presented in tables 1 and 2 feature major statistic differences between mothers with children learning

within the traditional education system and mothers with children learning in classrooms working according to Step by Step educational alternatives, at the level of the following variables: level of studies, time spent daily with their own child, frequency of contacts with the teacher and satisfaction level regarding the made choice of enrolling the child in certain classroom type, step or traditional.

Thus, the average of the test sample mothers step, regarding the variable *–educational level–* ($M = 2.5741$, $SD = 0.49913$) is considerable higher ($t = 3.121$, $DF = 99$, $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.002$) then the test sample of mothers traditional ($M = 2.2766$, $SD = 0.45215$). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = 0.29748) reaches from 0.10832 to 0.48663. The statistic data reveal the fact that mothers who guided their children to Step classrooms dispose in larger number of a higher educational level, as opposed to mothers took their children in traditional classrooms and the majority having secondary school studies.

Applying the T test on independent test samples confirms in this situation again the fact that there exists a major difference between the test sample mothers step and the test sample mothers traditional regarding the daily allotted time for their own children. Thus, the average of the test sample mothers step, regarding the variable *–daily allotted time for their own children –* ($M = 1.2593$, $SD = 0.44234$) is considerable lower ($t = -5.476$, $DF = 90$, $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.000$) then the test sample mothers traditional ($M = 1.8298$, $SD = 0.60142$). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = 0.57053) reaches from -0.77727 to -0.36378. These data show the fact that most of the mothers Step allot daily for their children a reduced time interval (between 1-3 hours), as opposed to mothers traditional who, in a larger number, allot an increased time interval daily for their children (between 4-6 hours), respectively (between 7-9 hours).

Regarding the frequency of contacts with the teacher, test T for independent test samples confirms the fact that there exists a major statistic difference between the test sample mothers step and the test sample mothers traditional.

The average of the test sample mothers step, regarding the variable *–frequency of contacts with the teacher –* ($M = 2.1852$, $SD = 0.61657$) is considerable lower ($t = -7.183$, $DF = 99$, $\text{Sig. (2-tailed)} = 0.000$) then the test sample mothers traditional ($M = 3.1702$, $SD = 0.76098$). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = -0.98503) reaches from -1.26152 to -0.70853.

The statistic data reveal the fact that while mothers step have contacts, meetings and relate quite often, in a higher number, with the teachers, at the level of mothers traditional the frequency of contacts with the teachers of the classrooms is very decreased.

The T test for independent test samples confirms the fact that there is a major difference between the test sample of mothers step and the test sample of mothers traditional regarding the satisfaction degree for the choice made for their own child. Thus, the average of the test sample mothers regarding the variable – satisfaction degree regarding the choice made for their own child - (M = 3.333, SD = 0.67293) is considerable higher (t = 2.962, DF = 99, Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.004) than the test sample of mothers traditional (M = 2.9149, SD = 0.10894). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = 0.41844) is between 0.13810 and 0.69878.

According to the gathered data, more mothers step are highlighted with an increased satisfaction degree regarding the choice made for their own child than mothers traditional, but on the other hand more mothers traditional than mothers step are unsatisfied with their own choice.

Tabel 1 Mean and standard deviations

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
nivelul studiilor	Equal variances assumed	9,061	,003	3,121	99	,002	,29748	,09533	,10832	,48663
	Equal variances not assumed			3,142	98,831	,002	,29748	,09467	,10962	,48534
timpul alocat zilnic copil	Equal variances assumed	1,529	,219	-5,476	99	,000	-,57053	,10420	-,77727	-,36378
	Equal variances not assumed			-5,363	83,457	,000	-,57053	,10639	-,78212	-,35894
de câte ori se mănâncă leg. cu înv.	Equal variances assumed	,587	,445	-7,183	99	,000	-,98503	,13714	1,25714	,71292
	Equal variances not assumed			-7,079	88,506	,000	-,98503	,13914	1,26152	,70853

cât de mulț. sunteți pentru alegere	Equal varianc es assume d	,013	,911	2,962 2,940	99 93,469	,004 ,004	,41844 ,41844	,14129 ,14232	,13810 ,13584	,69878 ,70103
	Equal varianc es not assume d									

Tabel 2 Value of t test for independent test samples

Regarding the second hypothesis, the data presented in table 3 and 4 show major statistic differences between the fathers who's children learn within the traditional educational system and those of which learn in classrooms teaching according to Step by Step educational alternatives at the level of the following variable: level of studies, time allotted daily to own child and frequency of contacts with the teacher.

The results confirm the fact that there is a major difference between the test sample fathers step and the test sample fathers traditional regarding their educational level. Thus, the average of the test sample fathers step, regarding the variable –educational level- ($M = 2.4815$, $SD = 0.50435$) is considerable higher ($t = 3.630$, $DF = 98.73$, $Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000$) then the test sample traditional fathers ($M = 2.1489$, $SD = 0.41592$). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = 0.33255) reaches from 0.15078 to 0.51431. The statistic data reveal the fact that fathers who guided their children towards Step classrooms dispose in a higher number of a superior educational level, unlike the fathers who enrolled their children in traditional classrooms and most of them disposing of secondary school studies.

T for independent test samples confirm the fact that there is a major difference between the test sample fathers step and the test sample fathers traditional regarding the time allotted daily for their children. Thus, the average of the test sample fathers step, regarding the variable –time allotted daily to own children - ($M = 1.1296$, $SD = 0.33905$) is considerable lower ($t = -4.632$, $DF = 78.72$, $Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000$) then the test sample fathers traditional ($M = 1.5319$, $SD = 0.50437$). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = -0.40229) is between -0.57515 and -0.22942.

Mame	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
nivelul studiilor mamei step mamei tradițional	54	2,5741	,49913	,06792
	47	2,2766	,45215	,06595
timpul alocat zilnic copilului mamei step mamei tradițional	54	1,2593	,44234	,06020
	47	1,8298	,60142	,08773
de câte ori pe semestru ati luat leg. cu inv. mamei step mame tradițional	54	2,1852	,61657	,08390
	47	3,1702	,76098	,11100
cât de mulțumit sunteți pentru alegere mamei step mamei tradițional	54	3,3333	,67293	,09157
	47	2,9149	,74687	,10894

These data reveal the fact that most of the fathers Step daily allot a reduced time interval (between 1-3 hours), as opposed to fathers traditional who, in a higher number, daily allot a more extended time interval for their children (between 4-6 hours).

Regarding the frequency of contacts with the classroom teacher, T for independent test samples confirms the fact that there is a major difference between the test sample fathers step and the test sample fathers traditional. The average of the test sample fathers step, regarding the variable – frequency of contacts with the teacher of his own child - ($M = 3.2037$, $SD = 1.10538$) is considerable lower ($t = -4.111$, $DF = 81.89$, $Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000$) then the test sample fathers traditional ($M = 4.3191$, $SD = 1.54788$). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = -1.11545) reaches from -1.65516 to -0.57573 .

The statistic data reveal the fact that, while fathers step relate in a slightly higher number, quite often (once a month, once a week, daily) with the teachers, at the level of the test sample fathers traditional, the frequency of contacts with the classroom is decreased, almost half of them never relating with the teacher.

Tați	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
nivelul studiilor tați step tați tradițional	54	2,4815	,50435	,06863
	47	2,1489	,41592	,06067

timpul alocat zilnic copilului	tații step tați tradițional	54	1,1296	,33905	,04614
		47	1,5319	,50437	,07357
de câte ori pe semestru ati luat leg. cu înv.	tații step tații tradițional	54	3,2037	1,10538	,15042
		47	4,3191	1,54788	,22578

Tabel 3 Mean and standard deviations

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Differ- ence	Std. Error Differ- ence	95% Interval Difference	Confidence of the	
niv elu l stu diil or	Equal variances assumed	27,11	,000	3,582	99	,001	,33255	,09283	,14835	,51674
				3,630	98,731	,000	,33255	,09160	,15078	,51431
tim pul alo cat zil nic co pil	Equal variances assumed	54,40	,000	-	99	,000	-,40229	,08458	-,57010	-,23447
				4,757	78,729	,000	-,40229	,08684	-,57515	-,22942
de cât e ori pe se m ati lua t leg - cu în v.	Equal variances assumed	23,68	,000	-	99	,000	1,11545	,26520	-1,64167	-,58922
				4,206	81,895	,000	1,11545	,27130	-1,65516	-,57573
	Equal variances not assumed			4,632						

Tabel 4 Value of t test for independent test samples

Regarding the third hypothesis, the data presented in tables 5 and 6 reveal major statistic differences between the families with children learning

within the traditional educational system and children learning in classrooms teaching according to Step by Step educational alternatives, at the level of the family monthly income.

The average of test samples mothers/fathers step, regarding the variable – family income - (M = 2.5556, SD = 0.50157) is considerable higher (t = 3.937, DF = 98.053, Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000) than the test samples mothers/fathers traditional (M = 2.1702, SD = 0.48090). The trust interval 95% for the obtained difference (Mean Difference = 0.38534) is between 0.19112 and 0.57957. Thus, the monthly income of families who enrolled their children in Step classrooms is considerable higher opposed to those in traditional classrooms.

Familii	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
venitul lunar al familiei step	54	2,5556	,50157	,06826
familiei familii trađional	47	2,1702	,48090	,07015

Tabel 5 Mean and standard deviations

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
venitul lunar al familiei Equal variances assumed	9,967	,002	3,926	99	,000	,38534	,09816	,19057	,58012
Equal variances not assumed			3,937	98,053	,000	,38534	,09787	,19112	,57957

Tabel 6 Value of t test for independent test samples

4. Conclusions

At the level of this ascertaining study involving parents of students in traditional classrooms and Step classrooms, we observe, according to the evidenced statistic data, major statistic differences between the mothers as well as the fathers involved in the two classrooms types, at the level of the following variables: level of studies, daily allotted time for their own child, frequency of contacts with the teachers, satisfaction degree of parents for the made choice. Major statistic differences were also observed at the level of the monthly family income within the two types of families. No major statistic differences were observed at the level of the following two variables: professional status and daily activity schedule of parents.

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