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THE ARTICLES FROM THE PERFORMER CONFERENCE
JUNI-22

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CULEGERE SEMESTRIALĂ DE STUDII ŞTIINŢIFICE ŞI DIDACTICE

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FOREWORD

International Conference **„Perspectives of a Higher Quality Level of the Training of Specialists for Early Education and Primary Schooling" (PERFORMER)** is dedicated to the results dissemination of the project POSDRU/86/1.2/S/62508, developed in the period 1st of February 2011 to 30th of June 2014.

Transilvania University of Brașov - Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, as applicant, together with "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, Istituto di Scienze Psicologiche della Educazione e della Formazione Roma, Italy, as partners, have collaborated on this project in order to improve the educational offer of University (completion of integrated study route) through the development of a Master's study programme degree, with double degree, for experts in early education and primary schooling adapted to European labour market.

Master's Program of ***Psihopedagogia educației timpurii și a școlarității mici – Educational psychology of preschool and primary school – Psicopedagogia per l'educazione nell'infanzia e la scuola primaria*** responds to the need to supplement the integrated scientific education and research because in Romania lacks the intermediate link- master's program for the graduates of Pedagogy of Early Education and Primary Schooling.

After three years of intense activity, in which experts from three Romanian universities and international experts have created and developed a new approach of academic training, the International Conference on the

occasion of communion for experiences share and exchange of good practice, paving the way for future cooperation in implementing this programme of studies and degrees in other Romanian universities, European and transatlantic.

I wish to thank the members of the Scientific Committee for the confidence granted to the Conference's papers, the colleagues and partners for involvement in carrying out the project activities unconditional, for their efforts towards the creation and development of educational community network in expansion. As a proof stands the presence at the Conference's papers of more than 100 representatives from home and abroad.

Assoc. Prof. Ph.D. Mariana Norel,

Project Manager

PARTENERI

Universitatea „1 Decembrie 1918" Alba Iulia

Universitatea „Aurel Vlaicu" Arad

Istituto di Scienze Psicologiche della Educazione e della Formazione Roma, Italia

AN ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE THAT CAN BE OPTIMIZED AND EXTENDED

The formative route and process of students and teaching staff revealed by the master study program PERFORMER Analysis and reflection

Rodica Mariana NICULESCU
Transilvania University of Braşov, Romania

ABSTRACT

The paper is the result of processing the questionnaires applied to students and teachers involved in the program PERFORMER in order to know some aspect of utmost importance for monitoring the project which involves this study program.

A range of issues related both to the perception of teachers and students against the main issues involved by the academic activity are scrutinized: curriculum structure, support materials available to students, teaching methodology, assessment centered on active learning in the context of a model blended type of learning, and actual practice. The analysis highlights issues resulting from a SWOT analysis of the program.

The final of the paper is focused on some important lines of action and optimization of the training activity.

KEY WORDS:
Professionalized training for early, preschool and primary education, curriculum, blended learning, SWOT analysis of a curriculum

1. A BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE INTENTIONS OF PERFORMER PROGRAM AND CURRICULAR SPECIFICITY OF THE PROGRAM

Psycho-pedagogy of early education and early schooling is a master program initiated and developed in the context of the European project: PERSPECTIVES OF A MASTER TRAINING FOR EXPERTS IN EARLY EDUCATION AND EARLY SCHOOLING at a higher quality [PERFORMER]. This project is coordinated by the University Transylvania in Braşov.

The collaboration of three Romanian universities as partners (Transilvania University of Braşov, University "1 Decembrie 1918" Alba Iulia, University "Aurel Vlaicu" Arad) with the Istituto di Scienza e della Formazione

Psicologiche della educazione Rome, Italy had as result the curricular philosophy of the PERFORMER master program. The resulting curriculum is slightly different from the original program implemented in Italy as a result of a necessary adaptation to the cultural and educational essence of Romania. [MASTER. ISPEF. 2011/2011].

Graduates' diploma can be recognized by the Italian partner institution to the extent that project requirements are met as they agreed. The master program is operating under the approval of ARACIS as Romanian authority

The program has designed the desired competence profile for future alumni, aiming to obtain it as a outcome. This profile contains three categories of competencies: cross/ transversal,
general, and specific competencies.

The pedagogical approach designed for this master program is a complex built on the following milestones:

1. Respecting, essentially, the structure and innovative ideas offered by experience of ISPEF, Rome with the necessary adaptation to the requirements and specificities of Romanian education.
2. Respecting the fundamental principles of a clear curricular design:
   2.1. Designing the final target (the graduate's competence profile as a portrait of an effective professional performance required by the evolution of education during the next years)
   2.2. Shaping the strategy of action according to ISPEF's model.
   2.3. Selecting the content related to the set competence profile
   2.4. Designing of each module, respectively subjects, in such a way that ensure the synergistic effect of their implementation in order to reach the designed competence profile; choosing the pedagogical methodology within the specific types of activities able to lead towards the designed competencies.
   2.5. Establishing evaluation formulas (including performance standards) for each subject / module in order to ensure accuracy, reliability in process and, ultimately, a high quality of graduates' training.

As a novelty, the model involves four categories of activities with a synergetic action on the development of graduates' competencies as they are defined by the designed competence profile. Figure nr. 1 shows the relations and the specific of the four types of involved activities.

2. Analysis of formative route. Positive aspects, difficulties, and formative effects of the implementation process

The analysis of the formative route and its effects on masters' students and teaching staff was conducted in the context of the monitoring program in the third semester of its development. It was based on discussions with the

students, among partners in the teaching teams from the three partner universities, and the processing of questionnaires applied in all three centers for students and teachers.

The reference points of the analysis are focused on the perception of the program by students and teachers as a program with specificity compared to other master's programs in Romania. The analysis's milestones are the following:

2.1. Students' and teachers' perception about the master program as a whole.

2.2. Strengths and opportunities mentioned by students and teachers

2.3. Outlined weaknesses and constraints

2.4. Improvement directions as formulated by teachers and students.

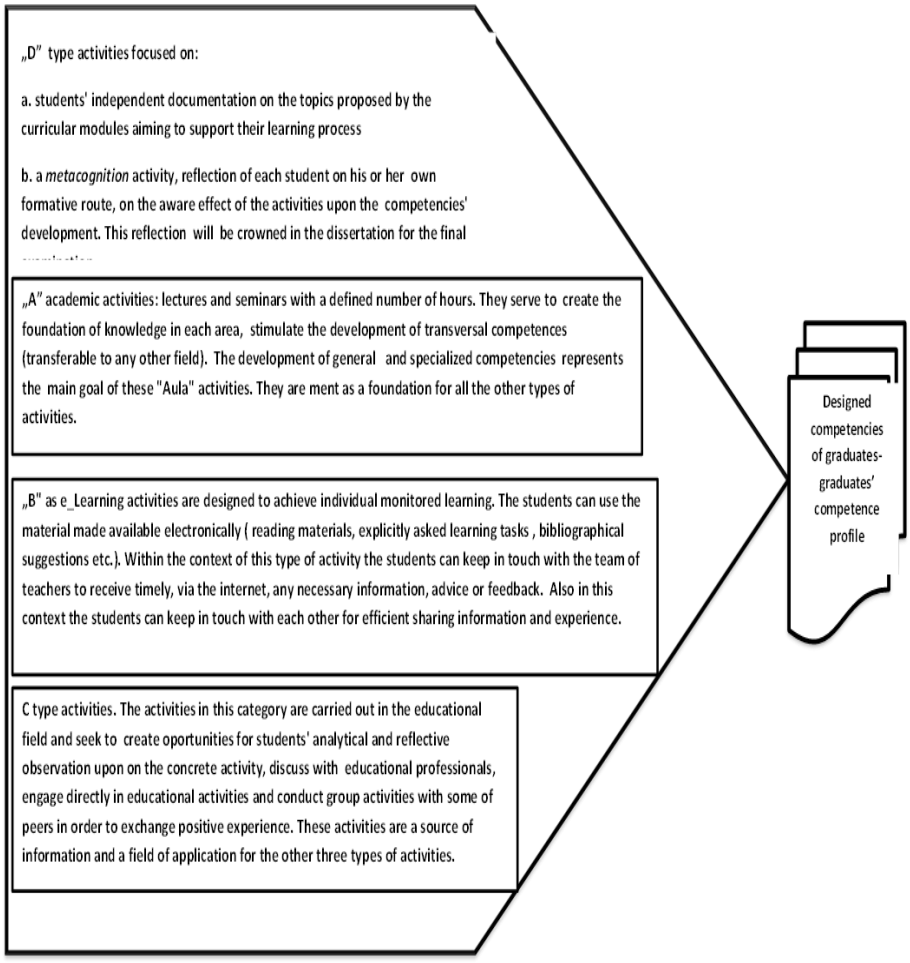

Fig. 1. The four types of activities specific for the curricular structure of the ISPEF model

2.1. Students' and teachers' perception about the master program as a whole.

The first issue investigated was the master students' perception about the importance of curriculum modules for training of their competencies as future professionals.

Regarding the hierarchical importance of the master modules, the picture is interesting. The general perception of students is almost similar in the three campuses. The first rank is different from one university to another and it is divided between *Methodology of Educational Research, Methodology of Instructional Process, and Developmental Psychology*. The second position is the same in Arad and Alba Iulia and it mentions the *Methodology of Instructional Process*, while Methodology of Personalized Intervention is situated on this position for Brașov students. The major difference occurs when it is about the module Education Research Methodology where one can find a significant difference between Alba Iulia and the other two centers (Alba Iulia : 1.3 rank , Arad: rank 11,12, Brașov: rank 11 10). Probably the perception of the person who teaches this module had a specific influence in this case. Another exception but less defined occurs in the case of the module Methodology of Personalized Intervention for students of Brașov when one can possibly keep the previous explanation , but where differences are less obvious (Alba Iulia : class 6.8 , class 4.6 Arad , Brașov rank 1.4 [1]) .

What is interesting in students' evaluation refers to the perception of the two disciplines belonging to the same module. According to the philosophy of curriculum for this master program, each module has two components: a more theoretical approach and one focused on the application of the learned theory. The students consider as being more important for them the theoretical approach than the application of the theory, even if they claim the necessity of a more practical approach of the teaching activity. A possible explanation in these cases can be the existence of more difficult tasks to accomplish for these applicative approaches and that is why the perception was distorted. This observation is valid for the module Methodology of personalized intervention in education in Brașov, where although the theory is on the first rank, the application stands only fourth position while it asked achieving specific individual intervention program in a particular case. (Alba Iulia: rank 6, 8; Arad: rank 4,6 ; Brașov rank 1,4).

The only exception to all three universities appears in the case of the module *Education and Community* where there were differences between 2 and 4 ranks in favor of the more applied discipline.

The module explicitly focused on educational field activities has a last position within this hierarchy. But there is an explanation, as well. Each module

[1] Ranks by subjects in each module (Table 1)

involves practical activity by component C of curricular structure. This is the more important specific of the curriculum of this model. The practice module separately designed, is a necessary compromise between the ISPEF 's model and the requirements of ARACIS for a Romanian master program. That is why it can be perceived as something "added".

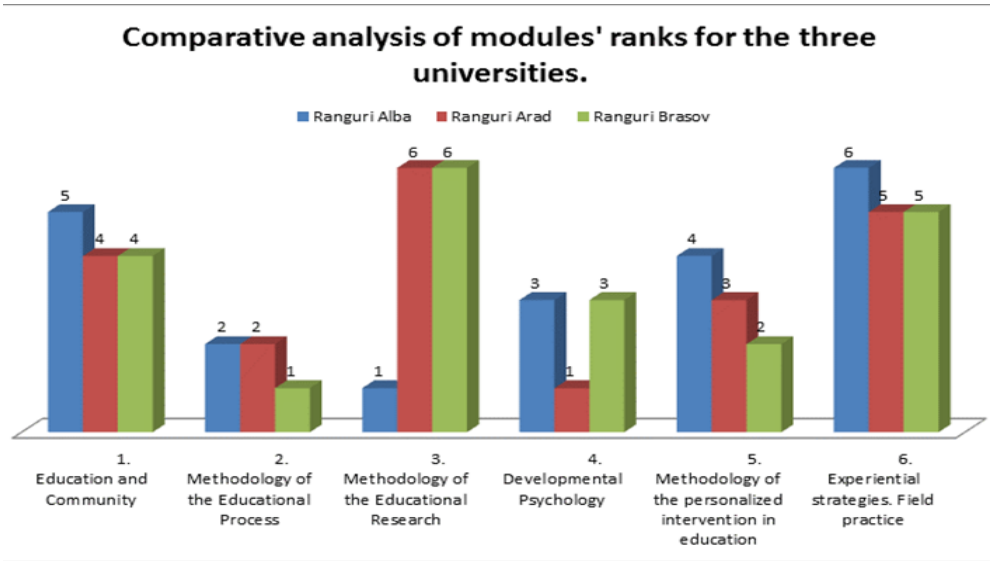

Fig. 2. Students' opinion about the importance of first year curriculum modules

Table 1. Ranks for each module and subject- first year in the three partner universities

Module	Discipline	Ranguri pe discipline		
		Alba	Arad	Braşov
1. Education and Community	1.a. Advanced study of education in the community	11	9	7
	1.b. Educational designs in relation to community and family	9	5	5
2. Methodology of the Educational Process	2.a. Teaching methodology in early education and early schooling	2	1	1
	2.b. Teaching models for early education and early schooling age	5	7	3
3Methodology of Educational Research	3.a. Management of research projects in education	1	11	11
	3.b. Qualitative research methods in education	3	12	10
4. Developmental Psychology	4.a.Advanced studies in developmental psychology for children and early schooling students	4	2	2
	4.b. Management of psychological learning process in early childhood	6	3	6
5. Methodology of Personalized Intervention in Educatio	5.a. Methodology of personalized intervention in education	6	4	1
	5.b. Management of strategies for personalized intervention in education.	8	6	4
6. Field Practice	6.a. Field practice- designing the activities with children and students	10	8	8
	6.b. Field practice- evaluation and inter-evaluation within the field practice of master students.	12	10	9

For the second year, first semester presents a more balanced hierarchy; the first and second ranks are identical in the three campuses and are occupied by modules: Educational and teaching design, and, respectively, Communication inter-personal relations. The practice in the educational field remains on the last ranks in Arad and Brașov, but it has the ranks 3 to Alba Iulia.

Table 2. Students' opinion about the importance of subject studied in the third semester

Modules	Ranks per modules		
	Alba	Arad	Braşov
1. EDUCATIONAL PLANNING AND TEACHING	1	1	1
2. DOCIMOLOGY and EVALUATION	5	5	3
3. COMMUNICATION AND INTER-PERSONAL RELATIONS IN EDUCATION	2	2	2
4. SOCIOLOGY OF EDUCATION AND QUALITY MANAGEMENT	6	4	6
5. COMPLEMENTARZ MODULES AS OPTIONALS	***4***	***3***	
Professionalize teaching in early education / Recovery literature in early education			***4***
6. FIELD PRACTICE (experiential internships)	3	6	5

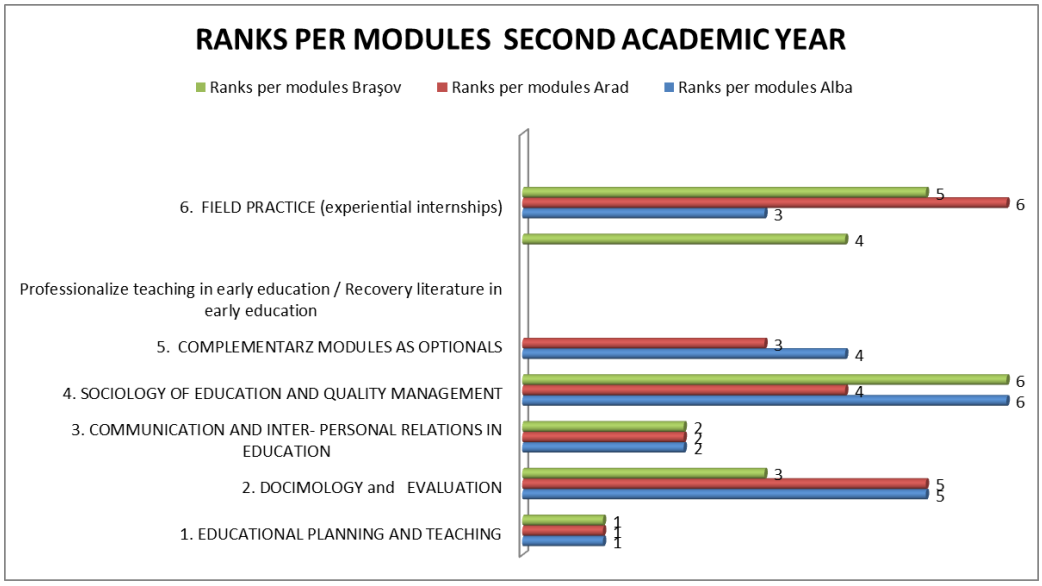

Fig. 3. Students' perception of modules importance in the third semester of the program

Teaching staff in all three centers consider that the existence of the four categories of activities, as they were described above, represents a real gain, if they are well managed along the implementation process.[Alba Iulia -100% 85% Arad, Braşov 100%.]

The existence of clear evaluation standards is well evaluated, as well. [Alba Iulia: 62.5% Arad: 71.4% Braşov:100%]. These are mainly mentioned as positive issues.

The teaching staff, although generally appreciates positively the model, they criticize bureaucracy, excessive number of documents asked as proofs, the tendency to assess pieces of competencies instead of considering the connection among competencies in action used by students in order to solve professional problem situations; essentially is criticized the focus on the shape instead of the essence. Along the three analyzed semesters a number of bureaucratic issues have been corrected, but still there are resources to optimize in this regard.
Teachers also highlight the interdependence between the ISPEF model and the Romanian experience to the benefit of both parties.

2.2. Strengths and opportunities mentioned by students and teachers

The master program has been undergone a SWOT analysis from the perspective of students and teachers. The same reality is to be analyzed but the criteria and the subsequent points of view are in somewhat different (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparative analysis of program's strengths according to students and teaching staff

Aspects analyzed and evaluated in terms of students	Aspects analyzed and evaluated in terms of teaching staff	
1. Materialele puse la dispoziţie de profesori	1. Materials provided by teachers as a result of collaboration between teaching teams of the three university centers	31%
	2. Materials provided by teachers without a proper cooperation between teaching teams of the three university centers	0%
2. Surse de documentare recomandate	3.Documentary sources recommended by teachers were effectively capitalized by students, and completed by additional sources	78.30%
3. Surse de documentare gasite de noi înşine	4.Documentary sources recommended by teachers **were not** effectively capitalized by students, and completed by additional sources	0%

Aspects analyzed and evaluated in terms of students	Aspects analyzed and evaluated in terms of teaching staff	
4. Modalităţile de predare	5. Teaching methods were appropriate to a modern education, forcing teams teaching self-improvement	71.60%
	6. Teaching methodology has been largely preserved, within traditionalism that proved as a trend more difficult to overcome, even in new contexts.	0%
5.Caracterul aplicativ al abordării disciplinelor	7. Practicality of the disciplines' approach has added a higher quality for both students and teachers	78.30%
	8. Practicality of the disciplines' approach has raised difficulties for both students and teachers	0%
6. Şansa de a aplica/ analiza în contextul practicii educaţionale a tot ceea ce am învăţat	9. New knowledge had the chance to be applied or/and analyzed in the context of educational practice	78.30%
	10. New knowledge had few chance to be applied or/and analyzed in the context of educational practice	0%
7. Evaluarea pe unităţi de învăţare distincte, cu probe distincte, vizând competenţe definite	11. High level of effectiveness of the assessment that focused on each learning unit and defined competencies	46.50%
	12. The assessment focused on each learning unit and defined competencies proved to be unwieldy and time consuming	6.60%
8. Relaţia profesor – masterand		
9. Relaţia dintre maste-ranzi (generată de sarcini de lucru în echipă	13. The interrelationship among master program students had effective educational effects	50.10%
	14. The interrelationship among master program students has proved to be extremely difficult because of objective reasons	4.16%

Students considered as main strength the materials provided by teaching staff (average percentage 82.6%), even if only 31% of teachers considered the item as a strength. Teachers rather considered as a positive aspect the recommended documentary sources and those capitalized effectively by

students based on their own documentation (78.3%). Methodology of teaching are named as strengths both by students and teachers (73% - 71.6%).

Applied nature of the teaching approach is higher assessed by teachers than by the students (students 64 % - teachers: 78 %). It is necessary to stress confusion about the meaning of "applicative " term that is obvious in the comments inserted in the answering files. The very structure of the master program that includes the 4 types of activities where the C activities are explicitly focused on practice is an appropriate context for this applicative feature of the program. Some of the students understand the applicative term as the approach of courses and seminars only in the form of applications, understood as grouping and regrouping of students and "doing things that involves complex learning tasks, with a defined role for developing the graduates' competencies. This should be the center of attention and not the exterior of the methodology used. This assertion is supported by the values recorded in item chance to apply / analysis of everything we have learned in the context of educational practice considered strong aspect of the program by teachers (78 %) and a less strong one by students (36 %). "Chance to apply" could be translated into the students' vision as the chance to "translate in terms of a direct transfer" those made at seminars and courses directly in practice.

The relationship between students and teachers is retrieved as explicit item only in the students' questionnaire. 72% of respondents considered it as strength, which is remarkable. Unfortunately, the relationship between students is positively valued by them in a low manner (only 29.3%), a much higher percentage considering that is one of the weaknesses of the program. (Fig. 4)

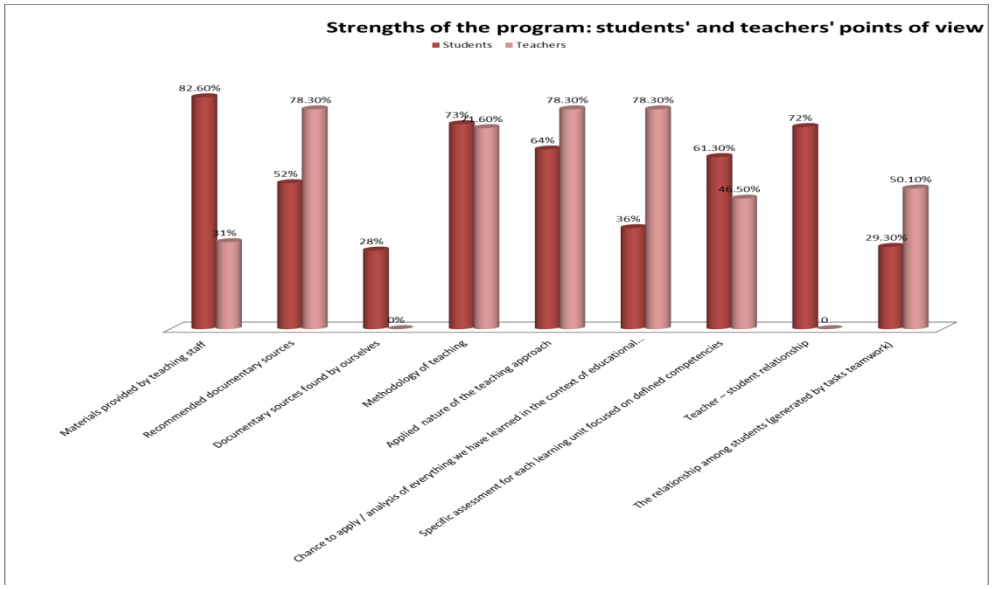

Fig. 4 Graph comparing the strengths of the master program (students' and teachers' opinion)

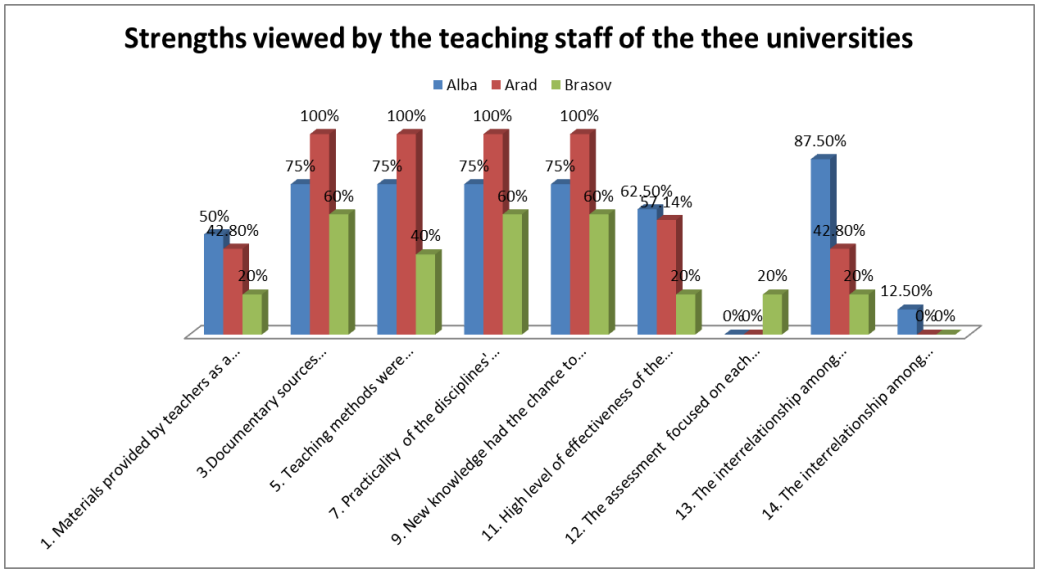

Fig. 5. Strengths seen by the three universities' teachers

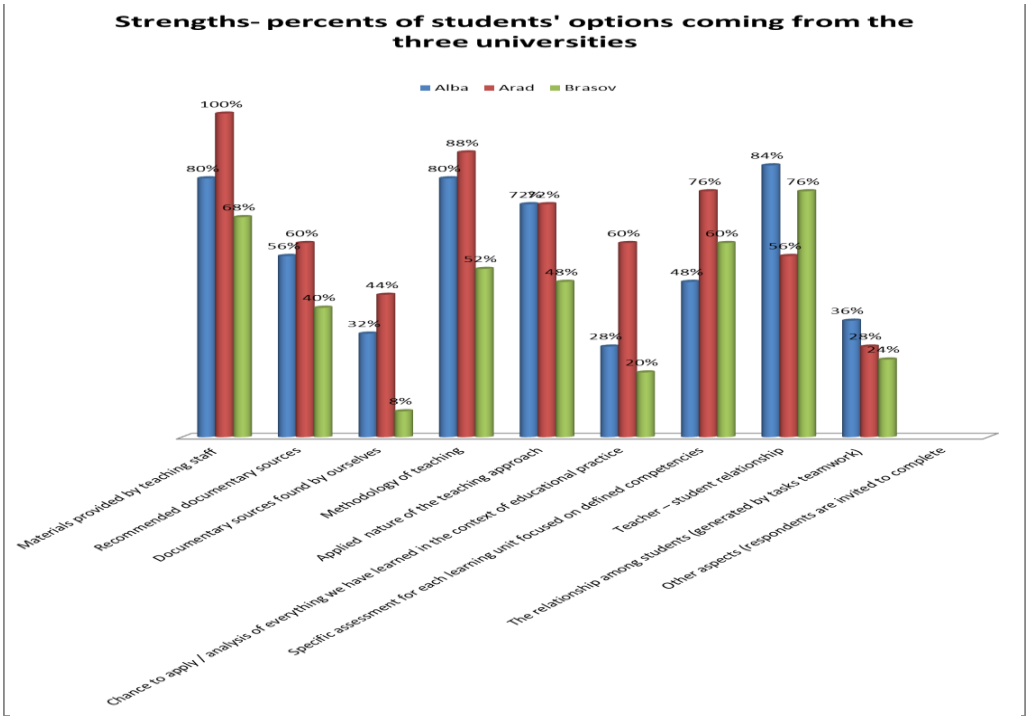

Fig. 6. Strengths seen by the three universities' students

The above charts provide details about the position about the strengths of the program coming from students belonging to the three universities,

respectively, to the teachers. Significant differences are sometimes found and the tendency of Brașov students and teachers to be more critical.

The opportunities offered by the program sometimes overlap the considered strengths. The meaning of this concept seems to be not very well understood, being decoded in different ways by students and teachers. In general students and teachers see some categories of items as opportunities; the average percentages received by these items are highlighted by the following chart. This chart should be viewed in conjunction with one of strengths .The chart notes that the recommended and found documentation sources are the main opportunity viewed by the students (73.3 %); this item has a much lower quality as opportunity in the opinion of teachers (13.3 %). Moreover, teachers generally have converted the possible opportunities into already manifested positive aspects. Therefore, in general the percentage recorded in teachers' mentioned opportunities is smaller. Then, perhaps the teachers and students decode concept of opportunity in a nuanced different way. For teachers most frequently mentioned opportunity (28.33 %) is the ways of teaching. We believe that in this case it is an explicit reference to students who have the opportunity to know, to be involved in a teaching and learning resulting from the synergy of the four types of activities. Students seem to understand less this novelty(4% only consider this item as opportunity) .

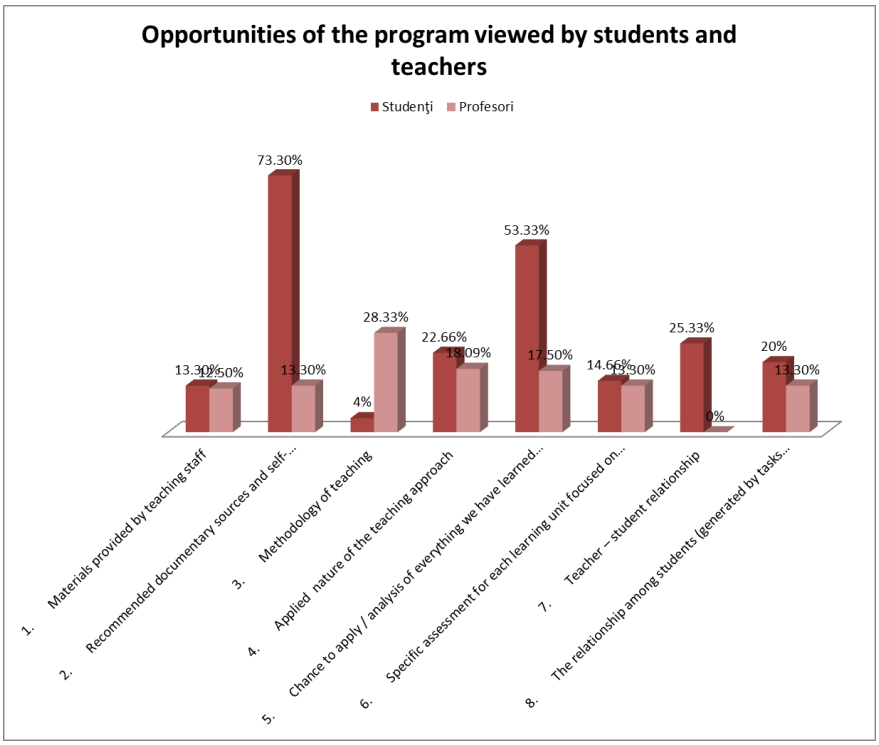

Fig. 7. Opportunities of the program viewed by students and teachers

2.3. Outlined weaknesses and constraints

At a first and superficial glance it seemed like the Arad respondents have the least perceived weaknesses and the most are in the answers of Brașov respondents; Alba Iulia students are on the median values.

An in-depth analysis, however, reveals a critical attitude cultivated by teachers from Alba Iulia and Brașov. In these two centers the students are encouraged to express their views. Once known the students' perceptions can be corrected where they are wrong and can take action to improve, where looming necessity. We believe in open communication and I had confrontations even under ARACIS visits on this topic. Students of Brașov had always their view, their criticism, even if it is not directed against certain substantive issues, they were always expressed. Assertion that students from other universities have not critical observation about their academic activity can be interpreted negatively rather than positive.

Also, is important to note that "other aspects considered as weaknesses " appear in the highest percentage in Brașov (16 %) and Alba Iulia (8%). These relate in particular to the details of the evaluation. One aspect considered as weakness is workload for individual portfolios asked for each discipline. If in Brașov, for the first semester there were indeed numerous requirements on at least two of the modules the appearance was regulated substantially, but the perception remains. The reason of these numerous requests consists in the difficulty of teachers to understand in depth the specific of the new model. It was necessary to start and run the activity for a proper understanding. On the other hand, the students' philosophy focused on solving tasks only during the exams session is the main reason of their complaining about "too much work and short available time ". It is important to highlight that tasks are announced at the beginning of the semester; they are not numerous but require documentation, reflection, and sometimes individual or group activity. They had a clear scheduling deadline on learning units. In these circumstances it is necessary to work with the students, which means their business management and shaping a more accurate perception of the model proposed by this master program.

The most common weakness is considered as being the relationship between students. Individualized education tradition, students' multiple statuses and their difficulties to properly play the connected roles, the distance between them as belonging to different communities, caused difficulties for solving the group tasks. On the other hand, how to work in groups is a fundamental requirement of the present and future, it requires explicit focus on students'.

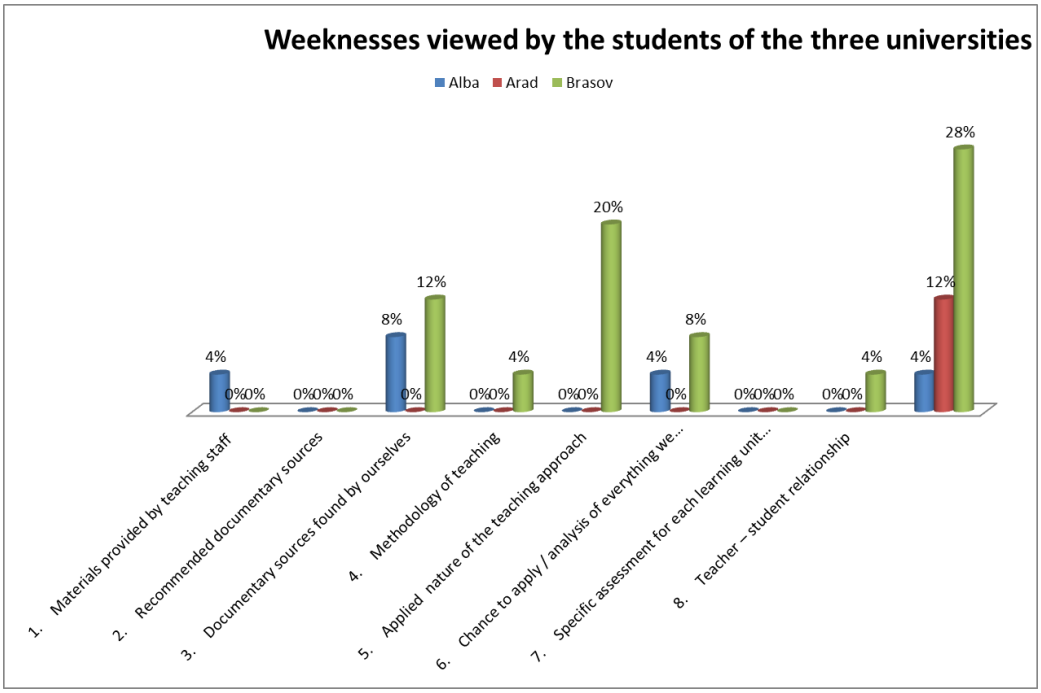

Fig. 8 Weaknesses of the program viewed by students

In respect of teaching staff category it is difficult to understand how failed to specify some weaknesses as long as, the discussions conducted during project monitoring process have revealed enough weaknesses. Several issues had been highlighted.

The first is a clear rejection of burdensome bureaucratic elements that still are a burden for the essential work. The large number of requested “proofs" for everything is happening in the process of teaching and learning - evaluation is considered as the main weakness in a significant number of comments made by teachers. There is even a comment (Alba Iulia) which highlights an interesting idea that *the more dense and demanding is this system of" proving” is easier to "cheat "*. We agree that excessive concern for production of proofs is time-consuming and has detrimental effects on the quality of education itself.

These negative aspects have been revealed rather in the context of free responses (open questions).

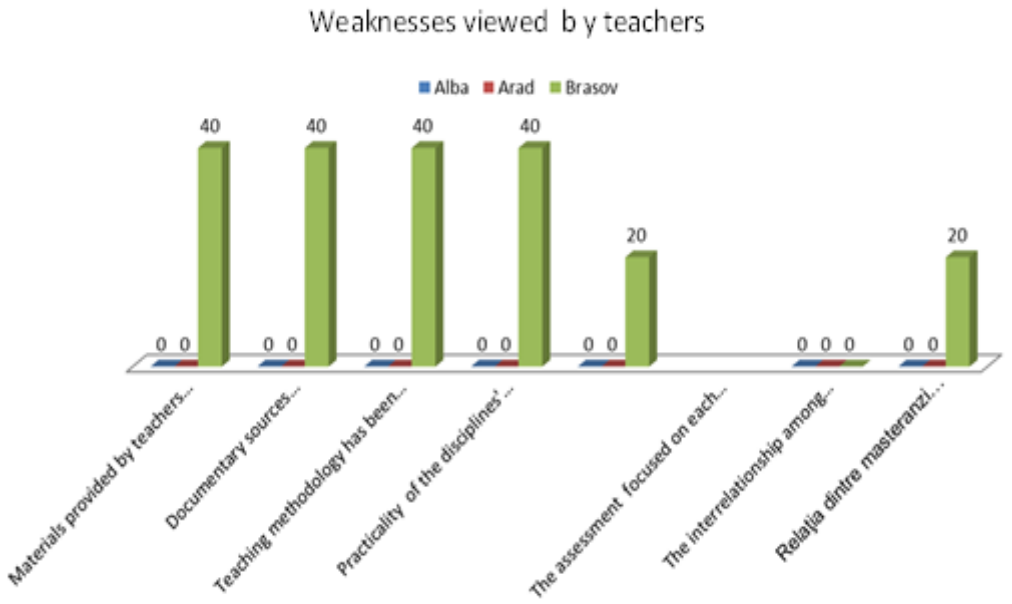

Fig. 9. Weaknesses viewed by teachers of the three universities

Constraints are interpreted very differently by the participants in the SWOT analysis. This case reflects the sliding from mentioned constraints of the program for the students and teaching staff, towards the environmental constraints against the program itself.

It is hard to understand why a 4% of students in each center consider materials provided by teachers as element of coercion. Even if the item is checked in this category, it is not elected to be argued. Thus, no arguments for this opinion can be found. From the discussions with students results that a certain degree of difficulty of some of the contents, the quality or lack of materials provided by teachers can appear as constraining factors for students involved in the learning program.

Documentary sources recommended constitute the greater constraint for students in Arad (20%), Alba Iulia (16%) and a lower percentage in Brașov (12%). The sources independently consulted by students are higher constraints in Arad (28%) and Alba Iulia (20%) but they seem to not exist in Brașov (0%). The arguments generally are focused on the difficult access to the Internet and libraries, always combined with lack of time. This item of documentary sources has the higher percentage in Arad (28%). For Alba Iulia students the distinct evaluation for each learning unit (32%) seems to be the most obvious constraint. For Brașov students (32%) work and team tasks that generate the need for effective relationships between students is the highest constrain. The

heterogeneous structure of Brașov group, the members' background, occupation and the personality seem to be the fundamental cause of this percentage.

Teachers relate very differently to the constraints. Teaching staff from Arad does not take into consideration any constraint. Three items tare highlighted as constraints by respondents from Alba Iulia. The assessment is considered cumbersome as long as the topics assess fragmented competencies developed through each type of activity (32%). Other 12.5 % must be added. It refers at evaluation as well, but this time the constraints come not from the focus on the learning units but from an extremely bushy documentation of the assessment. A third item with the same percentage of 12.5 % occurs in Alba Iulia and it refers to the documentary sources with an explanation that reinforces the students' opinions (difficult access to sources). The teaching staff of Brașov reveals several types of constraints that revolve around the same possible causes: heterogeneity of the group of students (initial training, profession and personality). This heterogeneity makes the materials provided by teachers, the recommended documentary sources, and ensuring the applicability of students' new competencies beyond the auditorium, to act as areas of difficulty in understanding and using the new knowledge. Hence, a high percentage of 32 % is connected to relationship among the students seen as a constraint. Brașov teaching staff also considers as a constraint the bureaucratic element of the assessment and the evaluation with too detailed requirements for skills. The discussions show another major constraint to the program. It derives from early education status in Romania which, while benefiting from the legal frame, the implementation is likely to arrive very late sometime in the future. This is considered as a constraint with negative influences on the students' learning motivation.

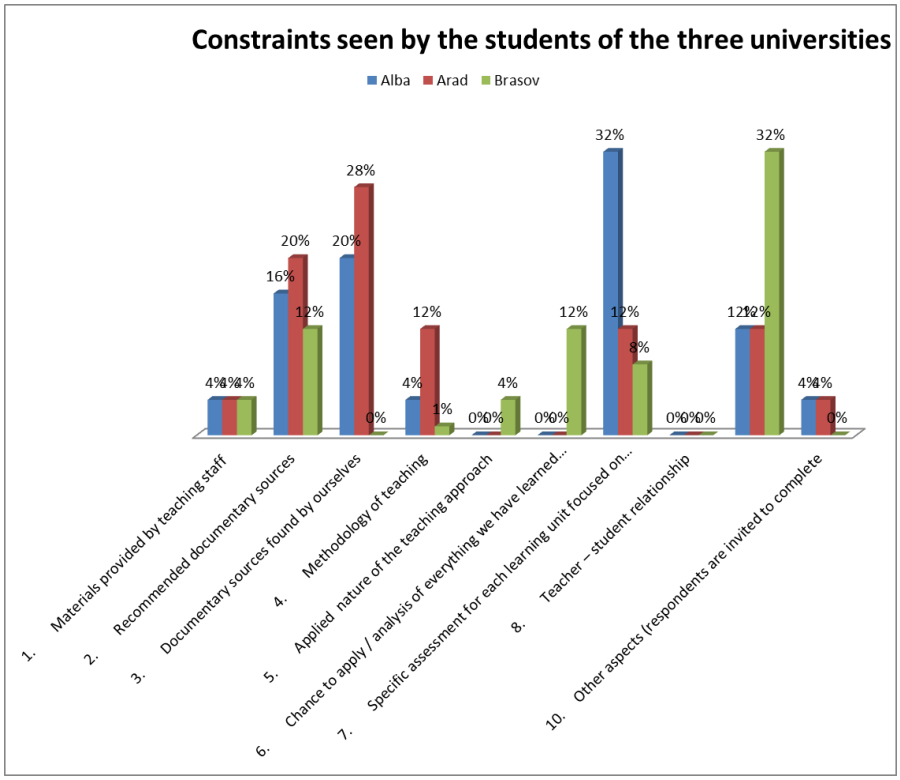

Fig. 10. Constraints of the program viewed by students

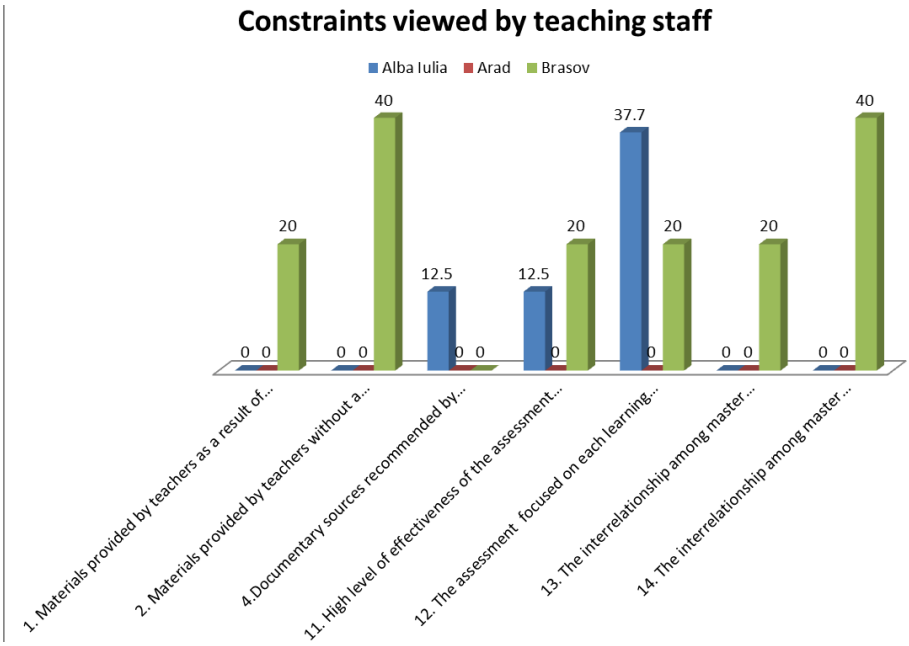

Fig. 11. Constraints viewed by teaching staff

2.4. Improvement directions as formulated by teachers and students.

Improvement directions suggested by students and, respectively, by teachers follow the same logic of different nuances coming from analyzing the same reality from different perspectives.

In terms of improving contents, the trends of the students are relatively similar. Firstly they require contents having a more obvious relation to their future profession (Alba Iulia: 44%, Arad: 52%, and Brașov 68%). A better structure of the contents is placed on a second place (Alba Iulia: 28%, Arad: 40%, and Brașov 36%). Some clarifications are required. Students do not seem to really understand that the training of the capacities specific for their future profession is part of the contents of the training program.

They are still tributary to the concept that content is synonymous with the information submitted. Unfortunately, some of the comments made by teachers seem to be quite close to the same vision. Teachers think that should be reviewed and optimized the project contents, but large differences appears in their opinion. If at Arad 85% of teachers' requests for improvement seem to be mostly related to the enrichment of information, discussions and project meetings in Brașov highlight the need to rethink some modules and their subjects aiming to avoid any duplication of contents, and to ensure the full contribution of contents to achieving graduates' competences profile.

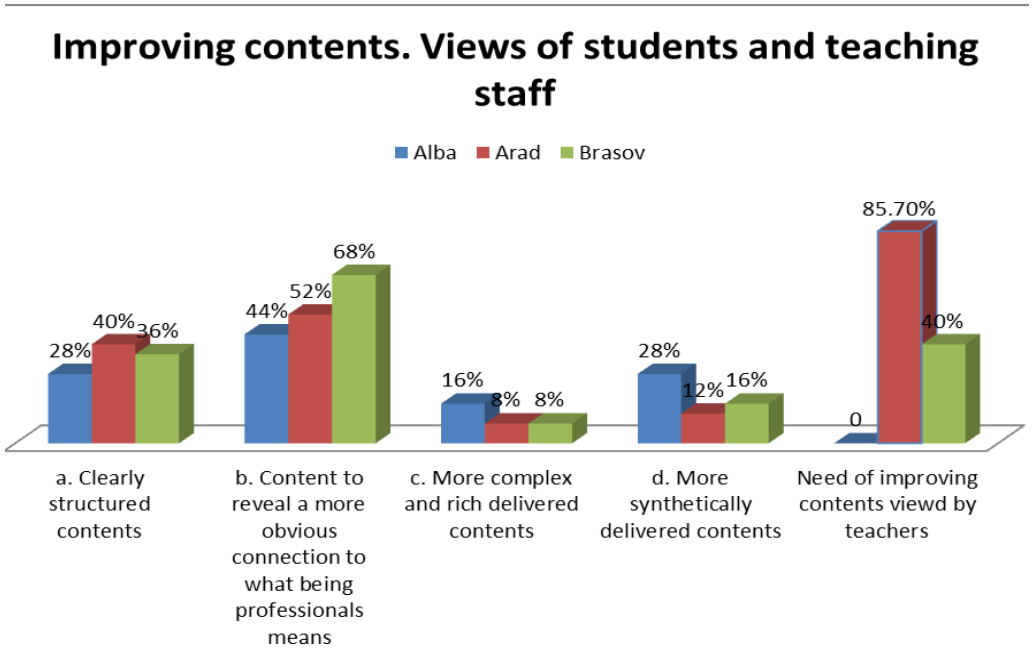

Fig. 12. Improving contents in the view of students and teacher

Improving teaching methodology is claimed by many students, especially its components as anchor in practice. A comment seems to be necessary; it refers to the students' optics against this "anchoring ". Some of the students are practitioners in the field of education. Often appears as obvious their tendency to think restrictive by reference only to the narrow field of their own experience or asking something utilitarian. They often require practical solutions to their problems, and if the tasks solved in auditorium do not lend it to finding solutions, the students are dissatisfied. Also, the issues discussed in the course or seminar ask sometime to be detected and analyzed within the context of practice; students often do not answer to these tasks on a high quality parameters. In these conditions a discussion professors-students aiming to clarify the vision about anchoring the teaching in practice seems to be absolutely necessary.

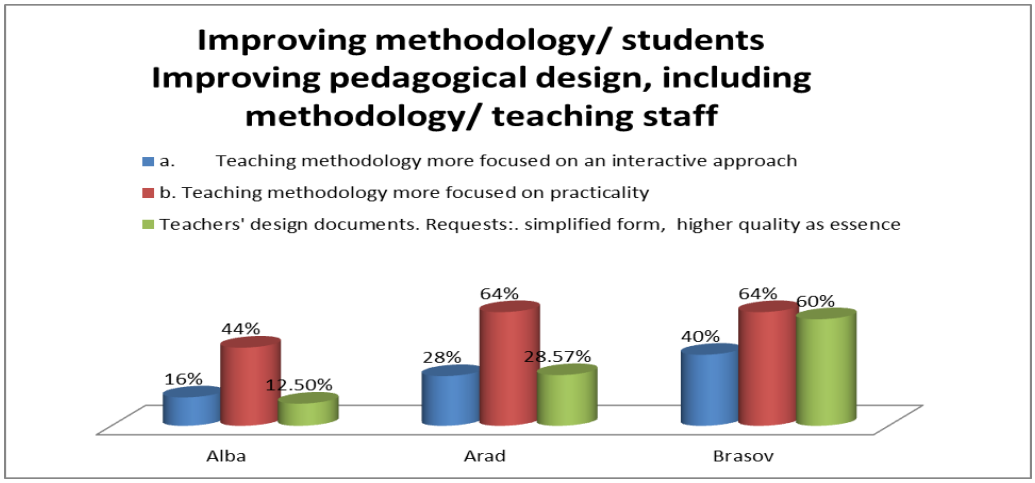

Fig. 13. Improving methodology in the view of students and the pedagogical design in teacher' vision

Teaching staff require the improvement of the design documents focused on waiving sophisticated and bushy forms and increasing concern for the essence, especially on the component of methodology design (Alba Iulia 12.5%, Arad 28.5%, and Brașov 60%).

Evaluation is one of the issues with specific shades in *Performer* project. It is requested separately for each learning unit. The assessment is designed to be related to the competencies to be developed by each learning unit. The details of the assessment are designed from the very beginning and all the implementation steps have to be specified. Both teachers and students have complains and requests for improvement when it is about evaluation. They are mostly related to external aspects not necessarily to its substance. The existence of standards well defined, keeping the principle known in our small

classes of performance descriptors is a recognized plus. But the initially requested fragmentation of the assessment focused on components and subcomponents of competencies is considered as artificial and ineffective. Teachers were concerned with finding the most appropriate forms of assessment that is truly focused on competencies, but considered in their complexity and unity. These issues are most acute requested by teachers in Brașov but they appear in the other universities. A lower number of tasks for evaluation are a requirement for students. But it is obvious that explanation of the different philosophy of learning, working and assessment involved in this project must be done and accepted by all the present and future students. Students' requirements for a better link of the assessment of what is done in the auditorium seem to be correct, but when it involves a request to solve the assessment tasks in Aula context it is no longer justified.

Generally speaking, it is certainly necessary to re-discuss with the current generation and from the very beginning with the next ones, about the specific philosophy of this project.

Figure 14 shows the issues mentioned above; the first four items are bound to students and the last two items are connected to teachers' views.

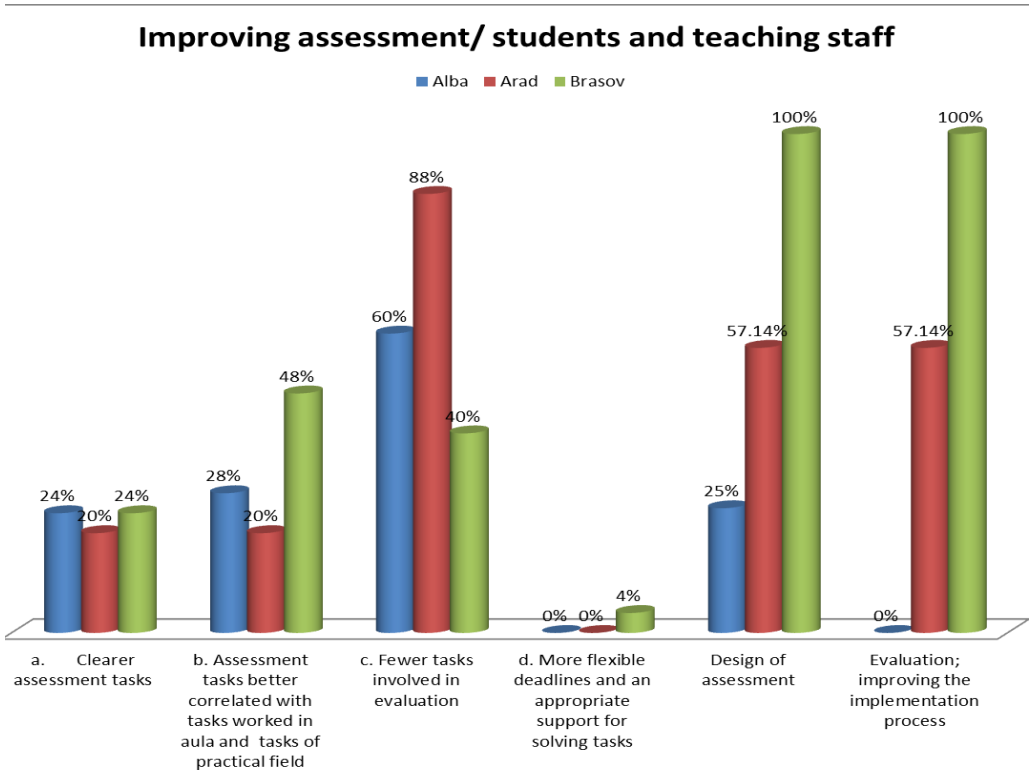

Fig. 14. Improvement of assessment in students' and teachers' vision

Students have some other specific requests. They refer to the necessity of a higher level of empathy but mostly understood as leniency which is not good for the educational context (Alba Iulia: 24%, Arad: 64%, Brașov: 40%). No one of the students ask for a more demanding attitude but they want a higher level of transparency especially in Alba and Arad (12% and 16%, but in Brașov as well (8%). It is important to highlight that the assessment process is a transparent one within this project and discussions about what the students understand through more transparency are also necessary.

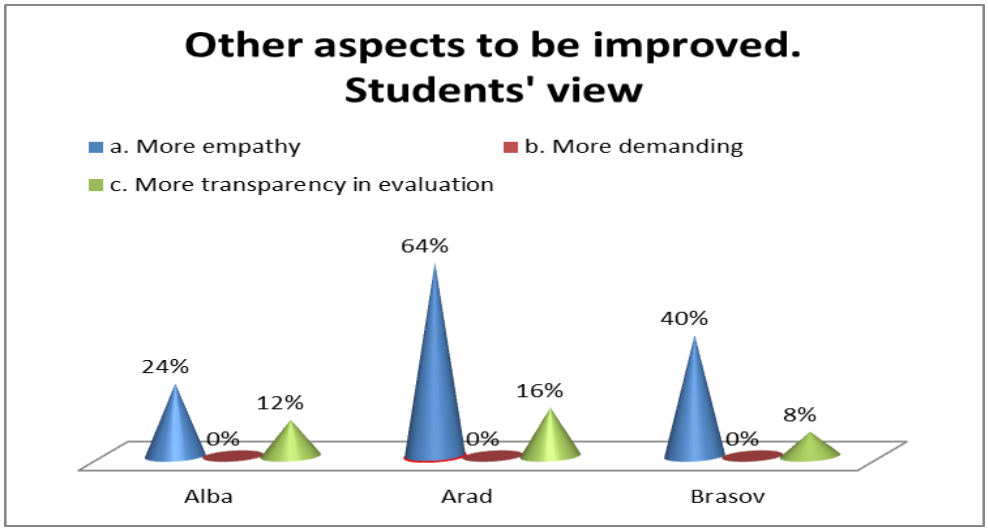

Fig. 15. Other aspects to be improved. Students' view

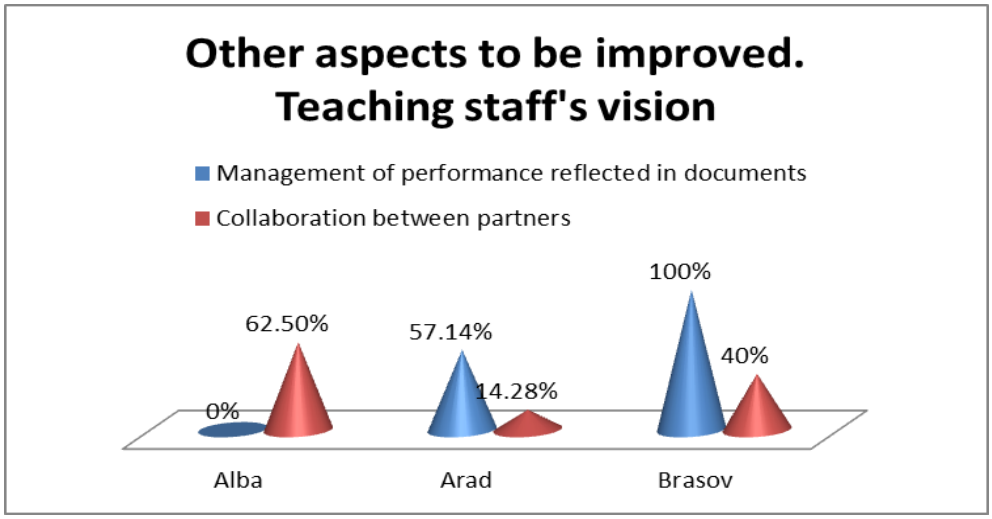

Fig. 16. Teaching staff's vision about other aspects to be improved

3. Conclusions and future directions of a more effective action

The analysis above is only a stage of the monitoring process of PERFORMER project and aims to figure out the core issues to be improved, the necessary changes to be done. All these are meant to keep the track of this innovative approach of training professionals for early and education and schooling through a master program. The most important aspects that come out as successful approaches can be extended through adaptation to other master programs.

The existence of these four types of activities synergistically leading towards the development of high quality competencies of graduates can be considered in other academic context and implemented with very good results. An in depth analysis of the effects of these activities shows some interesting issues:

1. The effective focus on students' developing competences through an active and interactive involvement of students in their own developmental process become easier and much more efficient in the context of a good management of these four types of activities.
2. A clear design of competences for each learning unit and the assessment process authentically focused on these competencies is the strength of the model. This statement is true if the general design of graduates' competence profile is genuinely connected to all these competencies considered for each module, and for each subject. The consistency of competences development process leading towards the final expected competences profile of the graduates has to be a frame for all the master programs. (Fig. 17)

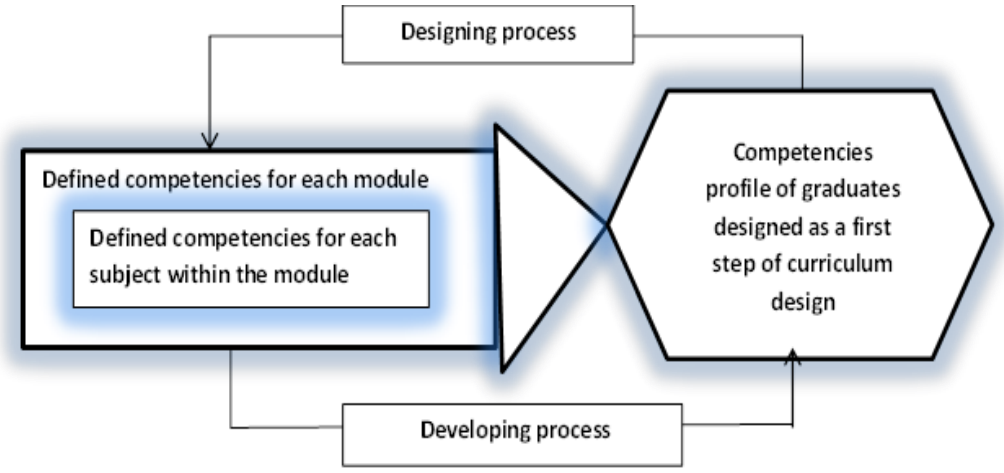

Fig. 17. Consistency and coherence in the design and development of graduates' competencies

The contents and the methodology of teaching - learning- assessment process should be selected from the perspective of the genuine development of the designed competencies. (Fig. 18)

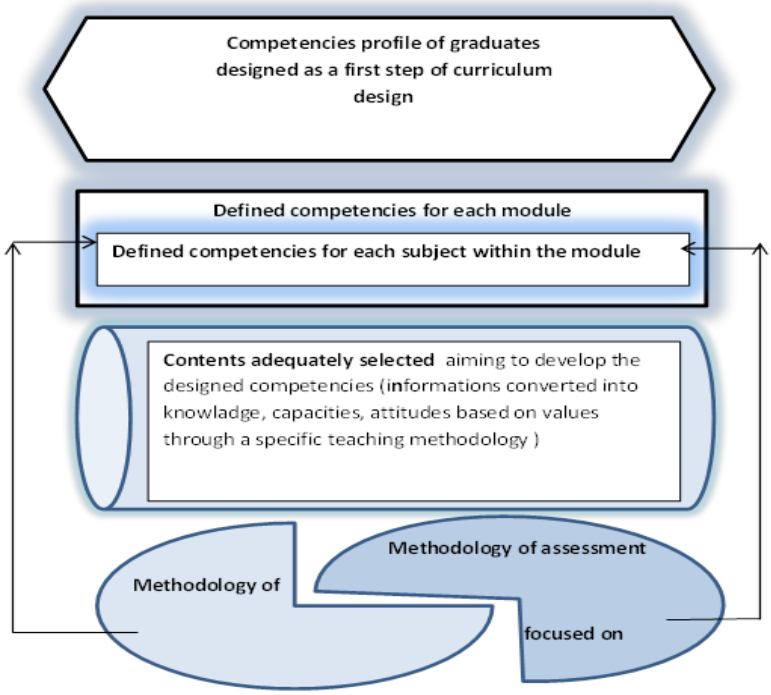

Fig. 18. Selected contents, methodology of teaching –learning – assessment process, and their connection to the graduates' competencies profile

3. An aware balance must be taking into consideration in the assessment process in order to avoid the artificial and ineffective fragmentation in assessing competencies.

4. The adapted ISPEF model to the condition of Romanian legal and concrete educational context is an example that good practice can be successfully shared.
   This model is an interesting example of a type of blended way for the educational process, a complex and effective blended manner of working. It is a specific, complex, and effective design and implementation of this blended manner in the academic context.[2]

[2] Adapted after Knewton: http://www.knewton.com/blended-learning/

The figure below presents the positioning of the four types of activities of ISPEF model inside of a graphic representation of blended learning focused on the combination between the manner of delivering contents and learning tasks and geographical location of learners against their teachers.

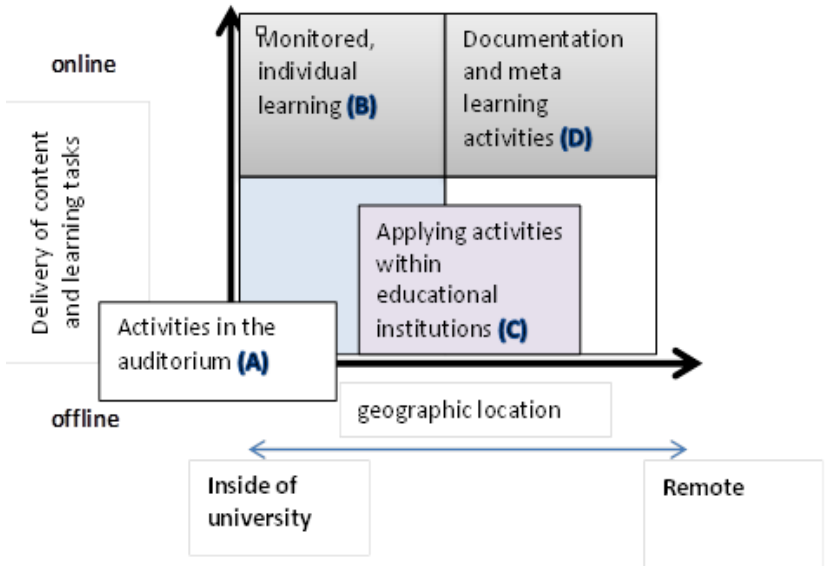

Fig. 19 Positioning the four categories of activity in the context of one of te graphical expressions for blended learning

It is obvious that the activities in auditorium are the starting point of the teaching- learning process. The students are put in the situation to learn independently but under the monitoring of their teachers (activities B), based on what the teaching staff delivers online for study and solve as learning problems . They receive suggestions, help if necessary and effective feedback. Students are invited to find out issues to be analyzed and theoretically approached, and to apply theoretical aspects in their practical activities (C). These do not take place in university but in institutions for early education and schooling. Here the independence of students against their teachers is higher and the possibility to interact with professionals in the field is important. The students is asked to develop his/her own documentation on different topics of curriculum and, more than this eventually to reflect and to assess the own route of the learning process (D activities, remote by the university but with deep roots in the entire student's learning activity.

No effort is too great, no attempt is useless when educators really want performance and quality in the learners' training. Our experience is an invitation for others to join it.

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INSTITUTIONAL MANAGEMENT IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

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„An excellent team made of individuals is by far better than a team made of excellent individuals”.

ABSTRACT

The issue of institutional management has become one of efficiency strategy and identification of performance in the knowledge society. The author, former rector with management experience in university structures analysis the relationship between organization and institution, as well as the extent to which Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad fulfils the demands of a knowledge institution, with didactic and scientific activity.

KEYWORDS: institution, management, organization, the knowledge society, Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad.

1. ORGANIZATION AND INSTITUTION

The word *organization* is more and more used in a modern meaning – without distinction – for any type of coherent group, irrespective of the social or economic area it functions in. Moreover, if the economic environment used words such as firm, factory, plant, corporation, etc., nowadays the theoreticians of ***organizational behaviour***[3] who come from the economic area promote the concept of *organization*. The concept sums up any human behaviour, *organized* according to principles, rules, hierarchies. Furthermore, the *organization* is redefined as a “field” or a “network”. The issue of possible confusion between *institution and organization* was brought up at a certain point.

Institutions, stated M. Vlăsceanu[4] (2003), are normative; they are subjected to constraining rules in terms of behaviour and action. Institutions

[3] **Behaviour** is a observable activity of a organisms, an interaction with its environment. The notion can refer to an activity, in general (ex: "Ever since I know X, he behaves very nicely to people") or to a certain activity, thus a particular situation (ex: "Today, X has acted strangely, when I have met him on the street"). Ther concept was used in psychology for the first time, J.B. Watson and H Pieron, in the psychological paradogm called *Behaviourism*, according to Wikipedia.org.wiki/.

[4] Mihaela Vlăsceanu, *Organizaţii şi comportament organizaţional,* Editura Polirom, Iași, 2003, p. 46.

have formal rules (laws, jurisdiction) and informal rules (conventions, rituals, traditions), which induces the idea of reward for complying with the regulations and punishment for disobeying them. The institution develops a complex relationship between physical environment (material base, non-human resources) and human environment of a production society by valuing bureaucratic behaviour which involves performance of strictly professional "duties". They can be regarded as the individuals` behavioural adjustment to (institutional) rules and regulations.

Competition and the urge to increase efficiency have determined the attachment of two new meanings to the rigid meaning of this concept. As these are predominant and obviously more important, the term was replaced by the concept of **organization.** Consequently, an ***organization*** is based on the existence of an institution (which promotes, rules, constraints, and regulations) but aims at performance by stimulating and motivating people and their satisfaction level. Therefore, in my management approach of almost 15 years, I have considered "Aurel Vlaicu" University (which I have managed as rector) both institution and organization. I would call it, ***institution*** as it is structured and ***organization*** as it has aspiration towards efficiency. Like a *field* (P. Bourdieu, 1980), an ***organization*** benefits from "hierarchical" positions and functions, each with specific attributions and interests. It has also (material or scientific e.g. accreditation, publications, authority) capital, abilities of self-regulation, change, adjustment and competition. The organization can make the boundaries between hierarchical levels and power proportions more flexible. It is quite difficult to define organisation within educational sphere therefore we appeal to E. Păun`s statement (1999): „*a system of activities structured around certain clearly stated finalities (goals, objectives) which involves a large number of individuals who have well-delimited status and role within a differentiated structure with positions of management and activity coordination*"[5]. We can synthesize the characteristics of an organization according to four coordinates: *organizational structure* (complexity, size, roles and bylaws, relationships, differentiating activities); *organizational control* (hierarchical structure, authority and power relationships, staff, bureaucracy); *organizational behaviour* (aims, organizational climate and culture); *organizational change* (flexibility, promoting innovation, staff development). According to Mary Jo Hatch[6] (1997), one can identify four "metaphorical" moments in the analytic evolution of an organization as reality, phenomenon and concept:

- ***Classic vision* or *the machine metaphor*** ("*imagines individuals as robots/machines who were built by the manager to*

[5] Emil Păun, *Școala – abordare sociopedagogică*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1999, p. 21.
[6] **Mary Jo Hatch,** management professor at The University of Virginia. She wrote: *Organization theory: modern, symbolic, and postmodern perspectives (Oxford, 2006).*

fulfil pre-set objectives"). In organizations where these "machines" function, the manager is an organizational engineer whose concern is to project, fulfil and ensure full functioning of these "machines", namely a sort of "organizations without humans";

- ***Modern vision* or *the organic metaphor*** („*organization is a living organisms, which becomes environment and resource dependent in order to function and survive*");
- ***Symbolic-interpretative vision* or *the cultural metaphor*** („*stresses out aspects concerning what we could call the ethos of an organization: traditions and customs, myths, legends, beliefs, values and symbols. They all make up the culture of that organization and the understanding of organization culture is relevant in developing a management strategy*")
- ***Postmodern vision or the collage metaphor*** ("*the analysis of an organization cannot make a distinction between subject and object – they cannot be separated – postmodern theoreticians consider the collage metaphor representative for a type of art, where objects are rearranged to obtain a new object. Thus, they admit the existence of various manners of approaching organizations and building explanation theories*").

To what extent is university an organization? University, as stated earlier, has both the attributes of an institution and of an organization. ***It is an institution,*** because it has a legal status, a rector, students and teaching staff; ***it is an organization*** because it has human resources (the relationship network of individuals who belong to this community), material resources – technology – (communication system, curriculum which aims various educational goals depending on faculties) and supports ***organization culture***. It has endured evolutional "metaphors" such as the machine metaphor, supported by Ivan Ilich`s ideas[7], who describes "deschooling school" or "deschooling society", then the organic and cultural metaphor typical for current universities and the postmodern collage metaphor which argues that universities do not fold the bureaucratic requirements, but show attraction towards crumbling, environment and utility. At the Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, we have followed only one policy and model. It is the model of efficiency and clustering authority in competition with traditional universities as well as regional ones. I have always tried to have a close and careful look at our international visibility in times of review and reflexivity.

[7] American sociologist of Russian origin, **Ivan Ilich** issued ideas considered too terrible about a society without school and universities. He wrote *Deschooling society* (1970).

2. KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION

Professor H Dragomirescu[8] states in an essay-like study entitled **Knowledge based organizations**[9], that when a society merges properly („*in an emblematic construction*") ***knowledge with organization,*** it has reached matureness. Such a study allows the university activity to unfold in three processes: *innovation* (creates new knowledge), *learning* (acquires new knowledge) and *partner interaction* (capable of relations with identical universities). Such an organization is „*an organization model of the 21st century*" and an alternative to ***authority and control-based organization.*** For instance, it is „the brain-organization" the core of a self-aware organization, "*capable of assuming goals and turn them into projects, of developing and using the knowledge treasure creatively, thus highlighting that conception prevails over action*"[10]. As procedure, universities can turn to knowledge by:

- technology (equipment, information technology, learning);
- projects (action, coherence, efficiency);
- organization (research, source of knowledge).

During my management at "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, I have focused on technological development starting from zero, on attracting and organizing viable projects that would bring funds, authority and intellectual stimulation, as well as on supporting research. A university needs good teachers but mostly good researchers. A policy with high impact on our university was the co-option of young researchers with outstanding research activity from foreign universities.

In organization theory, the ***hierarchical paradigm*** **(as rigid and authoritarian pyramid structure)** has an alternative, ***the network paradigm***. According to this type of organization, every teacher is a manager who turns information into knowledge and action. Networks involve groups, who develop projects, promote cooperation rules, mutual representations and even cognitive maps. Therefore, all actors and human resources should be proactive, in terms of *co-elaboration* (generating knowledge), *co-learning* (mutual validation of acquisitions) and *co-management* (efficient use of knowledge).

To what extent can the university fulfil the demands of a ***knowledge based society*** through its didactic and administrative staff and its students? Unfortunately, **the street metaphor**[11] (Emil Păun) is for universities a form of

[8] H. Dragomirescu, *Organizaţii bazate pe cunoaştere,* www.rocai.ro, p.3.
[9] Knowledge society is "*the one where information means power in a general meaning – irrespective if we refer to political, economic, financial power – obtaining, keeping and valueing information is th key to this society*." (H.. Drăgănescu, 2001).
[10] Ibidem, p. 4.
[11] Each discipline from the curricula designs its own competences without interferring with others, only tangentially.

action, keeping them rigid, conservative and inefficient in terms of progress. Despite the idea of university autonomy, universities are bureaucratic and highly hierarchical organizations and their **core** (**faculties) are only enforcers of Senate`s decisions but also of standardized curriculum.**

Knowledge based organizations (NBO) should bring about constant changes in management projects because separation of *management act* from *execution* is null. The manager declines administrative power and becomes „*an architect of systems and processes.*" The role is also of „*facilitator, mentor, moderator or promoter*"[12], which implies „*special management attributions, such as* ***strategic vision, interpersonal skills, project management and change management*** (s.n. – L. M.). In other words, the manager handles „*collective competences*", namely „*what an organization knows and is capable of doing, in relation to its objectives and determining environmental conditions, based on its members` individual abilities, which are systemically acquired and strategically mobilized*"[13].

The economic environment – especially the Chinese, Asian and American - has developed its own „knowledge centre", „organization system", „brand universities" as an appeal to the inability of certain universities to develop such competences. What do we know about what is going on beyond the products on the shelves of the supermarkets? We see order, the effects of marketing, promotions, advertising, design, computing, market prospection, exhibitions, etc. There is no concern for a coherent vision over the entire management process in universities because they consider it the prerogative of economic businesses.

Theories, like any type of philosophy, describe the past of a process and its effects. Knowledge is not as humanized as one argues. There is a tendency to **imperialize** it and often it becomes a „ public good" served as ***pills***. Company X does not reveal its "secrets", the results of its own creativity only when it replaces them with more performing ones. „Knowledge is sold" or becomes "public" only when it doesn`t stand for the ambition of the organization who developed it and is replaced by more efficient and advanced technique. For instance, the secrets of a mobile phone programme can be „sold" or distributed to other organizations, only when creative knowledge generated another more efficient programme to meet their clients` satisfaction. Therefore, universities are aimed to generate high knowledge and be the promoters of regional development.

Organizations (KBO) generate knowledge because they are open to learning and creativity. They are organizations which do not lack money but time and valuable human resources. They are „***organizations that teach***",

[12] *Ibidem,* p. 13.
[13] *Ibidem,* p. 13.

because „*learning is a specific management tool for institutional culture*"[14]. According to F. Kofman and P. M. Senge, „*institutions that teach are those institutions where people constantly develop their ability to reach their goals and where thinking and communication are promoted*". They have three fundamental elements which describe them:

- culture based on curiosity, modesty and understanding;
- practices for coordinated dialogue and action;
- ability to identify activity as a system;

Moreover, in each organization there are actors with different potential who are not motivationally involved:

- uninvolved, namely those who don`t learn;
- potentially involved, those who want but need individual motivation;
- involved, those who are engaged and have organizational motivation;
- proactive, namely volunteers, dynamic people capable of bringing about changes

In terms of above stated perspectives, universities can become model institutions with already mentioned fundamental characteristics. Universities promote a specific strategy for each category, namely a particular operational plan, capable of determining procedural efficiency (*efficiency* is expressed by "*the share between results and time allotted to achieve them*"). Strategies involve assimilation of concepts, skills, rules, abilities, competences and behaviours in a global and differentiated manner.

We would like to state our opinion regarding the previously mentioned considerations. The first one refers to the notion of ***knowledge based society***. What is the meaning of this notion? We are wondering, if there is a society which structures its existence without „knowledge"? Any responsible and efficient organization has its own proceedings relying on structural quality "inputs" in the system: the more the inputs are knowledge based, the more relevant the outputs are. Organizations "function" as organisms. If a university is capable of generating knowledge, then it shapes its personality and gives satisfaction to others. The **propensity of a university towards knowledge will provide it with quality and in this way students would want to be enrolled in such a university.** A university or faculty that only obeys various regulations will remain anonymous. Therefore, the statement „***knowledge based organization***" does not express a category but a quality. Without knowledge, a university dilutes its existence and functions.

On the other hand, any well-organized system – a university too – can be autopoiesis. By *autopoiesis* we understand the university`s ability of self-regulation, of finding stimulation and balance resources when needed. A

[14] T. Coşeriu, *Instituţia care învaţă*, www.design.ro (17. 05. 2014), p.1.

university which is incapable of proper and proactive reactions can no longer be called an organization."Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad is on a constant struggle to develop its organizational culture, to strengthen its authority and fame. Moreover, we can include it in the category of "knowledge organizations" because it is involved in a serious quality system through projects and vision.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PUPILS MOTIVATION AND THEIR SCHOOL RESULTS FROM PERSPECTIVE OF PRIMARY SCHOOL MANAGERS IN JORDAN

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to identify the relationship of academic achievement of students at the primary stage in Jordan from the viewpoint of school managers, in addition of recognizing the relationship between motivation and academic accomplishment of students at the primary stage in Jordan. For realizing that, the researcher applied a questionnaire on a study sample which consisting of 60 managers where 30 director and 30 headmistress distributed according to the gender. The results of study indicated that there are significant differences at α = 0.05 between mathematical mean of the sample and hypothesis average. The results showed that high correlation between motivation and achievement that affected significantly on academic achievement from the perspective of the research sample.

The study recommends to make available an learning programs which raise the motivation between students, through the preparation of school tests, which match the student's needs and do more investigation in this field.

KEYWORDS: Academic achievement, Motivation, Elementary stage.

1. INTRODUCTION

The education is a methodological process organized and developed in the school. It is based on the achievement of the educational objectives through the relationship between the teacher (the one who teaches) and pupil (the one who learns) that it suppose to have different points of view [1] The learning and the assimilation of the knowledge's in any educational system depends on by the its efficacy and stability [2].

In the actual institutions of education, teachers communicate to the pupils the most important knowledge's information, because these are basic for their skills formation, for their intellectual development, for their formation of culture and in the same time it has the role of helping pupils to solve the school and social problems. These knowledge's have an integral formed which point

the social, physical and cognitive development for good abilities and maxim potential [3].

The contemporary provocations proved the necessity of completing the pupil's education using modern methods that can induce to them a new mode of thinking, considering the future society's solicitations. That's why the primary teachers must have many essential knowledge's, in the same time they have to be creative, they must give up to the conventional methods of teaching and of course they must prepare the new generations to be able adapting themselves to the permanent changing's and social evolution [4].

Motivation is one of the most important conditions that the achievement of the educative purpose depends on. The didactic activity which is determined by a high level of motivation, it's easy to be identified in some situations and very difficult in others. The motivated teachers from the primary education are distinguished by the permanent documentation using the best methods of teaching in harmony to psychosocial development of pupils even through their motivation and their good school results [5].

The researches on this subject indicate the fact that the motivated persons are more successful in their school activity and at their workplaces too so that they can develop different affairs. Persons with a low motivation are easy to be identified because of the fact that they never chose difficult tasks in contradistinction to the motivated persons who dare to aspire and chose tasks with a medium and high difficulty, who wait for feedback concerning the task achievement's mode [6].

The motivation is one of the most important factors that makes the pupil to assimilate the knowledge, guiding his attention to the important activities concerning daily behavior, stimulating them to the perseverance and an efficient work. In the period of compulsory education, the motivation stimulates the pupil for the extra school activities and that's why the success of motivation is one of the most important educational objective [7].

The pupils mode of thinking, their reasons, the presence of their believes, principles; the mode of evaluating and teaching which needs much more a mechanical learning without developing a criticized thinking, the capacity of training themselves and solving the daily problems, all of these have an fundamental impact both for teachers and pupils [8].

The school success is the result of many factors that have a directly connection with motivational aspect, the environment conditions, the ingenuity, the healthy, the psychological security, native capacities, aptitudes and acquired abilities [9].

Following the success of the school, the primary school during the student can predict in other stages of education [10].

Pupils who aspire at an important level of education and performance are attracted by that activities with a high motivation and difficult levels. That's

why we suggest to us to study the relationship between motivation and the school results, trying to answer the following two questions:

1. What is the principals expectation from the managers of Jordanian primary education regarding the relationship between motivation and the pupils school results?

What is the relationship between motivation and school achievement of the pupils from the Jordanian primary education?

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

Your strict adherence to the format and style specifications described in this section is required to maintain uniformity of appearance throughout the Proceedings.

1. **2.1.** The knowledge of the Relationship between motivation and school achievement of the pupils from Jordanian primary education, from the principals' perspective.
2. The identification of the Relationship between motivation and school success of the pupils from the Jordanian primary school.

We consider that our investigations steps are important and justified because the stage of the primary education is essential for the future pupils evolution and the education is essential both person and society. That's why it's important that official factors, the principals' school in our case, to build and have influence over the achievement education. Of course we don't pretend that the study is a vast one because of the limits caused by the sample's size (a sample represented by the fundamental principles of the government), the limitation to the Jordanian space includes only the basic education' institutes in Jordanian government and the research doesn't have a longitudinal character ,it is just developed in the second semester of the 2012/2013 year of university.

3. THE METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

To be able to realize the study's objectives we used the descriptive analytics method and the questionnaire as an investigation instrument.

3.1 THE STUDY'S POPULATION

The study's population was formed from all principals and managers of the basic public school in the North part of the Jordan, starting from the first grade till the fourth, since 2012/2013, counting 2270, 732 are principals and 1538 are directress. The sample was chosen in an aleatory way and it counted 30 principals and 30 directress. After we have tested the validity and reliability

of the questionnaire, we used the Liker's dial of measurement and we noted as followed: 5 for the very motivated; 4 for enough motivated, 3 for moderate motivated; 2 for low motivated and 1 for a very low grade of motivation.

Table 1. Variable, category and sample size description

Variable	Category	Frequency
Gender	Masculin	30
	Feminin	30
Experience	Less than 5 years	11
	From 6 to 10 years	22
	More than 10 years	27
The environment	Urban	27
	Rural	23
Studies	Licence	9
	Master	32
	Doctorate	19
Total		60

We made questionnaires from six different domains as follows: the teachers performance, the school and material resources, social relationships, the social and economic ordinance of the family and the administrative domain. The questionnaire contains very difficult questions and questions that give to the person the possibility of formulating free answers'.

Also we gave seven questions for obtaining the determined answers' from the principals. The questionnaires were applied in the 2012/2013 in Jordan.

3.2 DATA ANALYSIS

We used (T-test) to determine the statistic significations' and the correlation coefficient for data processing and the demonstration of the theories.

3.3. THE INVESTIGATION'S LIMITS

We applied these investigations for the Jordanian primary education's principals in 2012/2013. We consider that this scientific measure has an important potential and it worth's to be investigated in the future regarding the fact that the primary education is the first step in the personality's development

of every pupil. The qualities and the school results of pupils influenced a consistent number of actors-teachers, principals, inspectors and parents in community.

The limits are divided in:

1. Temporal limits –we applied this research in 2012/2013.
2. Spatial limits –we applied this research in Jordan.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

For the realization of the first objective that refers to the identification of the relationship between motivation and the pupils achievement school from primary education, we calculated the arithmetical mean which is 198.7 standard deviation 15.23 and the hypothesis value which is 174. We also used (T-test) to notice if we can find significant differences and to know if this difference is real as follows Table 2.

We also conclude that their significant difference between means at the 0.05 level and at the 59 liberty grade and the difference is real Table 2. All of these prove that the principals who answers' to the questionnaires believed that the motivation influences the schools results of the pupils.

Table 2. The relationship between standard deviations, means, and T values

Individuals number	Arithmetical mean	Hypothesis value	Standard deviations	Final value (T)	
				calculated	tabular
60	198.70	174	15.23	12.56	2.000

We furthermore used the Pearson correlation's coefficient between grades to realized the second objective that regards to the identification of the correlation between motivation and the school achievement of the pupils from Jordanian primary education Table 3.

Table 3. Pearson correlation's coefficient between motivation and scores achievement of Jordanian pupils

The significance level (α)	The tabular value	The calculated value	The number of the sample
0.05	0.250	0.379	60

A relationship between the motivation grade and school results of a pupils sample from the primary stage was 0.379 which is bigger than the tabular value 0.250 and the significance level at 0.05 Table 3. All these data proved the

existence of a high level of correlation between motivation and school results at the studied sample.

CONCLUSION

The overall findings of this study revealed that the motivation factor is very important for the complete personal evolution of the person. In the Jordanian primary education we found some inclinations, skills of the pupil and we tried to build good beliefs, reasons according to his personal needs and the society's solicitations for a better world. Every pupil has the chance to become a stable and happy adult. For that why we need good motivated teachers. However the research is very important in building the relationship between pupils motivation and their school scores.

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THE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: PAST, PRESENT, AND PROMISE

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ABSTRACT

Diversity seen on ethnical, religious, socio-economical, geographical or historical considerations is a reality that has always accompanied the cultural evolution of mankind. Boosted in recent the decades, assumed politically, economically stimulated and socially necessary, intercultural education has made remarkable progress at the beginning of the third millennium. With its entry into the field of research, intercultural education has gradually gained more and more partisans (linguists, sociologists, psychologists, economists, politicians) currently being, ideologically, in the center of the educational systems of some traditional democratic states. Corroborating the contributions of many researchers in the field of education, concerned with defining, explaining and operationalization of the intercultural education aims, we propose in this article to value in a comprehensive theoretical synthesis, the main lines of research that have focused on the conceptualization of intercultural competence.

KEYWORDS: intercultural competence, conceptualization, education, interpretation models.

1. INTRODUCTION

Our society is becoming increasingly complex, migration, proliferation of contacts, loss of net borders, the development of information and communication technology are obvious realities. Countries are becoming increasingly interdependent among each other to obtain or maintain mutual benefits, the distinction between international and domestic is becoming more difficult to accomplish. Several major forces of change exert their influence on actual society. First, there is a tendency to reduce the birth rate in almost all countries. As a result, this leads to the second factor of change: society is becoming increasingly aging. Thirdly, the emigration-immigration waves led to a dramatic transformation of ethnic population in many countries. Diversity has become a major problem that cannot be ignored in the international arena. Fourth, there is a dramatic social change in family life, which gradually moved away from traditional values. These factors have a major impact on the education systems, education programs having to respond to these challenges [1].

This problem can be answered in several ways. For some, there is only one solution - assimilation. For others, a new perspective is offered -

multiculturalism. Replacing own cultural identity with that of the dominant group or affirmation of specific notes, in isolation, in the same horizon of space-time, avoiding possible contamination are, in this context, limited solutions. The most convenient solution lies in the intercultural attitudes that involve simultaneously the affirmation of each culture, with its specific rules, but also the openness to other cultures in the perspective of building a new common civilization.

Currently, a number of arguments support the reconsideration of the the importance of intercultural competence. These arguments are not motivated only socially but also economically and politically. To compete globally, as appreciates The Committee for Economic Development – CED [2], individuals should be equipped with knowledge and skills to mediate appropriate behavior in contacts with different cultures. Inevitably, cultural diversity manifests itself in the global market, making intercultural competence a skill highly valued. Lusting (2005) claims that the ability to relate with people and the ability to adapt to different environments, culturally and ethnically, describe an increasingly important competence both domestically and abroad [3].

With the multiplication of opportunities for employment abroad it has become increasingly pressing for the competitive international business to hire competent personnel from an intercultural perspective, as a manner of ensuring the future of the business. In a study of Japanese industry, poor intercultural communication competence of employees from other countries, led to a loss of 98% of the company's market share. In another study, conducted on 80 U.S. multinational companies found that between 10% and 20% of employees sent to another country have failed, essentially being impossible to effectively perform tasks service abroad [4]. This failure does not only financially harm the business, but it could also damage the public image of the company, resulting in longer-term damage.

In recent decades there has been a significant increase in people traveling abroad. According to the U.S. State Department, for example, over 13 million U.S. passports were issued in 2012 [5]. In 2011, 58.5 million people traveled abroad. Among those who traveled in 2011, 82% did so for leisure and 18% business. Comparing the over 58.5 million passengers in 2011 with the approximately 25.2 million passengers in 2001 [6], we find in a decade that the number of U.S. citizens traveling abroad has doubled.

While the objective necessity for the formation of active, informed citizens, responsible and able to interact in a multicultural context is generally accepted and the role of intercultural education in the formation of such people is almost universally recognized and well known, current data suggest a real difference between the rhetoric about the need for intercultural education, training intercultural competence and what is actually happening in practice. In this context, the concern for intercultural education has increased in the past

decade, becoming necessary to refer to a specific concept: intercultural competence.

At European level, intercultural education is considered a priority of educational reforms. This is seen as an instrument of social cohesion, based on the rights and responsibilities of citizens. Thus, one can say that intercultural education is a learning goal, conducting the educational system by a set of common values such as diversity, pluralism, human rights, social justice, welfare, solidarity [7], [8], [9], [10]. Under changes triggered by globalization – the globalization of politics, the internationalization and the trans-nationalization, the multilayered and diffused government of public authority [11], and the development directions implied by decisions taken at European level, intercultural competence will become a key in achieving teaching career and a basic component of exercising citizenship by the people who are in different cultural contexts.

Intercultural competence allows a person to work better when relations management is required in a multicultural space. In this respect, intercultural competence cannot be conceived only as a set of factors such as language, geographic origin and ethnicity; it includes elements of cognitive and affective attitudes that affect the very identity of the person, including behaviors and judgments, both in relation to itself and in terms of interaction with others. So look intercultural competence as a valuable and useful attribute of all who interact with people from different cultures.

Education's responsibility in this matter is essential, but also problematic because the concept of identity can be interpreted in two ways: asserting own identity, rediscovering own cultural roots and reinforcing group solidarity can be a positive and liberating experience for each individual, but if poorly understood, may impair or even thwart dialogue and contact.

Therefore, education should make individuals aware of their own roots, so they can have reference points to find a place in the world, but should support understanding and promote respect for other cultures as well as critically interpret own culture. Global interdependence of economic, scientific, cultural and political world, dictated by opening, under the pressure of free trade, which have as a result the opening of economic and cultural borders aided by the new information technologies becomes a reality [12].

2. THE CONCEPT OF COMPETENCE IN EDUCATION

The concept of competence is rooted in taylorism, faithfully reflecting, at that time, the principles of work organization in the industry. In this sense, the approach through skills entered the school system in North America by the late '60s. The approach through skills expanded in Canada, Australia and, in the late 80s, in Europe, in Switzerland, England and Belgium and then in most of

the other European countries [13]. A long time, the very concept of competence was one intensely criticized by the scientific literature. Its multiple meanings that surfaced from this dispute were both defended and criticized [14], [15], [16]. Despite these problems, any attempt to conceptualize competence is considered relevant if it takes account of the process of interaction management in ways likely to deliver individual, group or institutional effective and appropriate results in a given context. The concept of competence is polysemantic, with meanings that vary by area and the context in which it is used. Its meanings have varied and changed with the expansion of its use in psychology, in psycholinguistics, sociology and pedagogy.

Actual meaning of the term competence bears the imprint of psycholinguistic research with explicit reference to Noam Chomsky's contributions. The author makes a distinction between linguistic competence and linguistic performance. Linguistic competence means an internal capacity, which refers to the mental structures and mechanisms with real elements, manifest as well as latent, potential elements. Performance is an update of competence; it is competence in action [17]. According to Philippe Perrenoud, competence refers to the action, "is the ability to act in a class of similar situations" [18]. Competence is more than one capacity or skill that is related to a specific operation Competence is what allows global control of a class of complex situations by the mobilization of various resources - knowledge, practical skills, scheme operators, social representations, values and attitudes. In view of Jacques Tardif (2003) competence refers to a complex capacity of action that relies on the mobilization and effective use of a variety of resources. In this sense, a competence is not an algorithm, but a flexible capacity and adaptable to different contexts and problematic situations [19]. Four features are specific for competence [20]: (1) reference to tasks, to human activities or to solving problems in a specific context; (2) expected effectiveness from individuals or groups when those tasks, activities or problems are to be solved or executed; (3) the structured nature of processes to mobilize knowledge, skills and behavioral attitudes which ensure effectiveness; (4) the ability to make predictions about the effectiveness. Florin Voiculescu (2011) synthetically formulated the following definition: "competence is an individual or a collective ability attached to the possibility to mobilize and put into action in an effective manner in a given context a set of knowledge, skills and behavioral attitudes" [21].

Analyzing the structure of competence are two interrelated substructures: internal structure [22], which contains the components and relationships that make up the competence regarded as potentiality or availability of individual or group to act competently and external structure that contains the components and relationships that make up the frame where competence is manifested [23].

In terms of internal structure, competence is a functional system comprising three components: knowledge, skills and attitudes. In terms of external structure, we can distinguish three components: task, situation and context. The two structures are interrelated; they condition each other, so they must be treated in an integrative manner, forming what we can call an integrative model of competence.

3. THE CONCEPT OF COMPETENCE IN EDUCATION

From a historically point of view, the concept of intercultural competence arose from studies, covering the experiences of those who have worked abroad (eg. Peace Corp volunteers) in the 50's, 60's and early 70's. These studies have been driven by problems of communication and low collaboration between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. Many practitioners and scientists were concerned with strengthening and expanding the list of needed features for Peace Corp volunteers for success in peacekeeping missions in various parts of the world. Harris (1977) summed these features to a total of 24 variables which differentiated the success from failure among the volunteers involved in the peace mission in Tonga. Many of these features were, to some extent, specific for teaching career (covering content, teaching skills, and classroom management) and others are relevant to intercultural competence in general, including: knowledge of the host language, adaptability, responsibility, and cultural sensitivity, realism in objectives, inner strength, self-confidence, tolerance, perseverance, and initiative, reasoning ability, courtesy, cooperation ability or degree of maturity [24]. In the late 80s the research in intercultural competence has expanded including studies abroad, international business, intercultural training, expatriates who live outside the country and acculturation of immigrants [25]. Terms as intercultural effectiveness or intercultural adaptation can be found in literature since 1970 [26], [27]. The term intercultural competence has its origins in Geertz's semiotic vision and has established itself in the late '80s as an attempt to define new targets for language learning [28].

The concept of intercultural competence is also characterized by a certain ambiguity. In the specialized literature, researchers and theorists use another number of terms more or less close to the concept of intercultural competence: *transcultural communication, cross-cultural communication, international competence, cross-cultural awareness, global competitive intelligence, global competence, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural interaction, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural cooperation, cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, ethnorelativity, effective inter-group communication* [29].

We find that most of these concepts are, in fact, subsumed to the concept of intercultural competence, being only parts of it (transcultural communication, cross-cultural communication, cross-cultural awareness, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural interaction, intercultural sensitivity, intercultural cooperation, cultural sensitivity) or somewhat synonymous to the concept (global competitive intelligence, global competence, cultural competence).

3.1. Defining intercultural competence

In the broadest sense, intercultural competence by Alvino Fantini is defined as "a set of necessary skills to perform effectively and appropriately in interactions with others linguistically and culturally different from themselves" [30].

In terms of its function, "intercultural competence is the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment" [31] and implies "the ability to mobilize knowledge, methods of action, but also feelings, positive attitude in dealing with situations of intercultural interaction " [32].

The current sense of the term intercultural competence has exceeded the initial foreshadowed limited vision of linguists of 'intercultural communicative competence'. Intercultural competence is "a set of intercultural beliefs and behaviors specific advocating openness, empathy, communication, understanding and valuing logic of each culture, closer and further, for the collection and enforcement in its entirety differentiating otherness" [33]. In this definition we recognize the key components of competence: knowledge including the cognitive part of values "a set of beliefs" capabilities, skills, fundamental knowledge with functional values and expressed in conducts "specific intercultural conducts" and attitudes, based also on the uptake of values and transforming them into vectors of action "openness, empathy, communication, understanding and valuing logic of each culture, closer and further, for perceiving and respecting alteration in all its differentiating elements."

Summarizing previous definitions, intercultural competence requires proper management and effective interaction between people who in a lesser or greater degree, are different not only culturally, but also emotionally, cognitively and behaviorally.

3.2. Interpretation models of intercultural competence

Due to explanatory reasons, according to classification made by the Spitzberg and Changnon (2009), we divided the models and the theories of intercultural competence in the following five main categories [34]: structural

models, interaction models, development models, models of adaptation and causal models.

Structural models identify assumed components of intercultural competence, without specifying clearly the relationships between components. They most often take the form of lists of possible features and relevant features and abilities, which are supposed to feed the intercultural competence. Interaction models are models dedicated to conceptualizing intercultural competence and aim to explain behavior in relation to the interaction of people who are culturally different. These models share many of the characteristics of other types of models, but focus on reciprocity in interaction and on the existence of a common repertoire.

Development models place in their center the temporal dimension of intercultural interaction, indicating the stages of progress or maturation stages through which intercultural competence is meant to develop. These models too can share components of other categories, but emphasize the formation and development process of intercultural competence. Adaptive models tend to have two distinct characteristics: first, they are based on the presumption of the existence of several interacting actors, and secondly, they emphasize the interdependence between them, resulting in time their modeling and adjusting for each other. The emphasis is on modifying mutual actions, attitudes and understanding each other. Adapting in itself is considered the most appropriate unit of measure in assessing intercultural competence. Finally, causal models aim to capture the interdependence of the components of intercultural competence. They have generated hypotheses easier to implement and experimentally verify.

These five types of models are not mutually exclusive and, with no doubt, alternative classification criteria can be used. It best serves our approach, namely, identifying the defining characteristics of intercultural competence. We further present one representative model for each category.

3.2.1. Bennett's model of intercultural sensitivity development

Based on own research, Bennett (1998) developed a dynamic model that explains the individual response to the cultural differences and the evolution of these responses over time. Bennett defines intercultural sensitivity in terms of stages of personal growth [35]. The fundamental concept of the model is the differentiation. Differentiation refers to two phenomena: first - people see the same thing in a variety of ways and second - cultures differ from one another in how they retain their differentiating notes. In Bennett's view, cultures offer ways to interpret reality in a differently manner. Training and developing intercultural sensitivity is essentially learning to recognize and deal with the fundamental differences between cultures in terms of perceiving the world. Developing intercultural sensitivity is the following of two stages (see figure

no. 2) [36]: one that is ethno relative and an ethnocentric stage, each stage having three sub stages.

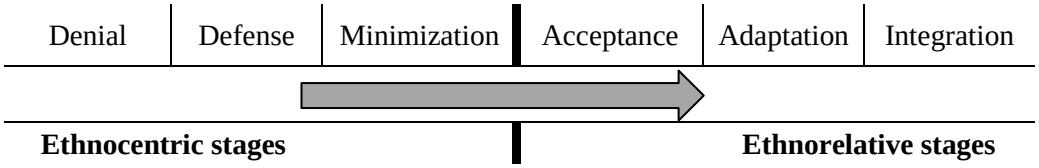

Figure 1. Developmental intercultural competence model (Bennett, 2007)

Ethnocentric stage involves the following steps:
- Denial phase: characterized by denying differences or psychological or physical barriers erected in the form of isolation or separation from other cultures;
- Defense phase: characterized by a tendency of defense by denigrating other cultures the tendency of manifestation of superiority towards them;
- Phase of minimizing differences: characterized by the surface recognition of cultural differences and consideration of cultures as fundamentally similar.

Ethnocentrism is understood as a stage in which the individual assumes that his vision on the world is essentially centered on reality. Denial is the base of an ethnocentric view on the world and it means that an individual denies that there is any difference, that there may be other worldviews. This denial may be based on isolation where there is little or no chance at all to deal with difference, so its existence cannot be experienced, or may be based on separation in which an individual or a group sets up barriers between people who are different for not confronting the difference. Separation, therefore, needs at least a moment of recognition of difference and is a development of this moment of isolation.

Etnorelativ stage involves the following three phases:
- Acceptance phase: characterized by acceptance and respect for cultural differences;
- Adaptation phase: characterized by cultural pluralism and empathy;
- Integration phase: characterized by integration into their own view of the world and life of other concepts specific to other cultures.

What is characteristic of the ethno relative stage is assuming that all cultures can only be understood reciprocally; one through another and individual behavior can only be understood within the cultural context. The difference in the ethno relative stage is not perceived any longer as a threat but as a challenge.

3.2.2. The model of coherence-cohesion of culture

Rathje (2007) emphasizes that the meeting of cultures produces unifying effects (coherence, cohesion). Subjects understand the differences within their

own culture in ways different from subjects coming from other cultures. The unique feature of culture is that it largely achieves unity through a mix of internal differences. Although adaptation involves interaction and integration in a culture, it does not produce degrees of uniformity and consistency among members (figure 3). „Intercultural competence is therefore best characterized by the transformation of intercultural interaction in culture itself" [37].

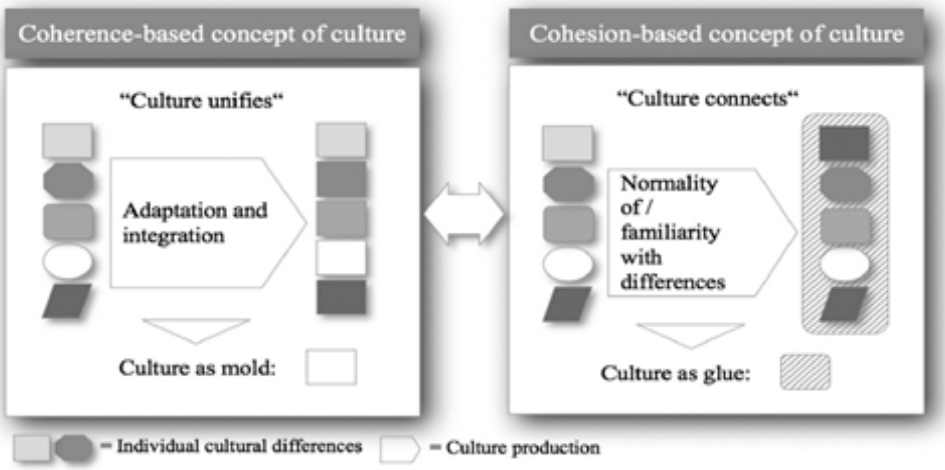

Figure 2. The model of coherence-cohesion of culture (Rathje, 2007)

Co-orientation appears in a competent intercultural interaction and is the result of a cultural environment that does not reflect the common cultural elements, but actually produces a common identity, this process is not likely to be regarded as one of assimilation.

3.2.3. Hamilton's structural model

Hamilton, Richardson, and Shuford (1998) have defined a list of components of intercultural competence distributed in three dimensions; each dimension is analyzed according to three coordinates [38]. Components can be found in figure 1.

Regarding the affective attitude dimension, it is expected that intercultural competent persons involved in the interaction to be aware of the value of their own group, the equality of groups, to understand and reject discrimination and ethnocentrism, to value risk taking and intercultural interactions. Affective attitudinal dimension complements the dimension of intercultural knowledge, which refers to understanding cultural identities, to cultural differences and similarities and to the knowledge of cultural influences on communication process.

Attitudes
Awareness: Values…
- Own group;
- Group equality.

Understanding: Devalues...
- Discrimination;
- Ethnocentric assumptions.

Appreciation: Values...
- Risk taking;
- Life enhancing role of cross-cultural interactions.

Knowledge
Awareness: Knowledge of…
- Self as it relates to cultural identity;
- Similarities and differences across cultures.

Understanding: Knowledge of…
- Oppressions;
- Intersecting oppressions (race, gender, class, religion, etc.)

Appreciation: Knowledge of…
- Elements involved in social change;
- Effects of cultural differences on communication.

Skills
Awareness: Ability to...
- Engage in self-reflection;
- Identify and articulate cultural similarities and differences;

Understanding: Ability to...
- Take multiple perspectives;
- Understand differences in multiple contexts;

Appreciation: Ability to...
- Challenge discriminatory acts;
- Communicate cross-culturally.

Figure 3. Components of intercultural competence (Hamilton et al, 1998)

A series of abilities complete the profile of an intercultural competent person: the capacity for self-reflection, the ability to identify cultural similarities and differences, the ability to analyze a phenomenon from multiple perspectives, the ability to combat acts of discrimination and intercultural communication skills.

3.2.4. Processual model of intercultural competence

Deardorff (2006), using the grounded theory method, has also developed a process model that suggests the existence of facility attitudes, which support the formation of intercultural competence (respect, openness and curiosity). Motivation is also optimized through knowledge (awareness of own culture, cultural knowledge in depth, sociolinguistic awareness) and individual skills (listening, observing, measuring, analyzing, interpreting, networking).

Motivation, knowledge and skills mediate internal changes increasing empathy and adaptability (figure 5). These internal changes precede external and internal results [39].

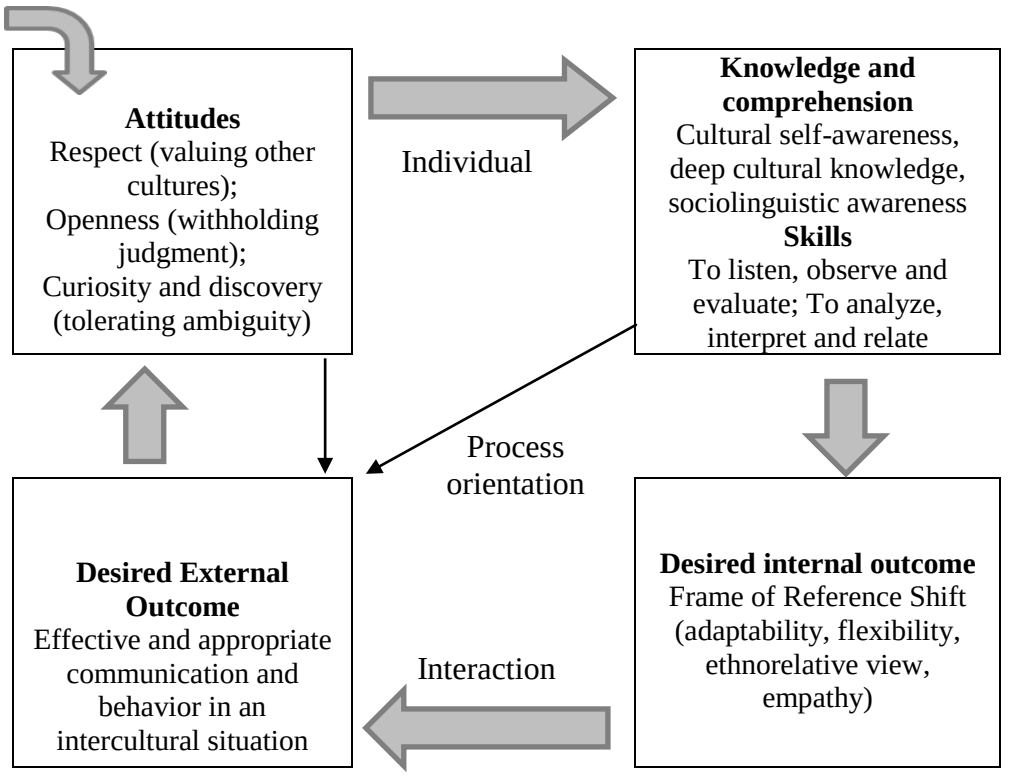

Figure 4. The process model of intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006)

3.2.5. Attitude acculturation model

In the process of adaptation there is a tension between those involved in the interaction. The authors present a typology of four possible forms of acculturation (figure 4) [40].

		Is maintenance of cultural identity and characteristics valued?	
		Yes	No
		Society of origin	
Is maintenance of relationships with other groups valued?	Yes	**Integration**	**Assimilation**
	No	**Separation/ Segregation**	**Marginalization**
	Host society		

Figure 5. Attitude acculturation model (Berry et al, 1989)

Cultural assimilation occurs when an individual welcomes absorption of own identity in the host culture, the individual defines himself by values of the host culture. Integration, however, accepts the possibility of multicultural groups to operate separately. Members composing them retain their identity, but recognize the importance of supporting multicultural group. When a person has an increased interest towards other cultural groups, combined with a low interest on maintaining their own group membership, there may occur imposed or voluntary separation. When there is little interest in adopting the values of another culture or values of their own culture, the person may experience feelings of marginalization.

4. A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE MODELS

Although most presented models and theories are relatively recent, their joint note is the prevailing descriptive character. All have operationalized intercultural competence, but few models have been accompanied by the development of a useful instrument of assessment of intercultural competence.

4.1. Strengths and weaknesses

We are exploring further, in sequence and critically, the five categories of models. Analyzed theories and models have a number of common elements (including motivation, knowledge, skills, and context) and some private ones. We reaffirm once again that their division was made in a more explanatory purpose with the reference to individual elements. The features of models that would justify them in another classification and in another category are not few.

Structural models have the advantage of having indicated the appropriate scope and the content of a theory, which has as an aim intercultural competence should incorporate them. These models can be considered to be weak in terms of their ability to establish and interpret connections between components [34]. Another one of their weakness results in the poor concern of the authors to define their own central concept, the intercultural competence. In other words, it is not clear what contributes to the development of intercultural competence and which results are expected to occur to a person considered intercultural competent. It is unclear how this competency can be assessed.

Some of the shortcomings of the first category of models have been removed from the so-called interaction models. Intercultural competence is understood, in these models, in terms of an ongoing relationship rather than as a breakthrough achievement. This approach illustrates the importance of a missing element in the structural models - time. The major advantage of this class of models is that they have focused on process and interactions that occur between representatives of different cultures.

Models of development continue the idea of process and draw attention to the evolving nature of interactions and relationships. The social systems, institutional relations, social and personal, are procedural and change over time. To the extent that different social systems reflect similar types of changes over time and in certain contexts, the theory might be more able to represent such changes, like Piaget, in the form of steps that predict and build upon each other [34]. However, development models tend to be more convincing in terms of intercultural training and development stages, but weaker in specifying traits and interpersonal skills able to facilitate or moderate the course of such developments [34]. The last category of models focuses on the basic phenomenon that occurs in intercultural interaction - adaptation. The capacity of adaptation is fundamental for the development of intercultural competence. Adjustment models however raise a number of theoretical problems. According to Spitzberg (1993), adapting in itself is a questionable criterion for assessing intercultural competence. The author points out that most adaptation models still need to deepen types of mutual accommodation, needed in various stages of development of intercultural competence [41]. To a large extent, causality underlies all explanations. Causal models posit explicit assumptions regarding the connections between the components of intercultural competence. Precisely this reveals one of the weaknesses of these models. To the extent that causal relationships form too many loops, bidirectional feed-backs, they reduce the value of the theory in terms of the weak possibility of hypothesis testing and verification of falseness hypothesis.

4.2. Discussion on actual theories and models of intercultural competence

A sensitive issue highlighted by these models, which has to be clarified, still remains the status of motivation, knowledge, attitudes and skills. More specifically, how they should be treated separately or as a whole. The affective-motivational dimension remains poorly theorized.

There is little concern on emphasizing the psychological and emotional needs of people interacting in a multicultural context. Besides "traumatic effects of culture shock" or "anxiety", people are seen as rational beings par excellence. Thus, motivation tends to have a too cognitive nature; even anxiety is often seen as a result of rational processing of information. Theories of personality, affectivity theories, theories of information processing, can complement current models of interpretation of intercultural competence.

Another problem is the conceptual primitive nature of theoretical constructs [34]. For example, adaptability. It appears as a central element, implicitly or explicitly, in almost all models of conceptualizing intercultural competence. Adaptability was never validly measured, in part because the concept was not operationalized very carefully. Many of the sub components of

intercultural competence have the same status. Intercultural sensitivity, empathy, curiosity, multiple vision, the consciousness of own culture and openness to new are also examples of concepts that have not been operationalized and whose validity has not been demonstrated.

A third issue brought before by the critics refers to the potential ethnocentric character of the theories and models proposed [34]. Most of these presented models have appeared in Western literature, speaker of English. We have great doubt that today, a model that has verified its applicability in Anglo-Saxon areal, will be equally useful in the Eastern European or Eurasian areal. Future research should focus with priority on generalizing these models.

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OUTDOOR LEARNING IN-SERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS A CASE STUDY FROM PRATO

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Abstract

Children today spend significantly less time playing outdoors than their parents did. Therefore, great attention must be paid by professionals to face this educational challenge, especially within early childhood scholastic contexts. That is a particular task for Outdoor Education (OE), a field of practice and research traditionally associated with personal and social development, and environmental education. The field has rich histories in some European countries (e.g. UK, Scandinavian nations, Germany), but nowadays is also more common in Italy, from where this Case Study comes. The aim for this study was to reinforce teachers' awareness about how best to use the outdoors at school, to construct a supportive context for activities, to extend their classrooms into the school grounds and local neighbourhood. Our article aims to enable educators to understand also the philosophical underpinnings of an educational model based on experiential Outdoor Learning (OL) in authentic contexts, which can be adopted and adapted by educators across Europe.

KEYWORDS: Outdoor Learning, Active Training, Case Study, Experiential Approach.

1. Introduction

When back in the city because summer holiday is over, many children live a drastic reduction of physical movement, because games like chasing, climbing, seeking and hiding, are more difficult within an urban contest. It's a shame, because spontaneous games play an important role in child development, such as the physiological evolution of nerve plots and cerebral cortex. They stimulate motor skills, and further both cognitive and emotional/affective processes (NICE, 2008).

Starting from the very beginning of life, a baby's movements become gradually more and more precise, so she/he needs practice and therefore, of

course, concrete opportunities for exercise with her/his body. Probably, we might consider that embodiment is the key developing aspect, reinforced perhaps by enjoyment (White, 2011, p. 2). Therefore, in planning daily outdoor routines in kindergartens it is important to allow room for motor games and sensory activities, in particular for those spontaneous activities that children are keen to create and do, if they have space and time available enough.

Applying an educational model based on embodiment, play and games, a multi-sensory and experiential approach, learning by doing and so on, in our In-Service Teacher Training we did as much active experience as we could, followed by debriefing (Greenway, 1993), a progressive method that allowed us to collect a lot of interesting feed-back, so that now it's possible to consider them data to present, discuss and share. This description process is consistent with the method called *Triangolation* by Stake (1995, p. 107), who claims it's one of the main useful dimensions in Case Study, his commonly known research design. Triangulation is able to make sharp connections on several issues, between subjects who are in a relationship, such as: trainers, trainees and children (and their parents) – in our case, in background there was also a powerful relation with the out-of-doors, of course...

1.1. Outdoor Education in Theory: an Active Framework

The "grandfather" of active education is John Dewey, mainly thanks to his *Learning by Doing* concept, which underpins the basic theoretical assumptions of OE as well. Many other influential authors had given their legacy to OE (Joyce, 2012), e. g. Jean Jacques Rousseau for his ideal of a "natural" place for learning far from the civilized world, where a child can freely express and develop his original capability; then there was Friedrich Froebel who created the Kindergarten, following the path of his master Pestalozzi, in the UK Margaret McMillan (1919) adopted this new approach at the beginning of XIX Century with her *Nursery School* model.

Therefore OE has become a crucial point of social policies in Northern Europe, focused more and more on the design of specific interventions for individual and social well-being. In recent years, a particular focus on respect for nature and the environment is spreading, and despite the extended and increasingly massive urbanization, a part of society considers it important to devote attention to and to use the environment as an educational resources.

Moreover, OE aims to consider learning as an action-oriented process, emphasizing both development and knowledge of an active subject; anyway, a clear understanding of the term OE is more than an exercise in semantic: a proper definition "it can help uncover some of the deepest and most longstanding problems with education itself" (Quay, Seaman, 2013, p. 1). The following can be considered a synthetic and useful definition for our purposes: "*Outdoor education is a direct, simple method of learning that extends the*

curriculum out-of-doors for the purpose of learning. It is based on the discovery approach to learning and it appeals to the use of the senses – audio, visual, taste, touch and smell – for observation and perception" (Lewis, 1975, p. 9).

Anyway, two essential OE features are *experiential learning* and *place-based* approach, and a coherence between these processes both inside and outside. Experience consists not only in a direct sensory exposition, but rather in a cycle where also reflection plays an outstanding role. It takes into account the aesthetic and affective dimensions, not only the logical and cognitive ones ("Aesthetic experience is where we live – it is the way we are *being* a person, *here* and *now;* Quay, Seaman, 2013, p. 82). And so, it's all about not merely doing activities, knowing subjects and being occupied, but about organizing children's life, especially school life, as a habitat in which to learn from direct experience. It is about following place-based learning instead of a "no-matter-place" in which to learn abstract lessons with a remote reference to possible living to be done in the future.

To summarize this first part, OE is based on two main approaches:

1. Learning methods that take place as the interface between experience and reflection, based on actual experiences in real-life situations;
2. An Interdisciplinary conceptualization which implies, among other things:

a. learning spaces extended beyond the classroom and including natural environment and cultural heritage;

b. emphasis on the relationship between sensory experience and knowledge, giving great importance to where they take place.

Dahlgren & Szczepanski (1998, p. 26) argue that "*reflection is needed to transform experience into knowledge. The distinctive character and identity of OE is based on the potential of awareness education, which may qualify for significant learning. The distinctive character of Outdoor Education is that of a sensory - experiential approach to the psychological development of the child and his (sic) learning*".

1.2 Description of an Outdoor Learning Training for Crèche and Nursery School Teachers

In recent years, OL has become the subject of research which demonstrates the positive effects of the practices of teaching methodology in educational contexts, and the psycho- physical, emotional and cognitive development of the child. Through sensory and experiential learning, it is shown that the OL has positive effects on motor and language skills, leadership, problem-solving, self and contextual awareness, and collaborative attitudes (Higgins, Nicol, 2002).

Regular use of playground and garden, day-after-day and through concrete participation, is the most suitable way for a preschool child to develop

her/his intelligence, to answer the needs of physical engagement; and one of the best ways available for teachers to understand and learn the activity needs of touching, moving, resting, solving problems and being occupied in one's own project, set off by internal curiosity and not by follow external instructions. Playing outdoors a child can also meet other children and do with them those group games which are almost impossible to do indoors, so that children become aware of both their capabilities and limitations, so that they learn to deal with unexpected issues and related emotions, such as sense of fear, and sometimes to overcome them. They can become more independent and capable, implementing their sense of freedom. Finally, we must consider that Italy is one of the western countries with the highest percentage of overweight and obese children, with all the consequences which that entails physically and psychologically, not only in childhood but also, for many of them, in adolescence and adulthood.

The spaces for outdoor games and activities must be free of danger, but in order to raise children interests it's also necessary that they aren't dull and flat. So it's important to create a challenging external environment that fosters contact with both natural and socio-cultural contexts. School playgrounds, gardens or courtyards represent good resources for child development and a real place-based learning, along with the opportunity to explore them.

1.3 Explore and Reflect

Our training course involved two groups of In-Service teachers, about 40 people in total, with whom we could work in an active way, e. g. take them outside or give them a "cue" such as pictures to reflect upon, and so on. Here we can present a brief description of that process, reporting three activities and the results of consequent debriefing, as Case study, a view that "draws from naturalistic, holistic, ethnographic, phenomenological, and biographic research methods." (Stake, 1995; p. VI).

1.3.1 Activity Number One: "Recreation"

From the famous Italian book *Cuore* (1886), we read the description which the author De Amicis makes about "recreation" in a nursery school. A situation of confusion and randomness, in which the role of the adult is indeed only that of supervisor. Today that is still the case in many schools, and it wastes a great educational resource. We must overcome the dichotomy between traditional teaching and recess. Education is at all times. Outdoor life should not be seen as a moment of disengagement (both for children and for adults). Let us ask ourselves how to transform the garden from the "letting off steam place" into an "educational garden." Outdoors, what should be the role of the educator?

Crèche and nursery school outdoor areas (garden, courtyard, terrace...) border on realities which differ from the playground itself: roads, fields, buildings...

Whatever that reality is, it inevitably arouses the curiosity of the children. In training, the teachers were divided into small groups and invited to tell each other what lies beyond the fence of their services, and, particularly, about how the children interact with that reality. The observations recounted later to the large group reveal an environment rich in micro stories, such as:
- A busy road where there are passers-by; to attract their attention, the children throw a ball out of the fence, it was picked up and thrown back in …;
- One hears the noise of a passing helicopter;
- A lady hangs out laundry on a near terrace;
- A huge cleaning machine cleans the street;
- Big crows land in the field.
- One hears the approaching engines of mowing machines coming to cut the playground grass. Some children are afraid and cry. One smells the fragrance of freshly cut grass. When the job is finished, the machines leaves the garden and the children wave goodbye - even those who were crying;
- Some pigeons were in the garden, they fly away frightened by children's arrival. A child who still doesn't speak, indicates a distant balcony barely visible behind a treetop. The teacher looks where the child is indicating but doesn't see anything unusual. The child insists. Finally the teacher understands what the child is trying to say": one of the pigeons is on a balcony behind the tree!

In conclusion, the educator can play an outstanding role in the garden, paying attention to pupils' curiosity and activities. It's necessary to abandon the old habit of chatting with colleagues, in order to be responsible for one's own small group (an attitude well described through the Italian expression: "to know one's own chicks"). It is necessary to accompany children in their explorations, providing them with the right word at the right time (cranes, pruning trees, helicopter ...). It is necessary to sensitize the children toward the animals which inhabit the garden (don't crush the ladybug ...). It is necessary to set limits (now stop throwing the ball into street, it could end up under a car...) .

1.3.2. Activity Number Two: What nature has to offer.

What does nature offer in your playground? We compile a long list (trees, plants, animals...), to work with and to discuss:
- Evergreen and deciduous trees -leaves to be collected;
- Protruding roots of large trees – to climb up and down, go around, sit on...;
- Trees with low branches - become shelters;
- Fruit trees such as pear, plum, fig, apple – give fruit to make jam, to take home...;
- Trellis, flowers (rose, wisteria...) - to pick ?;
- Aromatic plants both in the ground and in pots, rosemary, sage, thyme - each family has contributed one;
- Lawn with crabgrass, chicory, clover, dandelion, little asters …;

- Animals: birds, lizards , ants, earthworms , spiders , snails, slugs...;
- Hilly terrain, solid ground, mud, puddles, sticks, leaves, pine needles, pebbles, stones, rainwater...

We look at a Francesco Tonucci cartoon (1995): Parents: "This Christmas we want to realize your dream. Tell us which toys you want. "Daughter : "Puddles and clay!"

Thinking about present day commercial toys, it seems inconceivable that children can play at “no cost ", and yet earth and water have always been “universal toys”, free and easily available. From the apocryphal gospels we know that even baby Jesus played with these elements almost 2000 years ago! We might ask our selves: in crèches and nursery schools, are puddles resources or problems? We discussed it in small groups, starting with a real episode (described in "La pozzanghera”; Ritscher, 2013). We concluded the following:
- There needs to be a shared approach between colleagues, and between teachers and helpers;
- We must help families understand the importance of playing with earth, water, mud; the importance of getting dirty and then clean again; the importance of learning how to take off one’s shoes, put on boots and vice versa; and also, the importance of a small daily habit, that of using the doormat, as a contribution to keeping indoor floors clean (it part of being a responsible citizen).

1.3.3 "There is no bad weather , there are only badly dressed people "

It 's quite difficult to prepare small children to go out in the garden, and equally difficult to undress them when they return. Are clothes a problem or a resource? The answer depends very much on how the situation is organized. When the weather is not "nice", it is important to organize all the practical details. Beginning with rubber boots: each child must have his own boots, which are kept in a definite place, near the door leading to the garden. Upon returning indoors if the boots are wet inside, they have to be dried in the sun, or on a radiator, or with a hair dryer. If it's cold, it is best to keep boots indoors. The adults, too, must wear their rubber boots.

To go out in the rain is a special activity that requires particular organization
- Small umbrellas or hooded waterproof capes;
- A drying rack for any wet clothing;
- Small groups at a time;
- To avoid dirtying the indoor floor, take boots off before entering;
- Share the project among all colleagues;
- Share also with families.

One very important educational goal is to acquire independence in dressing. Adults (teacher, helpers, parents) should does not replace the child’s efforts, but

accompany her/him ("Help me to do it by myself " is the Montessori motto to bear in mind). They are "small" achievements that nourish self-esteem ("I've done it", "I know how to do it"). We must remind parents that at school, children's clothes must be practical, self-manageable, and one must allow them to get dirty. Brand names and fashion are unimportant!

1.4 Conclusions

Using small group structure, active involvement, case studies descriptions and discussion, allow effective reflective thinking for In-Service teacher training. We did so to introduce an OL pragmatic approach, based on some key assumptions:

- Reflect on the school setting, e. g. how spaces, objects and the whole organization are managed. This allows us to rethink it with stronger educational intention, in order to plan what was not there before;
- An OL approach in crèche and nursery school needs a pedagogical reflexivity to be shared within a working group capable of expressing freely any concern: anxiety, but also safety and capabilities.
- Training must help educators to guarantee children's personal growth through a kind of paradoxical journey between two rights: to risk and to be sure. Educating children to live outdoors, requires the ability to wait and not anticipate child action. OL is consistent with a slow school approach.
- We need to observe carefully what the child wants to tell us with words, gestures, postures, facial expression, with entire body communication. An educator able to observe, to be a reassuring presence for children, encouraging and supporting both with sight and voice, assures opportunity to reach "small but huge" discoveries.

Clearly, it emerges that teachers perceive positively the usefulness and impact of training in OL, as it tends to improve significantly the quality of relationship between themselves, children, families and the out-of-doors settings. Reflecting in small groups upon the educator's role in the garden leads to a set of basic guidelines:

- Take the children outdoors in small groups with their respective educator (who "knows her chicks");
- Avoid a dispersive setting in garden, create different centers of interest;
- Interact, participate with discretion, but without replacing the children's own initiatives (it's important to distinguish between education and entertainment);
- Stimulate and sustain children curiosity;
- Encourage the discovery of natural elements (also by eliminating the preponderant use of tricycles…);
- Create safe conditions: instead of standing up to watch, sit down (preferably on a bench) in a strategic point;
- Share your project with families.

OL is particularly interesting as an educational approach because it simultaneously involves reflectivity and pragmatic points. It leads a community towards a project growing not only in theory, but linking abstract reflections and practice actions. In conclusion, it fosters social and personal well-being.

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ENTREPRENEURIAL COMPETENCES TRAINING THROUGH PEDAGOGY OF PRIMARY AND PRESCHOOL SPECIALIZATION'S CURRICULUM - ANALYSES AND DIRECTIONS OF DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Students' entrepreneurial skills training from Primary and Preschool Pedagogy specialization is a strategic direction for curriculum development in the process of initial training, justified by the results of substantial research in the field of European curriculum. With reference to this premise, and on some analysis on the correlation between the desirable skills of graduates, necessary to facilitate entrepreneurial learning and curriculum for initial training process, we appreciated the legitimacy and desirability of a research study on the development of entrepreneurship education curriculum in the Primary and Preschool Pedagogy specialization's students. The article is structured in three dimensions: a) the theoretical foundation with reference to specific entrepreneurial skills training in professionalizing by initial undergraduate studies, and deepen the training by graduating Masters programs in science education; b) the research part, focused on presenting the process and the results of a study analyzing the views and curricular preferences of subjects (students, University didactic staff, primary and preschool teachers); c) assertion of several curriculum development directions, supported theoretically in agreement with the results of research and according to their methodological concepts. Conclusions of the article converge to the idea of focus on curricular re-dimensioning on desirable entrepreneurial competences components and on their relevance for facilitating entrepreneurial learning in preschool and early childhood education.

KEYWORDS: entreprenurial competences, initial professionalization curriculum, entrepreneurial learning in preschool and early childhood education, metacognitive strategies in entrepreneurship education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The subject regarding entrepreneurial competences represents an essential component of the European citizen's desirable profile, formed in the spirit of European conscience's key values. The documents of European educational policies promote social and procedural values of the civic spirit and entrepreneurship regarding the plan of general finalities, as well as the plan of

the curriculum concerning educational system's levels or adults' training programs.

A comparative analysis of integrating civic and entrepreneurial competences with the primary education curriculum as part of the European Union, accomplished by the European Commission, reveals different curricular structures and approach levels. According to the European Commission's report – *Developing key competences as part of European schools: political challenges and opportunities*, as far as the Romanian curriculum is regarded, the spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship is being poorly represented, with concern to the curricular structures taken into account regarding the introduction of transverse competences: the
cross-curricular level, integration as part of school disciplines, through separate disciplines [1]. Given this finding, education specialists and decision factors are concerned with identifying and promoting curricular solutions in order to introduce entrepreneurial competences especially as part of the primary education curriculum. Considering the introduction of transverse competences at this level, the process of curricular organization implies:

- re-dimensioning the national curriculum with regard to these categories of
competences, by introducing distinct disciplines or structures integrated as part of the actual disciplines;
- increasing the percentage of cross-curricular homework as part of the nucleus
curriculum or the one at the school's decision.

A basic premise of the relation between these reorganizations of the curriculum and the results expected as part of the entrepreneurial education, is represented by teachers' specific and methodological competences with regard to planning and managing the implementation of the curricular structures, which promote the spirit of initiative and entrepreneurship. For these reasons, we appreciate the legitimacy and opportunity of approaches concerning the curricular re-dimensions of the didactic career's training process, with regard to developing the entrepreneurial competences as part of the specialization Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education – bachelor's degree cycle, as well as part of master programs, which provide a thoroughgoing study or the professionalization in accordance with European models.

The basic components of initiative and entrepreneurship as key competences, relevant for the subject approached, are as follows [2]: a) identifying opportunities capitalized as part of activities with personal and professional purposes; b) properly managing an anticipative project (including the capacities and abilities of group planning, organizing and managing, of analysis, communication and evaluation); c) individual efficient activity, collaboration and team based; d) efficiently representing and negotiating; e)

assessing and ascertaining strengths and weaknesses; f) evaluating and approaching possible risks from a managerial point of view.

As part of the academic curriculum, the entrepreneurial education consists "in acquiring a system of knowledge, cognitive capacities, skills, entrepreneurial abilities and attitudes, in order to facilitate students the identification of some private companies opportunities, strategic planning and private initiatives management" [3]. As part of the socio-human field and especially as part of the educational sciences field, personal and professional initiatives are being identified and outlined through reflexivity, research and strategic planning, and approached from a managerial point of view through social and educational projects and programs.

Given these premises, we have elaborated the hypothesis of the empirical research, which is a particular one as part of the investigative approach including our micro research:

If the curricular development directions aim disciplines with curricular structures in order to emphasize elements of the entrepreneurial competences and training strategies in order to facilitate the entrepreneurial education, then these can be capitalized by subjects and represent premises of a curricular framework of the initial training.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. Objective

The purposes of the empirical investigation are:

1. Analyzing subjects' curricular conceptions and preferences, regarding the curricular development's directions, with concern to the development of entrepreneurial competences of future teachers as part of the primary and pre-school education.
2. Developing some strategic directions in order to develop the curriculum of the programs of initial training as part of the specialization Pedagogy of the primary and pre-school education.

2.2. The sample of subjects

The subjects of the research have been selected based on the representation criterion of the subjects involved as part of the process of initial training and in accordance with the equality of chances principle and the non-discriminatory treatment, with regard to gender and age variables. Given these, the sample of 110 subjects of the empirical research has the following structure:

- 20 teachers as part of the University education;
- 40 persons belonging to the didactic staff teaching as part of primary and pre-school education in school units all over Gorj and Dolj counties;

- 50 students attending the specialization Pedagogy of the primary and pre-school education, as part of University of Craiova.

2.3. Instrument

The opinion questionnaire represents the basic tool as part of the empirical investigation. The tool has been developed based on two questionnaires we have elaborated and applied as part of two researches that had a methodological character, too, on the topic of entrepreneurial competences as part of the socio-human field and transverse competences as part of the school curriculum.

The questionnaire has been applied to each category of the sample of subjects, this fact enabling us to accomplish comparative analyses between answers. The structure of the questionnaire reflects the operational character of the variables of the micro research's hypothesis: a) entrepreneurial competences elements, relevant with regard to the specialization Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education (3-7 items); b) academic disciplines relevant in order to develop students' entrepreneurial competences (8-14 items); b) adequate and flexible training strategies, which facilitate entrepreneurial education (15-19 items).

3. RESULTS AND DATA ANALYSIS

The significant results have been selected from subjects' favorable opinions, with the highest percentage of the high assessment degree. These results have been distributed on the variables previously mentioned, resulting multiple categories of answers:

- The structural elements of students' entrepreneurial competences are:

1) the procedural knowledge regarding the educational marketing; 2) the capacity of analyzing

the opportunity and feasibility of some socio-educational programs, approached as part of educational niche strategies; 4) the adequate management of educational programs; 5) the *feedforward* capacity, which "consists in monitoring the processes a) to secure the achievement of the set objectives, b) to eliminate those problems that could impede the operation of the system (before they occur) and c) for the prevention of risks and vulnerabilities that would affect the achievement of goals" [4].

Table 1. Percentage data regarding the structural elements of the entrepreneurial competences

Groups / Criteria	*University didactic staff*	*Primary and preschool teachers*	*Students*
Criterion no.1	60%	52,50%	62%
Criterion no.2	75%	62,50%	74%
Criterion no.3	80%	72,50%	82%
Criterion no.4	65%	57,50%	56%

As far as students are concerned, the academic disciplines whose curricular structure are based on entrepreneurial education, as part of the actual education plan or that might be introduced, are:
with regard to the Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education bachelor's degree program: 1) Entrepreneurial education; 2) Information and communication technologies; 3) Sociology of education; 4) Educational management.

Table 2. The percentage distribution of subjects' curricular preferences, with respect to the academic disciplines as part of the Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education bachelor's degree program

Groups / Criteria	*University didactic staff*	*Primary and preschool teachers*	*Students*
Criterion no.1	85%	77,50%	76%
Criterion no.2	65%	62,50%	72%
Criterion no.3	55%	52,50%	62%
Criterion no.4	70%	60%	68%

a) with regard to master programs in the field of Educational sciences: 1) Educational marketing; 2) Management of educational projects; 3) Planning and management of the educational curriculum; 4) Management of the didactic career; 5) Management of the human resources.

Table 3. The percentage distribution of subjects curricular preferences, with respect to the academic disciplines as part of master programs in the field of Educational sciences

Groups / Criteria	*University didactic staff*	*Primary and preschool teachers*	*Students*
Criterion no.1	65%	57,50%	66%
Criterion no.2	85%	77,50%	78%
Criterion no.3	85%	75%	74%
Criterion no.4	70%	75%	60%
Criterion no. 5	65%	72,50%	76%

The training strategies that facilitate the entrepreneurial education and confirmation of performances in the field of entrepreneurship, specific to the specialization curriculum and in accordance with psycho-social characteristics of students attending Educational sciences and their training needs, are: 1) strategies and methods specific to the management of educational projects: the context analysis, the relevancy analysis, the managerial approach of the project's cycle, the benchmarking method [3]; 2) modern strategies, specific to the programs and activities of professional and entrepreneurial training: "strategies of training focused on student, interactive strategies, strategies of constructivist training, methods and techniques of online teaching and communication, methods of teaching through action, methods of mentoring " (Johnson, W., Ridley, C., 2004, Boyer, N., 2003, Sava, 2007, Wilson şi Lowry, 2000, apud [5] ; 3) metacognitive strategies, focused on monitoring and improving the implementation of personal projects of professional development; 4) methods and tools of social and educational research: applying opinion and need questionnaires to beneficiaries of educational programs, focus-groups, experimental investigation of some innovative educational products.

Table 4. Percentage data regarding subjects' opinions with respect to training strategies focused on developing entrepreneurial competences of students attending educational sciences

Groups / Criteria	*University didactic staff*	*Primary and preschool teachers*	*Students*
Criterion no.1	75%	52,50%	78%
Criterion no.2	85%	77.50%	74 %
Criterion no.3	80%	47,50%	74%
Criterion no.4	80%	72,50%	68%

The results of the research confirm subjects' methodological opinions in accordance with the modern strategies promoted as part of University education and the curricular development tendencies as part of Educational sciences. The comparative analysis of the percentage data between the categories of subjects, reveal significant differences between answers with respect to two cases, as far as the training strategies are concerned:

- regarding the variable *metacognitive strategies, focused on monitoring and improving*

the implementation of personal projects of professional development; we correlate the assessment to a larger extent of the University didactic staff and students with approaching the metacognition issue especially as part of the academic environment;

- regarding the variable *strategies and methods specific to the management of educational*

projects, we also notice a greater experience of University teachers and students.

The needs of professional training mentioned by students and teachers as part of the primary and pre-school education, confirm the acknowledgement of the necessity in order to personally and professionally develop, with regard to developing entrepreneurial competences. Integrating values, principles and methodology of entrepreneurial education as part of the professional culture, represents the basic premise in order to achieve success as far as the entrepreneurial education as part of primary and early education is concerned.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results achieved and their significance confirm the hypothesis of the empirical research. Thus, the curricular development directions of the entrepreneurial education, capitalized by subjects, may represent premises of a curricular framework in order to train for a didactic career as part of the primary education, with respect to the bachelor's degree and master programs. The curricular variables developed and analyzed confirm the results of a previous personal research, on the topic of entrepreneurial education of students attending the socio-human field, which details them as part of the specialization Pedagogy of primary and pre-school education. The curricular re-dimensioning according to these directions will generate good educational programs and practices concerning teachers' training in order to provide the success of entrepreneurial education among pre-school and younger children.

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CHILDHOOD POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION. EUROPEAN APPROACHES

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ABSTRACT

Poverty is one of the oldest and unresolved issues in the history of the welfare state. One of the poverty outcomes may be social exclusion, modern concept and object of social policy goal of the European Union, therefore is important to reveal poverty or social exclusion rate by age. Childhood poverty and social exclusion have a significant impact on child development. Romania is one of the countries with high rates for the main indicators on social exclusion of all age groups, including younger ones. Policies developed by OMC aim to create opportunities for poor or socially excluded children.

KEYWORDS: child development, european policy, poverty, social exclusion.

1. INTRODUCTORY NOTES

The majority of social policies define poverty as either a lack of income or an insufficiency of consumption. Measuring poverty is of paramount importance for social policy design. The number of poor people in a country bears a double significance, both as a wealth level indicator and a starting point for social policy intervention objective definition. The various poverty levels give particular definitions for various types of poverty. The methods for determining poverty type thresholds are crucial and because of that, they are a constant source of debate and undergo frequent changes. The results obtained often become warning signs and create intervention pressures on governments.

A broader concept than poverty is that of *social exclusion* because it expresses not just the lack of material means, but also the difficulty of being connected to social networks. It signifies in other words not just a deficit of income or of consumption, but also of participation to everyday life or to social activities [1].

Like poverty, social exclusion is a multi-dimensional phenomenon. One work that depicts the multitude of these dimensions in the field literature is that of Kate Morris, Marian Barnes and Paul Mason (2009). Aside from the material dimension, they mention the spatial exclusion (mobility restrictions), the lack of access to services, to healthcare, to social participation, to decision making and self-determination in general [2].

The social exclusion dimension identification work led to the drafting of lists of groups which are socially excluded, or at risk of exclusion. Children from poor families can be found on the majority of these lists. In Romania there is a series of laws defining various vulnerable groups, but there is not a unitary approach. The Government Executive Order No.68/2003 specifies an open list of social groups that may benefit from social services, so they can reasonably fit the description of the more recent term of *vulnerable group*. They are: children, old persons, persons with handicaps, persons with addiction to drugs, alcohol or other toxic substances, persons who have left prisons, single-parent families, persons affected by family violence, victims of human trafficking, persons with small incomes or none at all, immigrants, homeless, persons infected with HIV/AIDS and the chronically ill [3]. Children actually belong to *severely vulnerable groups*, even in the countries of the European Union where one child in five lives in households with insufficient incomes [4].

The social development during childhood, based on moral principle acquisition, on friend group identification and on the development of autonomy [5] is decisively affected by poverty. This is why the child welfare shows up more and more frequently in the public policy debate, leaving open the question of the role of governments as social actors. The economic welfare of the child is evidently affected by the family income and his poverty becomes determined by the family's poverty. The threshold under which a family is declared poor not only is arbitrarily decided, but it does not even provide a true picture of the *severity* of the poverty experienced by the subject family.

2. CHILD WELFARE POLICIES - A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

Typically, the poor children and their families are meant to be caught in the safety nets of the social programs (social aid, foster families, counselling services etc.) designed in each country's framework of social policy. Leif Jensen [6] selects data from the work of Cornia and Danziger (1997) that illustrates the periodicity of social policies since World War II, including some relevant figures on child welfare. The first period of welfare state expansion was between 1945 and 1973, period in which the standard of living has significantly improved. During this time the infant mortality rate dropped from 28 to 18 deaths per 1000 births in the United States, from 23 to 12 in Norway, and from 83 to 28 in Eastern Europe. The second period - that of stagnation - lasted from 1974 through the late 1980's and was characterized by slow economic growth and by a flattening of social expenditures, including child welfare. The third period started in the 1990's and was a period of neo-liberal policies meant to invigorate the private sector and curtail public expenditures. The result of these policies was an increase in instability and in inequalities, being a period of concern for the authors who sees it as the start of an era of

extremes. Countries most exposed to these risks are the ex-communist ones, a good example being the Czech Republic where between 1989 and 1991 the relative poverty rate among children jumped from 4 to 43% when compared to the old persons' poverty rate which remained at 7% during the same period. Subsequently Wen-Hao Chen and Miles Corak [7] took a broad look at child poverty in North America and Europe, analyzing the child poverty dynamic in 12 member states of OECD in the 1990's. Their conclusions support Cornia and Danziger view of the third post-war social policy period and depict a relative polarization of states based on child poverty rates. Between 1991 and 1999 for example the rate dropped by 10.8% in Great Britain, by 7.3% in United States, but increased by 13.5% in Hungary.

In regard to the effectiveness of child poverty reduction social policy, Sutherland and Piachaud describe the measures undertaken by the UK's labour government starting with the 1999 which included changes in tax and social benefits, youth employment support programs and in those which were addressing events with long-term impact like support for teen pregnancies, for families with children under 5 and living in poor areas, etc. Their conclusions are that the changes in social policy did indeed result in a drop in poverty rate between 1999 and 2001, but the absolute values still remained double the one from 1979.

3. ROOT CAUSES AND EFFECTS OF POVERTY IN CHILDHOOD

According to Chen and Corak, there are three groups of factors that determine the poverty of children: (1) demographic and family profile (parents' age, parents' education level, the number of children in the family and family's structure); (2) labour market (parents' employment status and their income); (3) governmental policy (measured by financial transfers in household with children). The hypothesis of the three factor categories is also supported by Heuveline şi Weinshenker [9]. Other perspectives on childhood root causes of poverty are brought by Jenkins and Schluter [10] who make a comparison between two of the most developed countries in the European Union - Germany and The United Kingdom. The authors analyze the perspective of the vulnerable group as a root cause of child poverty (single-parent families or workless households) and they test and validate the hypothesis of trigger events as being the most significant causes of the differences between the two countries. The trigger events under consideration concern certain household dynamics like changes in the number of full-time workers, changes in income levels, changes in the number of household members, the household structure, etc.

The field literature contains detailed descriptions of the effects of poverty on children. A volume dedicated to child poverty edited by Aletha Huston [11]

brings forward a whole collection of detrimental effects on physical development, mental health and educational attainment, effects which are more pronounced, the longer the poverty status continues [12]. The short-term effects are material deprivation, social exclusion and vulnerability to bullying, the long-term ones being poor health, poor physical and mental development, the loss of life opportunities and the drop in life expectancy.

UNICEF studies reveal several types of risk that poor children are exposed to: poor performance in school, teen pregnancies, problems with the law, poor pay, homelessness and different types of abuse [13]. Janet Currie [14] looks at the connections between the socio-economic parental status, the child health condition, and the educational opportunities that lead to the subject's placement in the labour market. Her conclusions support the hypothesis of strong connections taking place between these aspects and suggest that the child's health can play a significant role in the inter-generational transmission of the socio-economic status.

The effects of social exclusion during childhood manifest later, in the teenage years Evans claims [15], when numerous problems start to appear: difficult access to the labour market, meagre salaries or seasonal, unpredictable work, alcohol and substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, unwanted pregnancies. These can be both indicators of early social exclusion and premises for exclusion during the subsequent adult years.

4. POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION RISK IN COUNTRIES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

In European Union studies, the risk of poverty or of social exclusion is being operationalized through indicators that attempt to capture the level of relative poverty, the severe material deprivation and the low intensity of household members' work.

According to a *Eurochild* report, children at risk of poverty or social exclusion in the EU typically come from single-parent families, large families, families with unemployed parents, immigrant and ethnic minority families, and families having children with disabilities. The same source claims that 19% of all children are at risk of poverty, 15% are leaving the educational system before high-school graduation, and the unemployment rate of the young is almost double the average rate [16].

European statistics show that child poverty is more acute than that of the adults or of the elderly for that matter. This is not surprisingly so since one assumes that the larger the number of economically-dependent members are in a family, the higher the risk of poverty. This phenomenon happens more in those countries where child care and education public services financial transfers are insufficient to compensate for the financial deficit of the

household. According to European indicators (Annex 1, Table 1) the most precarious material situation is to be found with children of Bulgaria and followed by those of Romania.

Another indicator of child poverty can be the low intensity of the work of household members of working age. The work intensity from the statistical data points to a highest rate in Ireland and lowest in Slovenia.

Table 1: The percentage of children in households facing poverty or social exclusion (European Union 2012)

Indicator	EU 27 Average	Min.	Country with min. recorded value	Max.	Country with max. recorded value
Relative poverty	28.0	14.9	Finland	52.3	Bulgaria
Severe material deprivation	11.7	1.4	Sweden	46.6	Bulgaria
Low work intensity	9.0	3.2	Slovenia	22.9	Ireland
Degraded dwelling	27.3	7.1	Malta	49.0	Slovenia
Dwelling with no bath or shower	2.8	0.0	Spain	40.3	Romania
Single-parent families	34.1	17.3	Cyprus	66.0	Greece
Early school abandonment	12.8	4.4	Slovenia	24.9	Spain

Source: Eurostat database extract: http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database.

In Romania's case, being the most rural country in the EU, although the employment levels in the agricultural sector appear high, jobs being widely available, the incomes of these workers are low, to the point of subsistence. At the year 2013 levels, a third of the whole EU population being employed in farms were to be found in Romania (See http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rural-area-economics/briefs/pdf/08_en.pdf). The large portion of the population leaving in rural areas also implies a large number of children living below minimum comfort standards, like not having access to toilets or baths with running water.

A 2012 UNICEF report takes a different approach to child poverty and social exclusion and uses two groups of indicators. The first group attempts to capture the level of deprivation of the child and the second one, his/her relative poverty. Child deprivation is measured by the *absence of at least two* of the following 14 items: (1) three meals a day; (2) at least one meal a day with meat, chicken or fish (or a vegetarian equivalent); (3) fresh fruit and vegetables every day; (4) books suitable for the child's age and knowledge level (not including schoolbooks); (5) outdoor leisure equipment (bicycle, roller-skates, etc.); (6) regular leisure activities (swimming, playing an instrument, participating in

youth organizations etc.); (7) indoor games (at least one per child, including educational baby toys, building blocks, board games, computer games etc.); (8) money to participate in school trips and events; (9) a quiet place with enough room and light to do homework; (10) an Internet connection; (11) some new clothes (i.e. not all second-hand); (12) two pairs of properly fitting shoes (including at least one pair of all-weather shoes); (13) the opportunity, from time to time, to invite friends home to play and eat; (14) the opportunity to celebrate special occasions such as birthdays, name days, religious events etc.

According to how the child deprivation has been operationalized in the 2012 UNICEF report, out of the 29 economically advanced countries, Norway had the lowest level (1.9%). Nordic countries in general seem to do best at this indicator. By contrast, the former communist block countries are situated at the opposite end of the spectrum. More than 30% of all deprived children live in Latvia (31.8%), Hungary (31.9%), Bulgaria (56.6%) and Romania (72.6%).

5. OPEN METHOD OF COORDINATION AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The Lisbon Treaty introduces the Open Method of Coordination (OMC) and gives the European Commission the competencies to take initiative in encouraging cooperation between member states in the social domain and to facilitate the coordination of their actions. These initiatives can take shape as studies or as sanctions towards establishing the orientation, the indicators and the best practices, including periodic reassessments. OMC also implies the identification and the promotion of the most effective social policies via information exchanges. Through the OMC one establishes common objectives and indicators, one prepares the strategies for action and one elaborates common monitoring reports [18].

In 2008 The European Commission presented an ambitious package of initiatives. This represents a new engagement in favour of a social Europe and includes an integrated approach that brings under one roof a variety of strategies. One such strategy is *The Renewed Social Agenda* which aims at preparing and fortifying the Europeans, especially the young, for the changing realities of globalization, technological progress, demographic ageing and for incoming evolutions like the increase in the price of food and energy and for turbulences on the financial markets. The RSA is targeted at those encountering difficulty in adapting to these changes. It's priorities are: (1) children and the youth - Europe of the future; (2) investments in people, better and more jobs, new competencies; (3) mobility; (4) long and healthy lives; (5) fight against poverty and social exclusion; (6) fight against discrimination; (7) opportunities, access and solidarity on the world scene. Aside from EU legislation, social dialog and OMC, *European community financing* is also an important instrument.

Investments in education and training are crucial for personal development and for securing a well paid job - says a recent document of the European Commission. Towards that goal, the Erasmus+ program is being launched. The program is meant to encourage both formal and non-formal education, together with volunteering among the youth [20].

6. CONCLUSIONS

Child poverty is an extremely acute subject in a Europe that finds itself in an already demographic decline, thus children and the young are at the centre of the attention of the social policy makers. The effects of child poverty are frequently irreversible and should be dealt with at early stages. The indicators of poverty and social exclusion can play bridging role between field realities and social policy objectives. Romania is displaying one of the highest rates of the main indicators of poverty and social exclusion at all ages, but particularly at the young ones. Policies drafted through the Open Method of Coordination aim at creating new opportunities for poor and socially excluded children.

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ANNEX

The main indicators of poverty and social exclusion in EU countries

	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	Severe material deprivation rate	People living in households with very low work intensity	Share of children living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation. .	Share of children having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling	At-risk-of-poverty rate: Single person with dependent children	Early leavers from education-and training
European Union (27 countries)	28.0	11.7	9.0	27.3	2.8	34.1	12.8
Belgium	23.1	8.6	13.0	28.5	0.4	33.2	12
Bulgaria	52.3	46.6	16.8	37.9	20.0	42.5	12.5
Czech Republic	18.8	8.5	6.7	19.2	0.7	31.3	5.5
Denmark	15.3	3.6	5.8	29.4	1.9	18.7	9.1
Germany)	18.4	4.8	6.8	30.8	0.0	38.8	10.6
Estonia	22.4	9.2	6.9	29.7	6.2	33.0	10.5
Ireland	33.1	12.4	22.9	17.8	2.7	31.1	9.7
Greece	35.4	20.9	7.6	17.0	0.2	66.0	11.4
Spain	33.8	7.6	12.3	19.9	0.0	36.9	24.9
France	23.2	7.2	7.2	25.8	0.3	35.2	11.6
Italy	33.8	16.9	6.8	32.5	0.4	40.7	17.6
Cyprus	27.5	18.1	5.0	37.2	0.1	17.3	11.4
Latvia	40.0	27.3	10.4	43.9	18.8	41.5	10.6
Lithuania	31.9	16.9	9.3	26.4	12.6	39.2	6.5
Luxembourg	24.6	1.7	4.0	32.6	0.1	46.9	8.1
Hungary	40.9	33.4	15.7	60.6	6.8	29.5	11.5
Malta	31.0	12.3	10.4	7.1	0.0	47.6	22.6
Netherlands	16.9	3.3	6.4	32.5	0.0	28.2	8.8
Austria	20.9	5.8	6.1	19.5	0.2	29.2	7.6
Poland	29.3	13.7	4.6	19.6	3.0	26.7	5.7
Portugal	27.8	10.3	8.5	30.4	0.5	30.5	20.

	People at risk of poverty or social exclusion	Severe material deprivation rate	People living in households with very low work intensity	Share of children living in a dwelling with a leaking roof, damp walls, floors or foundation. .	Share of children having neither a bath, nor a shower in their dwelling	At-risk-of-poverty rate: Single person with dependent children	Early leavers from education and training
							8
Romania	52.2	37.9	5.1	34.7	40.3	39.8	17.4
Slovenia	16.4	5.9	3.2	49.0	0.2	25.8	4.4
Slovakia	26.6	11.9	7.2	23.3	0.3	27.5	5.3
Finland	14.9	2.8	5.9	11.7	0.3	22.0	8.9
Sweden	15.4	1.4	4.9	14.1	0.2	33.3	7.5
United Kingdom	31.2	12.5	16.3	26.4	0.4	29.5	13.6

Source: Eurostat database extract:
http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/portal/page/portal/statistics/search_database.

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THE EDUCATIONAL POWER OF POETRY

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ABSTRACT

This short paper is intented to present the structure and main outcomes of an educational project realized in some primary schools in the municipal district of Arezzo (Tuscany, Italy). More specifically, the project in question, entitled "The magic of poetry", aimed to actualize a laboratory proposal of education to poetry and through poetry, in particular by exploiting the interplay between three figures of speech (simile, metaphor, oxymoron) and three emotions connected with them (happiness, anger, fear). The project involved children attending the second and fifth grade of six primary schools, both located in the city center and in the outskirts. Therefore, the first part of this article synthetically describes the basic framework, the contents, the activities, the organizational modalities and the educational objectives of the project; while the second part shows the obtained results as they ensue from direct observation, from students'opinions, and from a qualitative survey (open ended questionnaire) which implicated teachers.

KEYWORDS: education, emotions, figures of speech, poetry, primary school.

1. INTRODUCTION

We live in an era in which the seductive power of both oral and written language gives way to the charm of the image (television, advertising, internet) and these images, included the ones from contemporary art, bow to the commercializing and consumer subjection of the symbolic, saying not so more than this [2]. We live in an era in which the aesthetics of a community are entrusted to emulated appearance and to the ephemeral manyfold identities it guarantees, whereas the transience of such people's community bonds makes a match with the transience of the lexicons used to fullfill fashion dictates of the moment or the consumer trend [3]. We live in an era in which the unindifferentiated overabundance of the informations spread by the screen-culture facilitates individual's silent passivity, that makes him/her loose, at the same time, both the compass and a method for a conscious discernment [8]. An era in which indolent mechanicalness prevails on critical flexibility, as a cryterion through which it is possible to react to every input by mass media. In which verbal interaction is more and more shaped and surrogated by new media. In which technological progress induces people to linguistic synthesis, to the use of

neo-telegraphic expressions or mere replacement icons, strengthening conversational weakness [1]. In which the tendency to talk through slogans, annihilating all the pathos inherent in an authentic communication – as H. G. Gadamer has shown with the example of modern lovers' conversation [6] – gains the upper hand, as well as the use of an excessive and confused verbosity in order to surpass other people, to disorient them and to get out of listening to them (not only in the political environment) [9]. Talking of lovers, not a long time ago I attended a theatrical performance by a comedian who, together with one of his female colleagues, pretended to have dinner at a restaurant like a young engaged couple. Between one dish and another, between one bite and another, silence prevailed. There was no communication at all. Or rather, it was replaced by short messages they sent one another by means of their respective smartphones. The contents, short and curt, were all just about the dinner and, to be precise, their opinions referred to the courses. And besides, the whole performance was enriched by photos of every dish immediately posted on the web in order to share them with their Facebook friends and Twitter followers. This situation naturally caused belly laughter and I abandoned myself to laughter too, but shortly after I had a feeling of sadness and desolation. What I had seen, actually, did not distance itself from reality, and today it still does not. The fact of the matter is that in our era speech becomes superfluous, both because of the technological impact and the repercussions caused by an ethic ruled by the utilitarian distortions of economic action, affecting relational dimension and the blunting of critical abilities. At least the thought-out and chosen speech, which witnesses the authenticity of one's way of being, thinking and feeling, which reflects an active identity, which is able to tell us about the others and to open up to them, which nourishes the conviviality of the differences, which escapes the dull grey of uniformity and standardized desire to colour everyday life with vivid tints. What remains is an impoverished, trivialized, devoiced speech, something which is a sign of intellectual weariness and expressive difficulty, useful to make oneself understood but not caught. Moreover, due to social disintegration and the strengthening of the relativism of cultural and value-related horizons in view of the fall of strong models and the absence of universally sharable perspectives, speech becomes ambiguous so that it avoids to make itself understood: ambiguity, actually, shows the will of not fully revealing oneself, to escape the genuine contact with diversity, to maintain a borderline, to wiggle out of one's commitment and social and intercultural responsibility, to linger undisturbed inside the protective shell of one's loneliness and one's convictions [7].

The reasons I've just illustrated have urged me to publish a volume in which I argued the pedagogical reasons that could legitimate the recovery of the educational value of poetry, in order to bring the voice back to human thought and speech, to consult them again, and to raise the person from the prevailing prose of hyper-technologism, hyper-consumerism and hyper-individualism [4].

In the facing of this theme, I dealt with several aspects and, among them, I also criticized the widespread way of teaching poetry in Italian primary schools, proposing an alternative hypothesis. In fact, at school poetry is usually limited to mnemonic learning, or it is used only to know certain authors, or to sharpen logic and grammatical analysis skills. It is rarely considered as an educational means in itself, a means for a human growth, both from the perspective of fruition and from the one (almost forgotten) of production. Consequently, I decided to put the theory of the above-mentioned volume in practice, by starting off an experimental project about education to poetry and through poetry, realized in six primary schools in the district of Arezzo: I pivoted on only three of the innumerable instruments that crowd the toolbox through which poetical language operates (simile, metaphor, oxymoron), and I focused on the production side, not on the fruition one. The experimentation started on the fifteenth of November 2002 and ended on the ninth of May 2003. The complexity of this project is clearly explained in the text *The magic of poetry* [5]. In 2013, on the occasion of my Erasmus Teaching at the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of *Transylvania* University of Brașov, accepting the referring professor‘s request, I explained some features of my work to the students, and from this point forward it originated the invitation to make a presentation of the experimentation at this Conference, since the theme is congenial for its development. Seeing that the time at my disposal does not allow close examinations, the following exposition will be brief and essential.

2. THE EDUCATIONAL PROJECT

Intended target and timing: the protagonists of this laboratory experience are students attending the second and fifth year of six primary schools, for a total of nine classes, and the schedule, planned with the principals (initially it consisted in six meetings), allowed me to fix three meetings lasting two hours for each laboratory realized in each class.

Contents: I facilitated children’s introduction to the world of poetry by using the sphere of emotions as a motivational means. The leading themes of each meeting were, indeed, happiness (first meeting), anger (second) and fear (third). As I said before, I did not avail myself of such emotions because they could become the object of a psychological evaluation, but rather, because they could represent a stimulating starting point to undertake the path to the discovery of the poetical world and, nevertheless, because the solicitation of emotional intelligence could adequately support poetical production, which is connoted in itself by an inexorable emotional-affective substratum.

Activity and methods: within the laboratories, a gradual process of approaching to poetical language was activated, and its steps are outlined below in chronological order of appearance.

Listening to music: only for the happiness theme, I made the students listen to F. J. Haydn's *Toys Symphony* (*Kindersinfonie*), so as to create an atmosphere of collective joy, playfulness, and, therefore, an environment and a mood capable of stirring up "happy thoughts" and their following conversion with an imaginative-fantastic key.

Report of the memories: the student was asked to recover memories, in this case the ones relating to situations, events and experiences ascribable to a state of happiness, anger and fear. So starting from the memory, the following step was an oral and written report of the chosen episode.

Drawing: drawing was employed in every kind of intervention (happiness, anger and fear) to satisfy a twofold need: a) to keep the children's attention high, by varying the form of their commitment (from writing to drawing) through an usually relished task; b) to broaden the range of children's creative energies by means of the translation of their emotional lived experiences into a non-spoken language. And that, moreover, allowed to worm details of the recounted episodes that were impossible to express in oral or written way, with the consequent opportunity of increasing child's consciousness and enriching the sense of his life history.

Individual production of similes, metaphors and oxymorons: once the drawing was finished and after having supplied a propaedeutic exemplification of the three figures of speech, I asked the students to turn the contents of their artworks into five similes, metaphors and oxymorons. In order to facilitate their work, the students were invited to take the cue from animal and plant environment, and from their most significant extracurricular activities. The theme of happiness was linked to the similes, anger to the metaphors and fear to the oxymorons.

Group discussion: the discussion, conceived in a perspective of moral education, was inserted to implement an open confrontation about the expressions (similes, metaphors and oxymorons) worked out by children, to goad them into choosing one of the five – on the basis of their personal taste and other people's taste, of their emotional affection and other people's emotional affection –, and, finally, to negotiate together which expressions could be selected to pave the way for the last step: collective poetical production.

Individual poetical production: before reaching the final step, the pupils were asked to freely undertake a spontaneous individual poetical versification (without any metrical, shape and sense bonds), which could include all five of the similes, metaphors and oxymorons they conceived (obviously, one work for each leading theme).

Collective poetical production.

Acrostic: I deliberately left for last the acrostic because its use has been multipurpose, and that requires an explanation. I noticed some second-grade

children's difficulties in understanding the concept of oxymoron, so in these cases acrostic was used as a substitute for it. In other cases, instead, it was used together with similes, metaphors and oxymorons, as well as individual and collective productions, because it was particularly appreciated by pupils.

Educational goals: the predetermined goals are as listed: a) to perceive the diversity of poetical language from the ordinary one, by means of the increasing consciousness of its polysemy and its semantic ambiguity; b) to strengthen pupils' linguistic competences; c) to take advantage of the "introspective gaze" of poetical language to translate the subjective interpretation of reality; d) to decontextualize and recontextualize speech to recognize its different uses and meanings (broadening of lexical competence); e) to facilitate the emergence of the critical, lateral and divergent thinking; f) to promote the decentralization and the acceptance of different emotional, cognitive and experential perspectives.

Final test: for the evaluative phase, methods of a qualitative nature were adopted, by proposing open ended questionnaire to teachers (a month after the end of the project) and by asking the pupils autographical reflections and tales regarding the project in its entirety. The questions posed to the teachers are listed below: Question 1. *Before the educational project was carried out, how did the pupils welcome teacher's proposal to realize it?* Question 2. *During the three lessons how was, in your opinion, students' behaviour? Did they keep their level of attention, interest and curiosity in comparison with "ordinary lessons"?* Question 3. *Did the students, during other lessons, make references to the contents carried out by the project, or did they perceive them as something in itself and separate from the regular educational path?* Question 4. *At the level of interpersonal dynamics, in your opinion did "The magic of poetry" influence students' behaviour? (For example: if one or some of them showed interest in the proposed themes, did the others jeer at them? If one or some of them did not show interest in it, did the others urge them to participate?)* Question 5. *Which were, in your opinion, the project's repercussions at the level of learning mechanisms? (For example: do the pupils use the terms learned during the three lessons, do they refer to another point of view on reality?)* Question 6. *Do the students still practise or did they practise further on the contents learned during the project? If yes, are they still interested and/or amused?* Question 7. *Did students' families hear the echo of such experience lived by their children?* Question 8. *In your opinion, which is poetry's contribution to the development of children's educational processes?* Question 9. *In your opinion, which is poetry's contribution (in particular collective poetical production) with regard to socialization and culturalization processes and to pupils' moral education?* Question 10. *According to you, was the duration of the project meagre or adequate?* Question 11. *Personal considerations about the project and its realization.*

3. MAIN RESULTS

Given that the ultimate aim of this project was not to train budding poets, but rather to make use of poetry and its "tools" – starting at such a tender age and in view of a desirable educational and self-educational continuum – to revitalize and toughen up the ramparts of a speech weakened and threatened by several "enemies", as well as to facilitate the "clarification" of the subject's critical-creative potentialities, even though the time at the project's disposal was inadequate, however it is undeniable that encouraging results were achieved. Moreover these results are not confined within the circumscribed perimeter of the project duration and they also extend their range of action beyond the goals planned at the beginning of the project. In light of the foregoing need to synthesis above-mentioned, I am going to show, now and briefly, only the most significant aspects of the many results deducted through a direct observation, the answers given by the teachers and the pupils' opinions.

First of all, the use of the figures of speech, especially simile and metaphor, determined the expansion of semantic-lexical competences and enabled children to discover certain "relationships between the things" that led them to both a cognitive and emotional-affective enrichment.

In the matter of the cognitive sphere, that was possible thanks precisely to the nature of these figures of speech and their ability to match different semantic fields and different entities, shortening the ostensible distance or eliminating the degrees of separation between them. In other words, the children had the chance not only to understand what such figures are and what they are for, but also that these figures (just as acrostic) can offer an unprecedented perspective angle on subjective existence and the surrounding world that logical-rational thinking and language cannot offer. Then, the fact that it is possible to read the same reality through various lenses induced the children, without any other-directed indication, to consult speech, to ask questions about the sense of what they were reading or were absorbing from television, to autonomously search for the various synonyms of a term and to decontextualize words in order to discern different uses and meanings. And this did not happen in conjunction with the realization of the project, but afterwards, in the course of the regular lessons that dealt with Italian, History, Geography and Science, when there was no longer a "new teacher" to please and when the excitement caused by the novelty had disappeared.

With regard to the emotional-affective sphere, the resulting enrichment is due to the synergy between "the alternative gaze" made possible by these figures and the substance of the leading themes. Leveraging the delocalization of his/her inner feeling, moving his/her own happiness, anger and fear to other objects, phenomena or individuals, the child was enabled to look at him/herself from the outside and to know him/herself on a deeper level, to depict

him/herself in a different way, to a point where child assumes empathetically the emotional state he/she attributed to the chosen objects, phenomena or individuals and recognizes him/herself in them again, as inside a virtuous circle. Just to make an example, sometimes it happened that a child, beyond the lesson and more significantly at the end of the experimentation, addressed me or the teacher to express his/her feelings, referring to what he had experienced within the class. I am going to report next a little girl's own words: "today I am angry, and my anger is a cut down pine". After having pronounced this sentence, she then reported, in her opinion, how the pine could feel to the point of being moved because of its condition, and she ended up exclaiming: "there, I feel this way!". Incidentally, this turning to the animal and plant world promoted unexpected reflection of an ecological kind.

Back to emotions, a further salient fact is that the group discussion, encouraging the comparison between different pasts and their reciprocal reception, stood out similar or even identical causes of the same situation of anger or fear, cheering the child up about the chance of running into the grip of these causes individually. In fact, I often heard these words: "this thing happened to you too, then it did not happen only to me!". So naturally emerged a feeling of brotherhood and commonality, inferable from the approach to the schoolmate or the schoolmates and from the intensification of the communication between them. It is opportune to reaffirm that these are only observations, far from any psychological interpretation which does not lie with me.

One more time referring to emotional-affective enrichment, in the end I ought to make known the metaphorization of reality and the use of similes and oxymorons, expanding interpretative abilities, incited to the research of original modalities for expressing happiness and managing or attenuating fear and anger (but only in fifth grade classes). For example, if a child said that he/she was feeling happy like a blossoming flower or like a singing bird, then it was not unusual to see him/her, during the course of the project and after, expressing a new kind of happiness by imitating such blossoming flower or singing bird. If a child said that he/she was feeling angry and his/her anger was like the roar of a lion in a cage, it was not unusual that he/she wandered how to solve the problem of the lion (that is his/her problem), warning that he/she would break the bars or would obtain somehow the keys of that cage. If a child said that he/she felt scared and that his/her fear was a still movement (movement because of the will to run away, still because you often remain petrified), it was not unusual that he/she asked which was the best reaction between the two.

Regarding other results, now I would like to dwell on the group discussion. Like any other cooperative activity, also the one promoted had positive implications in terms of mediation between egocentric and hetero-centric instances. Nevertheless, it seems that the added value was the teaching

inherent in the appropriation of the deep meaning that metaphor guards, that is the celebration of the cognitive and hermeneutic pluralism. Reflecting upon some answers by teachers and some writings by students it is possible to deduce that metaphor's invitation to get inside other points of view had analogically encouraged a democratic negotiation. However, on the basis of my observation and the major part of the opinions I gathered, I believe that the emotional foundation of the activities and the inclination for giving life to something objectively beautiful, recognized as such by most of the people, actually made the difference instead of a normal cooperative activity. But there is the other side of the coin. In some cases (two classes) attention-seeking and competitiveness spirit reached considerable high level when the whole class had to decide which contributions should be excluded in the composition of the collective poem or which words for the realization of the acrostic. If sound competition produced poetic expressions or simply noteworthy linguistic expressions, egoism and primarily self-referential exclusivity prevailed during this phase. Without making the pupils feel guilty, who are still "children" with difficulties in mediating between oneself and the others, the "objective beauty" was hardly rewarded; it was rather the belonging to the dominant group of the class that marked a division between a rejection or a promotion.

The last thing to underline, that actually lies outside the project but highlights important pedagogical, sociological and psychological aspects, relates to the environmental conditions that influence and regulate the experience of fear. From the testimonies of children living in a city, it comes into light that the its streets are seen as a labyrinth that can suddenly disclose dangers and insurmountable obstacles; the dimensions and the distances of the city restrict freedom of movement and the will to explore the "world"; condominium relationships are limited to the formality of a superficial relation; social responsibility dissolves and becomes indifference and private interest. This leads to distrust and fear of city meanders, and, in particular, of other people, that is sharpened by domestic loneliness, caused by parents' absence due to working reasons: staying alone at home provokes anxiety and agitation, every noise is presage of a gloomy event, an unexpected visitation by a stranger is perceived as a source of anguish; then, the home door becomes a wall which defends from external attacks and all the other elements from the outside have a negative connotation, whilst all the ones inside could turn out to be useful for personal defence (baseball bats, cooking tools, etc.). In this way children use bounce from videogames to television, whose horror movies and documentaries about fierce animals contribute to foment their fears, acting directly on their unconscious, since it shows a virtual reality that is not mediated by anyone and, therefore, not conveniently analyzed, interpreted and assimilated. In the life of a small country town, on the contrary, the streets are like labyrinths in which loosing oneself is like a pleasant game to play; distances are limited and the

traffic almost absent; the desire of discovering the "world" is supported by a close relation with nature; urban loneliness leaves room to an educating community and the involvement into social life is quite obliged. In conclusion, a different environmental configuration and the presence of a social network which grants a sort of mutual assistance allow children to live everyday life in a less "phobic" way and more freely, and instead of television (although not absent) it is the neighbour who takes care of the child, the courtyard, the square with its social circles, with the grocery shop, with the elderly people, with the priest, with the friends who invite to play together.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Considering all that I have reported and the pupils' enthusiastic participation in the project, I can conclude that a different way of teaching poetry at school not only is possible, but also pedagogically inescapable for a complete education.

As already shown, if it is conceived as an educational instrument with its own dignity and not as a marginal appendage at the logical and formal service of language learning (Italian or Romanian), the use of the poetical language can contribute to the improvement of the lexical heritage and to the recovery of the vividness of the speech, affecting on the reorganization of the conceptual system.

In the same way, it can increase the centre of the conscious subjectivity (reflections on the self, on one's story, one's environment, one's sub-culture) and allows the individual to venture into other vital worlds in order to understand the limits, the conditionings and the resources of his/her own world, and then to come back into him/herself enriched by the meeting/confrontation with different experiences and different "faces". In this perspective, poetry rises to the status of main means to know both the self and the otherness.

Besides, the use of the poetical language can contribute to free the person from the standardizing and superstructural pressures of today's society, ensuring the right of expressive originality, the active maturation of singularity, the practice of critical thinking, the training of the creative abilities, the conscious interpretation of reality and of being into reality. Without considering that, through the effusion of the creative forces, it can give prestige back to the often neglected right cerebral hemisphere, enhancing man's unitariness at the expense of his rational mono-dimension.

All in all, poetry can educate the person to be the protagonist of her life, to search for the authenticity of the dialogue and to become acquainted with a taste and an aesthetic sensibility that go beyond the boundaries of appearance to fall back on the human substance of thought and speech.

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THREE START-UP OF THE GAME

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In order to challenge the world a child must arm himself with optimism and trust. And let's not forget about the educational value of the utopia. (Rodari, "The grammar of fantasy")

ABSTRACT

If we'd have the courage to cope with the future with optimism, at least three different "start-up" would open our teaching path: educating to deal with the uncertainties of our times, education through reflection and processing a project. These three goal can be achieved through different games.

Teaching to live with uncertainty of our times begins with learning to keep distances from excessive control. Submitting a dialogue game is a wonderful way to learn how to respect rules.

Teaching to live with uncertainty reflection can be cultivated through games which deal with life issues sustained by a debate. This "ludosophical" practice stimulates children to think by themselves.

Teaching to the project means offering different opportunities to put into practice their own skills to obtain a specific goal, like, for instance, inviting the children to create a project of a toy with a few simple materials.

The greatest exponents of our times invite us to travel through different paths to educate children to cope with the future and most of these paths can be enjoyed through games.

Keywords: education, game, play, project, reflection, uncertainty.

1. START-UP

"We have to get into the game", is a sentence that we hear always more frequently in finance, politics, and education. In order to emerge from the present crisis of values, we have to "get into the game!"

It is also the beginning and end of many debates regarding the birth of the "start-up", the starting point of an idea born of a small group of young people, heterogeneous in hopes, personal qualities and competence. It is an idea that encourages the financing of an undertaking.

The "start-up" phenomenon has seen growth in a variety of areas (technology, tourism, social networking). Investments are growing

exponentially (by banks, foundations, governmental sectors) in an effort to introduce new ideas. In 2013, for example, a Venetian "start-up" (Solwa) circulated a do-it-yourself kit that rendered non-potable water (salt or polluted) drinkable, using only radiation from the sun. The United Nations called this "an innovation for the development of humanity". Not all "start-up" reach these heights. Seventy-five percent disappear after a short period of time. But the creation of something that hasn't existed in the past, respecting man and his environment, is perhaps the most difficult and important task we can follow to face an insecure future.

An education that looks towards the future must aim to coexist with the insecurities of its time, to cultivate critical thinking and to encourage project creation.

This does not mean that education must follow the dictates of the economy, nor must it program training for entrepreneurship. Education can't be the driving force of a system in crisis. Rather, we would like to consider the "start-up" as a means of interpreting a new tendency, beyond the economic, social and cultural, an aspiration that gives us faith in the inventing of the present.

The "start-up" transmits the following: individualism is being replaced by the group project; new ideas are nurtured by reflections that aim to improve the world; we must know how to begin again after a failure and not remain paralyzed in the face of today's uncertainties.

If we face tomorrow with optimism, we can activate at least three game "start-up" in the pedagogic present: first, to teach uncertainty, second, to teach reflection, third, to teach "the project". We can do this by "playing". This affirmation may seem a utopia. Let's try to put this into practice, starting with the words of the poet, Delmore Schwartz: "in dreams begin responsibility".

2. TEACHING TO LIVE WITH UNCERTAINTY

Teaching to live with uncertainty begins with the responsibility of distancing oneself from excessive controls.

It is difficult to define with certainty the meaning of "the game". Many have tried to through philosophical, sociological and anthropological means. We can venture to say that the "game" is such if uncertainty reigns.

When "playing", we never know what might happen, what the players' reaction might be, how the "game" will end. The game changes each time it is played. Rules vary from place to place, from player to player, from moment to moment. The uncertainties of the game are dependent upon environmental, individual and cultural elements.

Our culture strives to dominate uncertainty... the more uncertainty, the bigger the attempts to dominate.

"Red light! Green light!" loses something fundamental the moment the behavior of the players becomes evident....for example, if the head of the game is supervised to make sure he has "moving" players return to the start when required.

"You're it!" loses something fundamental as soon as there is uncertainty due to the conformation of the field. A flat surface is predictable... one with trees, steps and hills is not.

"Quattro cantoni" loses something fundamental if interpreted with a moral point of view; for example, if a player changes his mind and puts his ally in a difficult situation. This might be judged as disloyal. However, in this type of game, "tricking" is the most interesting of the aspects of the "game".

When we play volleyball (or any other sport) on a regulation court, with a referee and international rules, we are not "playing" in reality. In fact, we are performing a "sport", but we call it a "game" because elements of surprise still exist. Thus a "sport" is quite different from a "game": a sport is regulated externally (rules that are dictated, referees, technology). A game, however, is regulated by the players themselves (who decide how, when and where to play it). At the same time, a soccer match becomes a game if played on an uneven bumpy field with tall grass, if the players themselves decide when there's a corner, a goal, a penalty shot, the number of players, males against females, only one goal post, etc.

When we eliminate the elements of ludic uncertainty, children will ask after playing a structured game... «Can we go play now?», as if to say, «Thanks for trying so hard to let us play a game. But since we were many, some of us a bit wild, and since you didn't want anyone to get hurt and you wanted everyone to follow the rules.....there wasn't much room for uncertainty, and now we would like to play in small groups, making up the rules as we go along. We would like to fight a bit (playfully, of course!) and run around a bit....even if it has nothing to do with the "game"!».

An educator must take risks and live with the unpredictable. Teaching to live with the "game".

3. TEACHING REFLECTION

"Teaching reflection" starts with the responsibility of playing far away from excessive stimuli.

Today's children are exposed to a multitude of stimuli and, often, there isn't enough time to absorb lived experiences, thoughts and emotions. "To do a lot" doesn't mean "to know a lot". A cultured child asks questions, reflects, and forms hypotheses. A competent child incorporates what he has learned into his life.

How can we give meaning to children's thoughts? By slowing down, by giving them time to think, to find the right words to express a reflection, to listen to others; through conscious learning, where it is possible to narrate experience, where what is lived becomes knowledge; to cultivate curiosity and facilitate discussions that evolve from daily occurrences.

Playing and thinking can coexist. We can "think" while having fun. If such weren't so, it would signify transmitting the message that "thinking" is fastidious. Facing life with a playful attitude creates pleasure even in the most difficult moments, it increases positivity (even while suffering), it feeds optimism.

One can have fun in tranquility, in silence, while thinking. There are many shades of playfulness. Playing doesn't mean being in a constant state of over excitement. To have fun "by force" is a contradiction. In a "super-active" world it is important to feed the pleasure principle in slow motion and guarantee the right not to play.

Therefore, before or after (sometimes during) a game it might be fun to debate a theme that may seem far away from the world of play. Children already do this when they play in small groups. They discuss what is and isn't "right", friendship and love, death and violence. Children like to philosophize!

There are some games where reflection is spontaneous: a game where one plays dead ("E' morto Sansone" for example), leads to thoughts and discussion about death. At the same time, there are thoughts that spring from daily occurrences which they play out: if children reflect on violence, we can propose war games (like "Il naufrago e gli squali").

The role of the adult, sensitive to "ludosophy", the philosophy of the game (playing and thinking to life themes), will be that of proposing certain types of games, gathering the thoughts of the children and facilitating the debate. He must be careful not to influence the game in the direction of the "reflection" that he aims for and the "reflection" in the direction that he is thinking about.

During the philosophical dialogue, which can be extraordinarily ludic, it is essential that the adult alienate his thoughts, but above all that he only asks questions (opened, closed, procedural, exemplary) without entering into the discussion. Any adult comment would influence the children's thoughts. The end-all is to think, that is, to take conscious of one's own way of seeing the world, of listening to one's self and the others.

The adult can search out those games which touch life themes and support the children's queries on actual philosophical reflections. The "ludosophy" is a method of stimulating and developing a critical attitude towards everyday topics and of nurturing the courage to think with one's own mind.

4. TEACHING TO THE PROJECT

"Teaching to the project" begins with the responsibility of playing distant from excessive "techniques".

It is important to be familiar with a variety of techniques (artistic, manual, musical, etc.). They are as fundamental as design skills. If we concentrate only on technique, we risk teaching a working approach to the world. We must always leave room for moments where children can put into use acquired grammar and skills; in other words, "teaching to the project".

When children are left to play by themselves, they are tireless architects. One has only to watch them playing outside in contact with nature. They take note of what the environment offers. They make a mental map of materials available; beautiful, rate, resistant."Let's gather some of these things", they observe. They ponder. They look for a gesture that goes well with the gathered material, and an idea is born! When they realize that the next game is the "project", they exclaim, "I have an idea"! The project has been designed in their minds. They don't always agree but contribute their different points of view. Some hypotheses fail, other ideas are born. They must follow through on the project, because often the final result doesn't correspond to the initial idea. In fact, sometimes there will be no product, or it will be quickly dissolved (a sand castle, for example).

When children plan and project in contact with nature, they do something similar to a land-art artist. This is a form of behavioral art (centered on the artist's actions) that par takes of the natural environment using what nature offers in that particular locale. Landscape art distinguishes itself from the technical art of our society. It is a transitory art.

When children play and project with objects, they become artists, architects, engineers, scientists...

A project is born and develops from the need to understand. Children, parting from a question of everyday life and from an exploration of daily materials, can live an original experience constructed from their own knowledge. This knowledge is made up if hypotheses, examination, confrontation, and rethinking that lead to new ideas and the realization of projects that are always more complex.

In order to "teach the project", an adult must "project the project", parting from available tools:

- observe the children and note their interests;
- look for, make available and propose materials that can satisfy observed interests;
- note their skills and reflect upon the experience with the children;
- re-suggest the fulfillment of one of their ideas using a specific material;

- make the children realize how they came upon their ideas and what they would still like to accomplish;
- look for, together with the children, materials that could be useful for the new projects;
- propose technical activities (structured and/or semi-structured) to further explore the children's interests;
- offer and propose new materials to complete the new project;
- maintain a dialogue with the children to acquire knowledge regarding their abilities;
- reorganize the environment with new materials (or creation or renewal of the project space).

"To play to project" signifies adapting to the limits that reality provides....to try and approach them solely for the fun of creating an idea. This is true of the child as well as the adult who wants to "project the project".

5. THE FUTURE IS IN THE PRESENT

A utopia is a dream that can become reality if each of us takes responsibility, if each of us joins the game by following ideals without losing hope. A ludic approach to educating to the future allows us to face life's challenges with optimism. We can also meet these challenges while playing.
"Education is in every moment", according to Giselle de Failly, founder of the Cemea education movement, therefore also during games; games that put things in play, three game "start-up" that have fundamentally different pedagogical roots.

The majority of literature regarding the study of games show us that playing can not be inserted into a rigid rule system.we learn that games are in the reign of uncertainty from the writings of Froebel to Dewey, from Freud to Klein, from Vygotskij to Piaget, from Huinzinga to Caillois, from Bateson ti Parlebas. But, above all, the importance of educating to face uncertainty is supported by all the major educators of our time, from Edgar Morin to Zygmunt Bauman. Bauman, in "The society of uncertainty", makes a continuous reference to the game, to playing and to the player as a metaphor to illustrate a way of confronting certain insecurities of contemporary society and writes, «Nothing in the game is entirely predictable or controllable, but nothing is untchangeable or irrevocable» [1]. We can interpret this also by exchanging the word "game" with the words "life today". In his video interview for "Progettare futuri" - "Designing futures" - (Reggio Emilia, 2003), affirms; «Doubt alone isn't part of education, but all sciences today teach how to deal with and negotiate uncertainty; whether we speak of micro physics or human sciences. We must teach that each person's destiny depends on uncertainty from birth. We

don't know what illnesses we will be affected by, the date of our death, whether or not we will be lucky in love. History, too, has become uncertain. We thought for a long time that history was a locomotive that relentlessly followed it's tracks towards a better future. Now we know that tomorrow is an incognito. We can only strengthen character by teaching to deal with uncertainty» [2]. When we relate these reflections to the pedagogy of the game, we can believe that by allowing players self-regulation we can help them learn to live with uncertainty.

While continuing to reference pedagogues who influenced thinking over the last century, let us arrive at conclusions by referring to recent thinkers. Lipman writes of his mentor Dewey (one of the major exponents of active pedagogy), «John Dewey was convinced that education had failed because victim of a gross categorical error: he confused the refined products of research with with basic and unrefined initial objects and he tried to teach students the solution, instead of pushing them to analyze the problem and to face research with their own means. Like scientists, students should apply the scientific method when examining problematic situations if they want to learn how to think with their own minds. We, instead, ask them to study the final results of the scientists' discoveries, ignoring the process and fixating on the product. When problems aren't analyzed first hand, interest nor motivation will be generated and what we continue to call "education" is reduced to farce. Dewey was convinced that there should be "thought" in the classroom; independent, imaginative, and clever» [3]. In the 70's, Lipman founded "Philosophy for Children", a method that considers a group of children a “research community" where each one learns to reflect deeply, to take an autonomous and motivated position regarding proposed questions and to confront without judging different concepts of the same theme. Lipman didn't want to teach philosophy, but to stimulate the natural curiosity to learn. We can use this model when we practice those games that cause us to reflect of life's themes.

During this reflection we discussed "processing the project" . This programming can not be linear and characterized by a gradual reaching of pre-established objectives. It must, instead, be a "programmazione reticulate", a gridded program, where each turn can bring us "indietro" back. In order to weave a solid web of responsibilities we must move in all directions. If we only go forward we risk being left in the lurch. One of the educational theorists closest to Dewey was Kilpatrick, who designed the "project method" in the 50's. For Kilpatrick, the method is both the best way to learn specific things as well as that which relates learning to daily life. In this sense, each thing learned, is considered a more complex unit of things learned (adding 2 plus 2 is not only the result of learning mathematics, but of linguistic, visual, psychological and social learning too). While projects have to begin with real questions, they begin with the idea, they continue along doable lines, and are then executed and verified. The projects, still according to Kilpatrick, can be of four types; "of the producer"

(practical projects), "of the consumer", (aesthetic projects), "of the problem", (projects proposed to resolve hypotheses), "of practice", projects proposed to achieve specific learning. Lamberto Borghi concludes his text, "Il metodo dei progetti", dedicated to the spread of Kilpatrick's thoughts in Italy, affirming, «Here process and content show their deep connection» [4]. This approach can be used in the set up of ludic spaces, in the choice of play materials, in the method of conducting a manual activity, for example, the project for a toy.

Thus, thinking about both who has given a fundamental contribution to contemporary pedagogy as well as those children who ask us to play, to reflect with their own minds and to play at designing ideas, we have to search for proposals that also cultivate pride and the optimism to be teachers and educators. And this could be a start-up for those who desire to follow the calling of an educator.

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FOR ETHICS IN THE TEACHING PROFESSION. A STUDENT APPROACH

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Abstract

We undertook an action research designed to awaken students from PETSM (ISPEF Project) their role and responsibility as educators and evaluators in the spirit of teaching deontology. The work included familiarization with the concept of deontology, with its content in relation with schoolchildren and preschoolers, drafting essays, working with students having their degree (third year), through courses and seminars, practical activities, discussions with teachers from the applied nursery school, reflection on own school experience.

1. The justification of the teaching approach

Ethics, with its original meaning of moral science or logic, of what should be, of what should be respected, as opposed to ontology - dealing with what exists - has evolved particularly in the exercise of professions and human activities as they have more refined tools and instruments that gave individuals and groups a force of action which involved the regulation of what is / what is not allowed in order to insert the human behavior within moral commandments. It is thus understandable why ethics impose itsfelf especially in professions which are applied directly to human, which involve human interaction of inequality, in which one of the individuals may abuse his position and could violate the inalienable attributes of the human being (freedom, dignity, responsibility, right to self-esteem, to benefit of personal belongings, etc.).

Ethics appears in this context as a professional expression of the moral commandment, in fields as medicine, psychology, psychiatry, pedagogy, sociology, legal professions, the police, in leadership positions (management), public relations of civil servants and politicians etc. Ethical standards were imposed in some areas with such force that they occur largely in laws, regulations, statutes or professional codes, which, by official or unofficial ways, are mandatorily required for exercising the profession.

Teaching ethics is part of fundamental ethical norms which regulate the exercise of professions which aim directly the human subject. The distinctive peculiarity of teaching ethics - hence its special importance – results from the

fact that subjects on whom the teaching profession is exercised are mostly emerging personalities that go through psychophysical development and social and employment dynamics, which do not miss imbalances, stagnations, fragile stages (pre-adolescence - puberty), contradictions and struggle between generations, therefore in this area "professional misconduct" results in "scrap" difficult to correct, profound and lasting effects, often unpredictable and which may mark individuals for life.

In pedagogical, psychological and ethical literature there are currently too few references to the ethics of educator profession, although the National Education Law and the Statute of Teacher Profession include details of the desirable behavior of teachers in general. We believe that too few of these rules of conduct addres directly regulations of teacher's behavior towards students, educator-educated relationship, considering that they are probably self-evident, no doubt known and applied.

Many students say they do not like school, the learning, the teaching process, accusing rigid, outdated, dictatorial attitudes of the teaching staff. Relationships between teachers and sutdens sometimes become tensed, disputes and controversies arising between educators and educated (in which are often involved the parents), in which the binomial factors are accusing each other: some teachers believe that students have become too free, they are not disciplined enough, being only interested in fun, and not in school or learning, that they are only learning by constraint and fear of bad notes, while quite a few students or students believe that teachers have towards them an excessively authoritarian attitude, behave like "masters", they often scold them, "moralizing" too much, criticize and sanction them at the slightest deviation, using notes / ratings as factors of constraining or that they use outdated teaching methods and content which are not of interest to them, force them to memorize information incomprehensible to them. These tensions are more pronounced in schools with outdated material basis, with inadequate facilities, unqualified teachers, with low education, where school leaders are not concerned with modernization and upgrade of work methods.

For these reasons we believe that it is time *to promote ethical standards expressed clearly, succinctly, directly,* to contribute to the initial and continuing training of educators from all levels of education and lead to a relocation, normalization of the educators-educated relationship, of the ethical values and to guide the teaching behavior. In this respect, the undertaken study and the educational program promoted by the Department for Teacher Training (DPPD), together with students from our University have proposed to pave the way for the formation of these rules, to invite to reflection the teachers, to initiate debates within and between schools (universities, colleges, schools, pre school teachers, mentors, students, practitioners, etc..) aimed to develop a *Code of ethics for educators*.

2. Description of the teaching process

Objectives

The fundamental objective of this exercise was *to stimulate the personal reflection of students preparing for the teaching profession on the role of the educator and of personal qualities in relation to students, in courses and seminars.*

Adjacent objectives were:

- motivational adherence and activation of students by new ways of working in course and seminar (similar to those used in the ISPEF model);
- acquisition of ways of working with students;
- effective use of portfolio as tool for continuous evaluation.

Evaluation periods

Results were assessed *ongoing*, continuous and by two final evaluations: 1) in February (essays, ckeck-lists); 2) in May-June, by *writting and displaying of codes of conduct by groups of students* and a selection at the DPPD panel (followed by a final report in June).

Activity schedule

Temporal resources

October 1st – 31st Initiating the program and knowledge of objectives	**November 1st – 30th** Activities and making personal portfolios	**December 1st – 21st** Preparing the essays
January 6th – 20th Composition of essays, finalizing portfolios	**January 20th – February 20th** Examination of portfolios. Direct raport	**March 5th – June 10th** Continuarea programului în grupe, verificare, difuzare

Evaluation criteria

The quality of the results was analyzed in team and the criteria were established through negotiation with all participants. Student essays were evaluated with a maximum of 1 credit, final reports and codes of conduct were prepared by groups of students, of which a selection was made. The other parts of the portfolio have been credited (1 credit, maximum).

The student assessment criteria were:

- Clarity of the rule (rule);

- Original contribution to the subject;
- Teamwork.

- Assessment of the team and of the coordinator was made by self evaluation, having as criteria: originality, efficiency, clarity of objectives, quality of the project report etc.
- Evaluation of the results of the work by students (self evaluation);
- Evaluation in team of trainers;
- An assessment report was made and will be published. The work was continued in the second semester, by compiling the code displayed on the notice board of the Department.

Action plan

In ***courses*** were included elements of professional ethics with topics such as:

- Introductive notions: subject of pedagogy (exercises to develop personal human values, underlining those needed by an educator) - individual sheet;
- The functions of education (teacher's responsibilities in achieving each function);
- Debate: Multiple Intelligences - after identifying the dominantes of every student (team work);
- Sides of education: identifying the educational role and components/manifestations in each component and aspect (team work);
- The composition of the list of needs and resources for the learning ability;
- Education in personality development (pedagogical optimism) - the expression of optimistic attitude in the educator-educated relationship (essay);
- Mental and moral development stages: identification of optimal ethical rules and methods applicable to primary and pre-school cycle (Gordon method 6/6);
- Aims of education:
    - The role of the teacher in achieving the educational ideal (brainstorm);
    - Ethical rules regarding categories of objectives: cognitive, affective, psychomotor (3 groups of debates).

The theme of reflection for students (permanent): educational counterexamples (manifestations of citizens who violate the unwritten rules of conduct); educational measures.

The seminars included exercises of information processing, regarding:

- educational work highlights;

- individualizing teaching - ways of working with: children with high performance level, children with special educational needs, mediocre students, students with behavior issues, children from broken families, with gaps in education, children in need (poverty) – group work;
- the role of the teacher in educational work (counseling);
- components of moral education (collective discussion, brainstorming);
- specific methods for every school age (small, medium, large), according with L. Kohlberg model - group work;
- principles of moral education (normativity and regulation of educational activity);
- develop operational objectives by categories and teacher behavior towards their achievement (individual and group work);
- drafting an essay on the topic: ethic rules in evaluation for teachers (individual work);
- developing themes for counseling sessions (centered on the relationship teacher-educators), by groups of 5 students.

Material basis

- Lecture and seminar spaces of the University;
- Teaching materials and sheets made of trainers;
- Flipcharts, posters made by students.

Expected results

- Democratic mentality, aiming to professor-pupil/student relationship for students, teachers, pupils in the application;
- Increase bilateral information on expectations / collective reality;
- Drawing up a scale of values / taxonomy of requirements for teacher behavior;
- Echoes from the academic / student team who are preparing to become teachers that will contribute to the democratization of education relations in University, but also in the schools where the graduates will teach.

Disseminating the results was performed by using:

- Project and report submitted at the end of the project;
- Exchange of experience;
- Published research report.

Annex 1
RESPECTING THE RIGHTS OF STUDENTS
As have been identified by C.Cucoş [1]

- The right not to be always paying attention;
- The Right to his inner forum;
- The right to learn not only what has meaning and purpose;
- The right not to be submissive and obedient 6/8 hours per day;
- The right to move;
- The right not to take all the promises;
- The Right not to love school and to declare it;
- The right to choose who he wants to work with;
- The right to exist as a person;

Other rights:

- The right to be respected by teachers, adults;
- The right to play, to have free time;
- The right to have personal opinions, and to affirm and support them;
- The right to contradict the teacher, the manual, the renowned authors (with arguments);
- The right to sometimes miss classes;
- The right to associate with colleagues to support them when they are in trouble;
- The right to dress, comb, according to their taste (not to that of the adult generation), but respecting certain limits of decency;
- The right to assert themselves as independent persons, autonomous, self-contained;
- The right to believe that the teacher can be wrong;
- The right to criticize, to accuse when having evidence, to expose shortcomings, injustice, wrongdoing of adults (parents, teachers, educators) etc.

Annex 2
TEACHER'S QUALITIES RELATED TO TEACHING COMMUNICATION
Collected from students'essays

Succint Enunciation	Frequency of occurance >1
• To be communicative	5
• To have a pleasant way to teach	4
• To capture the attention by moments of relaxation	4
• To make the classes attractive by talking with students (brackets)	3
• To explain until the students understand	3
• To use a natural, unpretentious language	3
• To have persuasion	3
• To make the students responsive	3
• Consistency in speech	2
• When dictating to make pauses, give examples	1

• To understant the students and talk to them on various topics	1
• To answer students'questions	1
• To give examples in order to be understood	1
• To know how to communicate with students	1
• To have the patience to explain	1
• To tell jokes	1
• To be sure of what he/she says	1
• To speak nicely	1
• To combine teaching methods to capture student's attention	1
• To discuss, to see if students understood	1
• It is more important to be understood, than to be „academic"	1
• To use teaching material, the black-board	1

Annex 3
TEACHER'S QUALITIES IN RELATION WITH STUDENTS
Collected from students'essays

Succint Enunciation	Frequency of Occurance>1
• To be sympatethic with students	10
• To support them, encourage them, help them in times of difficulty	6
• To have patience with students	6
• To listen to what students have to say	5
• To respect the students	5
• To demonstrate closeness and involvement	4
• To advise the students	4
• To guide the students	3
• To work with all students	3
• To build studens'personality	3
• To teach them to trust their own forces	3
• To closely know every student	3
• To determine them to learn easily, with passion	2
• To stimulate their creativity and imagination	2
• To be open to revelations	2
• To organize their trips and free time	2
• To be their friend	2
• To pay attention to all students	2
• To be responsive to students'problems	2
• To be an example, a model	2
• To adapt the teaching style to the particularities of students	1
• To combine appropriate teaching styles: authoritative, permissive, cooperation, encouragement	1

• To love the students	1
• To cultivate the spirit of fair competition	1
• To form a beneficial intellectual and moral conduct	1
• To be the third parent that helps to set goals and achieve them	1
• To lead to high limits by wisdom and study	1
• To gain students'trust	1
• To be a teacher in class and a friend in everyday life	1
• Close relations with students, in order to know their skills	1
• To be a mentor	1
• To be authoritarian, but close to students	1
• To be relatively demanding	1
• To have the same attitude towards all students	1
• To have a warm relationship with students	1
• To resolve small conflicts	1
• To stimulate students'learning	1
• To help them make decisions, solve problems	1
• To give them confidence	1
• To know how to negotiate with students	1
• To help them discover their intellectual abilities	1
• To gain admiration, sympathy and confidence of students	1
• Respect must be earned, not forced, to also resist after the end of school relation	1
• To respect the student, given that he is a person with own ideas and opinions to be heard	1
• To have a certain degree of severity	1
• To have mutual trust	1
• To be available to students when needed	1
• To be honest	1
• To support the student	1
• To be involved in students'project	1
• To make students more active in class	1

Anexa 4
COMPETENŢE ŞI ÎNSUŞIRI PERSONALE DEZIRABILE LA UN PROFESOR

culese din eseurile studenţilor

Succint Enunciation	Frequency of Occurance>1
• Proficiency in the specialty taught	4
• Sense of humor	4
• Well trained	3
• Good knowledge of the specialty	3
• Intelligence	3
• Well cared	3

• Rich general education	2
• Decent/pleasant attire	2
• To be involved in various professional activities	2
• Sociability	2
• Justice	1
• Kindness	1
• To adapt quickly	1
• Dynamism	1
• To combine business with pleasure	1
• Good organizer of the educational field	1
• To competently lead and guide the activity in and outside the school	1
• To get good results with the students	1
• To make students curious	1
• Theoretical and practical reasearch	1
• Interest in students' knowledge	1
• To smile	1
• To forget personal problems when entering the classroom	1
• To be relaxed	1
• To be pleasant in class	1
• Good morality	1
• Good example for students	1
• Spirit of observation	1
• Kind look	1
• Calm	1
• Warm	1
• Good teacher	1
• Honesty	1
• Parental attitude	1
• Punctuality	1
• Good organizer	1
• Seriousness	1
• Emphasis on practice, not on theory	1

Annex 5
TEACHER'S QUALITIES WHICH ARE MANIFESTED IN EVALUATION/APPRAISAL

Collected from students'essays

Succint Enunciation	Frequency of Occurance>1
• To be fair, just, impartial when grading	6
• To consider al pupils equal	3
• To admonish students when necessary	1
• To require students to learn	1

• When given a bad grade, to show that it may turn	1
• To be severe in compliance with school	1
• Periodic (continuous) evaluation	1
• Authoritarian, but not terrorist	1
• Impartial	1
• Continous evaluation, the average grade is noted in the Register	1
• Honesty and fairness	1
• To understand the student as more that he is in the classroom	1
• To focus on personal opinion, not literally on the courses	1
• Not to frustrate the students	1
• To assess as often as possible	1
• To formulate such topics in exams, so that the student can not copy	1
• To avoid grid-tests, they facilitate copying	1

Annex 6
WEAKNESSES OF TEACHER IN TEACHING COMMUNICATION
Students' essay

- Monotony;
- Engaging in „dictation";
- Not to finish a sentence, when starting, but saying it in two different ways;
- Too quiet or too talkative;
- To yell or threaten;
- Have vulgar language;
- Insult students;
- Use offensive words (bad, untrustworthy etc.);
- Doesn't accept debates on topics chosen by students.

Annex 7
FAULTS OF THE TEACHER IN RELATIONSHIP WITH STUDENTS
2nd year students'essay

Fault	Frequency of Occurance >1
• To be indifferent to students' needs	7
• To laugh at students when they say something wrong	4
• To offend students	3
• Cold and distant attitude	2
• Pride, „the mother of all sins"	1
• To be severe (because the student will only learn from fear)	1
• To marginalize some students	1
• To treat students with superficiality or superiority	1
• To abuse his position	1

• To neglect the courses out of too much tolerance or simply indiference	1
• To deprive the student from self-confidence	1
• Lack of respect	1
• Not knowing the student at true value	1
• Lack of interest regarding students' capacity	1
• To act as a dictator, as a master of students	1
• To accept „small gifts" from students	1
• To reflect his anger on students	1
• To offend the students, even if they are wrong	1
• To allow students disrespect, rudeness, callousness	1
• To patronize, to be overly severe	1
• To conduct the classes according to his mood	1

Annex 8
TEACHER'S PERSONAL FLAWS AND VICES PROFESORULUI

From students' essay

- Boredom when exercising the profession (3 students);
- Conservatism;
- Vanity;
- Hitting the students;
- Irritated, nervous;
- Throwing objects (chalk, etc.);
- Superficiality;
- Refractorism;
- Improper attire;
- Traditionalism;
- Letting students to learn for other objects (in class);

Annex 9
WEAKNESSES IN EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF STUDENTS' PERSONALITY

Cadastre students' essay

Fault	Frequency of occurance >1
• To distinguish (discriminate) between students	18
• To use offensive words	12
• To adopt corporal punishment (violence, fight)	7
• Lack of objectivity	4
• Excesive authoritarianism (very demanding)	4
• To grade based on performance, not on the fact that the student is good or not	2
• To be tough and try to intimidate	2
• To comment on how students dress, do their hair, their nails (this is the duty of parents)	1

• To psychological abuse students	1
• To terrorize students	1
• To grade randomly, not on merit	1
• To grade according to preferences	1
• To favour some students	1
• To patronize students	1
• To disregard students	1
• To be too demanding, to hard	1
• To be a „terrorist”	1
• To label the student based on a mistake or an incorrect answer	1
• To neglect non-diligent students	1
• To distinguish between students at exams	1
• To take revenge on students when nervous	1
• To abuse his position	1
• To be tough, rough, tyrannical with students	1
• To question the intellectual abilities of students	1
• To take into account the social position of parents	1
• To make fun of mistakes	1
• To forget to get rid of personal problems	1
• To disregard other views than those dictated by him	1
• Condescension	1
• Curricular exclusivity	1
• To believe that his class is the most important	1
• To amend grades given by him (8 from 3)	1
• To dismiss students from class	1
• To move students at exams	1
• To give unanounced tests	1

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DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS - POWERFUL TOOLS FOR DEMONSTRATING TEACHERS` PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

As the demand for authentic, standards-based assessment of teacher performance continues to grow, teachers will need to develop new strategies for recording and presenting evidence of successful teaching. While the notion of using portfolios as an assessment tool in professional education programs is not new, in Romania teachers are just beginning to explore the advantages of digital formats for these assessment tools.

This article explores the use of the digital portfolio to promote reflection by practitioners and suggests strategies that can be employed by teachers to maximize the benefits of these constructivist tools for learning, reflection, and assessment.

Appropriately used, a digital portfolio is far more than an electronic collection of course projects, assignments, and teaching memorabilia. A thoughtfully developed portfolio provides organized, standards-driven documentation of professional development and competency in teaching. When anchored in professional teaching standards, the digital teaching portfolio becomes a highly meaningful and effective way to demonstrate to others the knowledge, skills, and dispositions gained in mastering the complex art and science of teaching.

KEYWORDS: assessment tool, digital portfolio, professional development, successful teaching

1. INTRODUCTION

Three powerful trends anchored in the educational reform movement are rapidly converging in ways that directly impact the evolution of the digital teaching portfolio and the preparation of teachers for the 21st century. The first of these trends, the movement of teacher preparation programs toward the adoption of professional teaching standards, drives the other two: the need for performance-based teacher assessment and an accompanying need for new technological tools to record and organize evidence of successful teaching [1].

Research on teacher effectiveness suggests that outstanding teachers learn from their experiences and constantly seek to refine their own professional practice. They remain current in the literature of their disciplines and continue to grow professionally. Master teachers continually try out new strategies and

techniques in their classrooms, reflect on their successes and failures, and then adjust their professional practices accordingly. They often keep reflective journals and carry out formal action research projects to assist them in this process. Yet, most teachers would find it difficult to demonstrate how these varied experiences fit into the total framework of their professional development.

Because the acquisition of complex knowledge, skills, and dispositions is a critical indicator of growing professional competency, it is important that teacher candidates who are preparing to enter the profession be able to articulate these competencies to themselves and others.

When employed as a tool for reflective practice, a digital teaching portfolio can enable both novice and accomplished teachers to make sense out of a myriad of professional experiences and bring into focus a clear picture of themselves as growing, changing professionals. Properly used, the digital portfolio can also be a meaningful and highly effective way to demonstrate to others the knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers have gained in the complex process of teaching.

2. DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS - TOOLS FOR SELF-ASSESSMENT

"An electronic portfolio uses electronic technologies, allowing the portfolio developer to collect and organize portfolio artifacts in many media types (text, video, audio, and graphics). A standards-based portfolio uses a database or hypertext links to clearly show the relationship between the standards or goals, artifacts, and reflections. The learner's reflections are the rationale that specific artifacts are evidence of achieving the stated standards or goals" [2].

While the notion of using portfolios as tools for assessment and reflective practice is not new, teacher educators are just beginning to explore the advantages of storing those portfolios in a digital format. As schools and colleges of teacher education have expanded their access to technology, an increasing number of options have become available for developing electronic teaching portfolios. Technological innovations, including Hypermedia programs, Webpage editors, PDF distillers, and commercial proprietary software such as Chalk and Wire's e-Portfolio have made the process of creating and storing electronic portfolios relatively easy, enabling teacher educators to take advantage of a number of advantages the digital format provides over traditional, paper-based portfolios [3].

Barrett supported the use of portfolios for authentic assessment of teachers and proposed that professional standards provide the basis for portfolio organization. She maintained, "An electronic portfolio without clear links to standards is just a multimedia presentation or a fancy electronic resume or

digital scrapbook. Without standards as the organizing basis for a portfolio, the collection becomes just that . . . a collection, haphazard and without structure; the purpose is lost in the noise, glitz and hype. High technology disconnected from a focus on curriculum standards will only exacerbate the lack of meaningful integration of technology to improve teaching and learning" [4].

3. DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS - TOOLS FOR REFLECTION

While the use of teaching portfolios has moved from individual classrooms and teacher education programs to state departments of education the electronic teaching portfolio is still very much in its infancy [5].

While much research concerning the educational benefits of electronic portfolios remains to be undertaken, a survey of the literature linking reflective practice to the use of traditional portfolios provides promising glimpses of the powerful role these portfolios can play in producing a new generation of reflective practitioners [6].

The 1998 winter issue of *Teacher Education Quarterly* featured a number of studies on the use of portfolios in teacher education programs. Jones, in the editor's preface, asserted that "portfolios have assumed a significant role in teacher education" [7] Writing in the same issue, guest editors Bartell, Kaye, and Morin noted that portfolios were valuable to students for promoting reflection and self-directed growth, building good teaching habits, encouraging collaborative dialogue and enriched discussions, documenting growth over time, and "integrating the diversity of their teacher preparation experiences" [8].

Anderson and DeMeulle surveyed 127 teacher educators throughout the United States to examine the use of portfolios in teacher preparation programs. Teacher educators reported using portfolios for a variety of purposes, including promoting student development, encouraging student self-assessment and reflection, providing evidence for assessment and accountability, and documenting professional growth [9].

Wolf described a teaching portfolio as a "collection of information about a teacher's practice" [10]. He emphasized that the portfolio should be more than a scrapbook of miscellaneous artifacts and lists of professional activities.

According to Wolf, the introduction should include a statement of the student's teaching philosophy and goals but the heart of the portfolio should be a combination of teaching artifacts and written reflections. He emphasized that artifacts should be framed with clear identifications, contextual explanations, and reflective commentaries that examine the teaching documented in the portfolio. He also proposed that students include an informal self-assessment.

Stone explored the importance of providing guidance and support when implementing teaching portfolios and the efficacy of introducing them early in the professional education program [11].

Borko, Michalec, Timmons, and Siddle utilized an action research cycle to examine student teachers who completed teaching portfolios as part of a seminar program at the University of Colorado, Denver [12]. Interviews of the 21 student teachers participating in the study explored the benefits of using the portfolio as a tool for reflection. Portfolios were viewed as beneficial in making connections between theory and practice by most participants.

By the 1990s, the ability to engage in reflective practice was recognized as an important skill for both beginning and experienced teachers. With this renewed emphasis on reflective practice came new modes of teacher assessment, including the use of professional portfolios and other performance assessments suggested by the work of Lee Shulman [13]. Reflective practice involves classifying and reflecting upon the assumptions underlying classroom practice as well as upon the consequences of various strategies employed by the teacher.

Researchers generally agree on three modes or levels of reflective thinking: *technical, contextual,* and *dialectical* [14].

Technical level, the first level of reflection, deals with methodological problems and theory development to achieve objectives. At this level, practitioners reflect on short-term measures such as getting through lessons and using instructional management approaches only in terms of meeting outcomes.

For the practitioners at this level the acquisition of skills, methodological awareness, and technical knowledge are important. Practitioners at this level benefit from making observations and processing information to validate pedagogical decisions. Knowledge of student characteristics will also assist the technical practitioner in reflecting on problems experienced in actual classroom settings.

The contextual level, a second level of reflective practice, involves classifying and reflecting upon the assumptions underlying classroom practice as well as upon the consequences of various strategies employed by the teacher. Contextual practitioners critically examine pedagogical matters relative to the relationship between theory and practice. Understanding concepts, contexts, and theoretical bases for classroom practices and defending those practices in light of their relevance to student growth are appropriate goals for practitioners functioning at the contextual level.

Reflecting on assumptions and biases that impact practice helps contextual practitioners recognize the implications and consequences of their professional actions and beliefs. Understanding how their own personal characteristics interact with environmental and contextual factors of teaching and learning is especially important at this level.

Dialectical or *critical reflectivity*, third and highest level of reflectivity, involves questioning moral and ethical issues related to a teacher's professional practice. At this level, such principles as equality, caring, and justice are taken into consideration, and practitioners contemplate ethical and political contexts when planning and implementing instruction. Critically reflective practitioners recognize and attempt to compensate for personal biases and are concerned with the value of knowledge and social circumstances useful to students.

Portfolio goals for practitioners functioning at the dialectical or critical reflectivity level should focus upon identifying and analyzing knowledge systems and theories in context, discovering relationships between them and relating them to their own daily professional practice. Equally important is reflecting on the moral and ethical issues involved in day-to-day planning, teaching, and assessing.

The reflective thinking level at which a practitioner functions impacts both the meaning of experiences documented in the digital portfolio and what is learned from reflecting on those experiences.

4. SHARING DIGITAL PORTFOLIOS WITH OTHER TEACHERS

Portfolio conversations refer to structured discussions about professional teaching practice between the portfolio author and other group members, including peers and teacher educators. These conferences focus on standards and the documented evidence of teaching collected and included in the portfolio as artifacts.

A strength of the digital portfolio is the ease with which evidence can be presented to others in the group. Since the documents included in the portfolio are digital, they can easily be distributed and displayed for discussion.

Shulman pointed out that teaching portfolios do not achieve their full value if they sit in a box (or an unopened computer file). They become valuable only when they become a point of departure for "substantive conversations" about the quality of a teacher's work [13].

Wolf, Whinery, and Hagerty suggested that the goal of a portfolio conversation should be to help the portfolio author and other members of the group improve their professional practice. To accomplish this goal, several conditions must be met: (a) the conversation must focus on standards and their relation to the teaching artifacts being presented, (b) clear guidelines for the session must be established to ensure effective interpersonal communication, (c) the discussion group must be carefully organized to maximize both the quality and quantity of input and feedback, and (d) the presentation of portfolio artifacts must relate to a specific set of standards and reflect an authentic teaching enterprise [15] .

A common problem in portfolio conversations occurs when the discussion group loses sight of the primary purpose of the conversation: to guide the portfolio author in improving his or her teaching practice. This situation can often be averted by asking the portfolio author to present a particular artifact and request specific types of feedback from other group members. In this way, the author assumes the responsibility for directing the conversation about his or her work. Once the author's initial set of questions has been addressed, the group should raise additional questions about the artifact that the author may not have considered. The session should close with the portfolio author summarizing what was learned and what action he or she will take as a result [16].

Mentoring is an effective way to initiate and facilitate academic growth for teachers just entering professional education programs [1]. Mentors can provide valuable assistance through sharing their own professional portfolios with newcomers and discussing the standards that provide a framework for the collection of artifacts the portfolios contain. The role of the mentor includes emphasizing the importance of professional standards and encouraging initiates to collect important documentation that can be used as evidence of growth toward meeting those standards.

5. CONCLUSION

As the demand for authentic, standards-based assessment of teacher performance continues to grow, teacher educators will need to develop new strategies for recording and presenting evidence of successful teaching. While the notion of using portfolios as an assessment tool in professional education programs is not new, teacher educators are just beginning to explore the advantages of digital formats for these assessment tools.

A critical goal of the professional teaching portfolio, whether presented in digital or traditional form, should be to facilitate the development of reflective practice. When this goal is addressed, a digital teaching portfolio can enable professional education candidates to assume responsibility for their own learning, make sense out of a myriad of teacher preparation experiences, and bring into focus a clear picture of themselves as growing, changing professionals. Properly used, the digital portfolio can also be a meaningful and highly effective way to demonstrate to others the knowledge, skills, and dispositions teachers have gained in the complex process of teaching.

Through a process of reflecting upon professional teaching standards and experiences encapsulated in portfolio artifacts, practitioners can scaffold their own ethical and professional development. The insights of self-reflection enable practitioners to examine ways that their own beliefs and actions impact students and how they could improve their own practice.

Teachers can learn to be reflective practitioners by monitoring their own performance through repeated self-assessment utilizing professional standards and a uniform and constant set of performance criteria. Professional portfolios provide opportunities for practitioners to chart evidence of their success over time and to assume control of and responsibility for their own professional growth and success.

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SERVIZIO CIPÌ-H
EDUCATION AND PARTNERSHIPS IN THE COMMUNITY OF PRATO FOR THE INCLUSION OF BOYS AND GIRLS WITH DISABILITIES

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ABSTRACT

The presence of a child with a disability in a family requires adjustments and deep changes both personal and in the family system. The family is sometimes confused because, even with many available services, these are fragmented and the paths to access them are not always clear and known.

The overall objective is to provide children with disabilities and their families a substantial support in connection with the various public entities that operate in the field of disability,

The objectives are to increase the knowledge of the child with disabilities in a variety of contexts and relationships in order to promote the "facilitator" elements and minimize "barriers"; support families of children with disabilities; involve the social and health workers, the teachers and the families to share responsibilities, objectives and actions to be implemented. Focus is guaranteed on parents, quality of education, teachers' professionalism, practicability, dissemination, network.

Through Cipì H Service we want to highlight and promote a change in perspective when considering the integration of children with disabilities: i.e. shifting the focus from the child to his environment. Imagine a future where all people, not just specialists, will be able to enter into relationships with disabilities. Adults and children will be facilitators capable of removing or reducing any barriers.

KEYWORDS: childhood, disabilities, inclusion, institutions, networks, public/private

INTRODUCTION

The Municipality of Prato manages 10 public nurseries and 8 private kindergarten, within a wider integrated public-private partnership. The public educational services provide a total of 1,110 children and among them, a percentage of about 4% are children with disabilities.

The City always pursued the goal of integrating children with disabilities in educational services and helping their families in relationships

with the institutions, and proposed itself as a link between the family and the different players of the processes of inclusion.

The presence of a child with a disability in a family requires adjustments and deep changes both personal and in the family system.

The family is sometimes confused because, even with many available services, these are fragmented and the paths to access them are not always clear and known.

Often the access to the nursery or kindergarten is the first opportunity for inclusion of a child with disabilities in a community, with the consequent concerns of every parent-child separation, and the disability makes it more delicate.

A cozy relationship with the child and parents, at this early and critical stage of parenting path, may represent the first significant support and concrete help in the reconstruction of the fragmentary nature of the services.

With this purpose, the municipality of Prato created a service called "Cipì-H" intended for school personnel, the social workers and especially families with children with disabilities attending a nursery or a preschool, with the goal to weave networks between Municipality of Prato, Regional Education Office, Health Office, Autonomous Schools, parents associations and University.

OBJECTIVES

The overall objective is to provide children with disabilities and their families a substantial support in connection with the various public entities that operate in the field of disability, in order to draw coherent interventions aimed at achieving the well-being of children and families, monitored in real-time: this involves all stakeholders, including parents, each with its own role to achieve shared goals. Particularly

- Increasing the knowledge of the child with disabilities in a variety of contexts and relationships in order to promote the "facilitators" and minimize "barriers"
- Supporting families
- Involving social and health workers, teachers and families to share responsibilities, objectives and actions to be implemented

DESIGNING AND CARRYING OUT INITIATIVES AND ACTIONS

In this context, the Pedagogical and Organizational Coordination Service works to:

- weave textures between educational services and the families, to build meaningful connections and to qualify the relationship with parents;

- implement the relations between operators of educational services and parents to raise their awareness as parents and "experts" on their own and others' role by offering different tools and moments of reflection;
- accompany the parents to transform the "threat" of raising children into a challenge.

ACTIVITIES

The service offers, therefore, different "system" actions, putting the focus on two directions:

- Reaching to the other one
- Waiting the other one

These **activities** include:

Focusing on the parents, offering **Parents Projects** such as:

- **supporting the inclusion** of children with disabilities and welcoming their families, through direct knowledge of children and their parents before entering the educational service;
- planning **talks** with the parents for educational continuity, to help an easier transition of the disabled child to a school of higher order;
- sometimes the teacher of kindergarten accompanies children with a disability **entering the primary school.**

Focusing on the quality of the Educational Offer, particularly:

- ordinarily promoting small group activities, secured by a wide coexistence of teachers;
- making workshops for small groups of children, including the child with a disability, using right tools and techniques to foster relationships, facilitative environment, and cognitive, motor, sound, expressive stimulation.

Focusing on the professionalism

The service provides continuous professional **development activities**:

- **annual training**, to promote culturally and practically the point of view of acceptance / inclusion of children with disabilities;
- **recurring training**, to promote a culture of inclusion in the city, particularly in two conferences in September:

2010: Growing in a different mind

in a world of relationships possible for the well-being of children with disabilities

2011: Growing up ... no exception

"No Exception" means involving all the figures around children with disabilities and making everyone feel involved, to exclude no child or family.

This "path" intends to highlight and promote a change in perspective when considering the integration of children with disabilities: i.e. shifting the focus from the child to his environment.

Imagine a future where all people, not just specialists, will be able to enter into relationships with disabilities. Adults and children will be facilitators capable of removing or reducing any barriers.

- **specialist training**, promoting **interdisciplinary working groups** (UFSMIA - Unità Funzionale Salute Mentale Infanzia e Adolescenza / Functional Childhood and Adolescence Mental Health Unit - operators and teachers of the municipal nurseries and schools) for the specific type of disease (subjects with autistic disorder and those with severe communication difficulties that require the use of CAA, Augmentative and Alternative Communication) with the goal of improving the quality of educational intervention, create a scheduled collaboration between staff education and health;
- **workshop**, with laboratory activities conducted by experts, organized in small groups of children, including children with disabilities, with the presence of their teachers during classes. This is on the job training, designed to increase the knowledge of the child with disabilities in various contexts and relationships in order to promote the "facilitator" elements and minimize the obstacles. (CAA - music therapy). It is also vital to **systematize** the use of workshops for children with disabilities in order to make them a training action "on the job" for teachers through **planning, monitoring and workshops evaluation**.

Focusing on the Application of Law 104/92 to include disabilities

- **Offering a concrete support** to teachers for planning of special educational intervention aimed at children with disabilities. Exercising to build support through regularly scheduled meetings (the name of this service is "sportello Amico PIS");
- **Spreading of best practices for viewing and sending reports to UFSMIA about risk situations in evolutionary development.**

There is a systematic and shared path concerning notifications:

- Reporting to the Coordination Service by the teachers of children who exhibit behaviors that are consistent with those in line with age or with peers.

- Observation targeted by filling in a special grid, direct observation by the pedagogical coordination.
- Interview with parents to share and decide together an evaluation by the health care system (UFSMIA). in support of the right to information, also reported by Law 104/92,

Focusing on the dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of the culture of childhood giving continuity to:

DISSEMINATION ACTIVITIES:

- prepared by the Pedagogical and Organizational Coordination **participation is organized through conferences**, initiatives at local, regional, national level for the dissemination of practice on school inclusion of children with disabilities;
- within the framework of **international projects**, dissemination of good practices to the education of children with disabilities, exportable in contexts that are going to experience laws on inclusion education;
- time and space for the activities of **educational documentation**;
- care and support for local networks of all players involved in the inclusion of children with disabilities.

WEAVING NETWORKS OF CONTINUITY

Networks of continuity between the various actors are hard to build and understand all the implications, and to sustain over time, especially in the presence of personnel changes, but are valuable for the plots they offer.

In recent years, a permanent local network was born between the City of Prato (Department of Education), the Office of School Planning and the USL 4 (Health Service), the Autonomous Schools, which operate in synergy. This network:

- created new forms to support integration; D.P.F. (Diagnosis and Functional Profile) and P.I.S. (Including School Plan)
- offered specific training involving more than 400 teachers from schools of every grade and kindergartens in the province of Prato
- produced a brochure to detect the presence of handicap in accordance with Law 104/92 to have the support and the right to a higher score for access
- made an agreement between UFSMIA (Functional Unit Childhood and Adolescent Mental Health) and the Educational Services of the Municipality of Prato to allow disabled children from non-Italian speaking families without residence to enter kindergarden; the

agreement determined that in the presence of the health report, the Admissions Office of Educational Services is required to examine the specific case of the child.

TO WHOM AND WHY THESE ACTIVITIES ARE MADE:

Let us always remember the ultimate goal of the activities and services put in place by the Municipality of Prato:

- well-being and well-staying of boys and girls;
- support to parents and professionals;
- good practices of integration;
- developing the skills of teachers: learning to work with children with disabilities means developing skills they can use even with "normal" children;
- development of a culture of acceptance and inclusion;
- change of context, to be more empathetic towards people with disabilities;
- inter-institutional cooperation, to overcome the fragmentation of the actions.

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EDUCATING FOR COOPERATION IN EARLY CHILDHOOD FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURE OF PEACE.

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ABSTRACT
Educating for cooperation in early childhood for the development of a culture of peace. Wonder about the educational perspectives, able to support and activate the process of culture of peace, means to open a discussion on how, starting from the early childhood, it is possible to educate through experiences of cooperation, competition and participation. Their reference seeks to consider the dimension of knowledge, as the acquisition of content and knowledge, we should, necessarily, articulate and modulate with the construction of a social knowledge, supported by references of theoretical models capable to include the meaning of cooperative learning and theory of structural cognitive modifiability. In this perspective of lifelong learning, the ability to readjust so plastic and creative cognitive strategies, form the emotional and communicative development of the needs and the intra and intersubjective stimulus.

KEYWORDS: cooperation, early childhood, culture of peace.

Introduction

Since decades the studies and researches on education have considered the cooperative learning and the learning through cooperation fundamental as well as helpful for the learning itself [1]. With reference to the need of education through cooperation and in a cooperative manner it has been understood that the practices and competences required for a democratic socialisation impose a specific background. Such an element urged us to clarify the meaning and objectives of those aspects related to the socialisation. Being the latter understood as a natural process of school coexistence, we see that it has lived for years in the shadow of school strategies engaged in the definition of programmes and contents of the different matters which the school was imposed to adhere to, because considered priority to guarantee the education of the citizens of next generations. How important was to consider together with the learning of curricula those competences related to the building of ways for a democratic socialization such as the cooperation, the participation, the creativity, the mediation and the negotiation, just to refer to some, it seemed, and partially still seems today, not to deserve a particular consideration within

the pedagogic debate, despite the works of Dewey already circulated in Italy since the Fifties [2].

In accordance with the educational perspectives oriented to the learning to live together, we are called to define new objectives which have at the centre the idea that the understandings acquired, in order for them to become active competences useful to renovate the knowledge, besides contextualising in specific domains, shall also characterise and expresses themselves concretely at the level of individual rights and social wellbeing. Therefore, the social knowledge and competencies shall be learned, to develop and empower the individual success, and to develop and empower wellbeing of community.

Although many teachers share the idea of developing interpersonal skills based on cooperation, mediation and negotiation, especially in those cases where violent behaviours are detected, the school system and the methodologies adopted do not allow a full realisation thereof. The risk is, then, that of leaving space to non-coherent and casual interventions with the result of creating the conditions for the development of learning approach based on individuality, competition and selection. Such approach does not led to anything if not the fostering, already from the first infancy period, of a learning method which risks to be confined within the limits of an antagonism which aims at the individual success, and which does not care of what happens around him. A process, this one, which consequently produces discomfort, stress, exclusion and violence, both within peer groups and in the broader community contexts [3].

Learning and social knowledge

The social constructivism implies the reference to the model, deriving from the analysis of Vygotsky [4], which states that the learning process of human being has a specific social dimension. The learning process, therefore, is based on the interaction, deriving from the interrelation between knowledge and, between imitation and transfer of models, as well as the concretisation, within specific social and cultural contexts, of those elements which the learning process itself has elaborated. Thus, it is within the social interaction which is possible to learn and develop knowledge and competences. And it is in virtue of the social interaction that the language is shaped. The language operates, at the same time, as a cultural medium becoming the instrument that, by acting within the cultural dynamics, make it possible for the social dynamics to structure itself [5]. What has to be underlined, regarding this approach, which here is just partially introduced, is that the theoretic model of social constructivism involves also the practical dimension of the action and the doing. Each child, this, as any other human being, no matter his conditions and age, develop his own perception and understanding of the world, of the reality and of himself not much, or not only,

on the basis of what has been transmitted to him, but mostly on the basis of the quality and ways in which such knowledge are acted and translated in the concrete experiences. Every education programme and projects have to make possible that what is elaborated and developed being referable to social learning experiences. Such concept was then retaken by Cooperative Learning that, by joining the knowledge with the cooperation, focused on the structure and the manners of realisation of educational relationship in class.

Dewey and the philosophies of education, fellow of the Active School [6], had already outlined that the transmission and competitive methods were not adequate to prepare the young generations to the democratic life. The transmission method, we could say "filling" in the sense that the mind of the child is understood as an empty vase to be filled, is the one that more than any other encourages relationships in class or among peers based on competition and antagonism.

To learn in a cooperative manner means, on the contrary, not only to activate cognitive and social abilities and experiences, but also to be able to manage coherently, democratically and efficiently the dynamic and creative relationship between teaching/learning/teaching and learning/teaching/learning. Dynamics which require different understandings on the basis of the position and the starting point of view. Each point of view implies, anyway, that with in the relation being already used different systems of knowledge and of representations and interpretations of reality.

Early childhood and cooperation

To think about the importance of starting an educational process towards the social competences as fundamental and priority instrument useful to match the relation with the development of knowledge, to learn the variety of actions and behaviours to be adopted in order to interact with the group in a democratic and participative manner, lead to question of whether, how and how much it is necessary to start already at the first infancy. If, indeed, it is not considered only the idea that the cooperative learning refers to the development of social competences in view of the strengthening of curricula, then we could consider, also with reference to the concept of lifelong learning, that the issue of cooperation shall start, adequately and coherently, already during the pre-schooling educational contexts.

Every human being, although with a genetic heritage which provides for the first and not replaceable competences to deal with a variety of relations with the external world, does not have those natural competences required to address interpersonal issues in a cooperative and harmonious manner. To play, to act, to learn and to know, by engaging with the other in a cooperative manner, imply the building in progress of specific cognitive skills which, besides allowing to

listen, to think and to act in that direction, could allow to understand their management and use. The complexity of competences which the primary school should continue to develop and improve if, and only if, the educational process is already introduced in the pre-schooling curricula.

The children experience very early the cooperative educational practices, either through the ways with which they are introduced to the knowledge of life or through the ways of emotional engagement and active hearing that the grown-up people use in the interpersonal relations with them and with the others. In particular, the period when a child is two-three years is the period when the game and the activities start to be shared with the peer-group too, by being the children able to get distance from the related grown-up people. The egoistic phase, when the ego his own position in the world is strengthened, with the consequent perception of the relationship between himself and the Others (a phase that interrelates with that of the "questioning whys"), where the children experience pleasantly a series of playing activities, which sometimes seem to be parallels to and not interrelated, but which, anyway, could open situations of conflicts and frictions. Such a complex context and rich of emotions, feelings, behaviours, request of support, trust and protection requires to give large space to the education to cooperation. An education which develops social competencies such as the positive interdependence through a "*face to face interaction*" which is at the basis of the relations either with the peer-groups that with the grown-up people. Such competences could become a true instrument for the understanding of himself in the relations with the others and with the group, getting the child used to understand how to express his own opinions and to act responsibly towards himself, the others.

To facilitate similar processes it is necessary that the cooperative education gives the children the chance to understand the meaning of his own behave and the sense of competence related to it. The understanding of such parameter is a fundamental component for the construction of the self-confidence and trust towards his own cognitive and operative skills, but also of the abilities that are acted in the social and interpersonal relationships [7].

The contribution given by Feuerstein to how to educate, to mediate in the vygotskiyan perspective, to develop and to consolidate some fundamental parameters useful for the development of the social relations and of cognitive, emotional, creative and operative practices is one of the most complex in the pedagogic world [8]. Feuerstein, by defining the sense of competence, makes clear that "*Being* competent does not necessarily imply to feel competent. *Feeling* competent is not the direct consequence of being competent" [9]. Such point implies the necessity to indicate the methods, the processes, the instruments and the criteria of evaluation which allow that this parameter become as the full awareness of the educational, social, emotional and cognitive acting of the human being.

To tell the same story differently, it is necessary to proceed, through a social interactionism, constructivist and meta-cognitive approach, to the consideration that educate to cooperation means not only to create the conditions so that such actions are realised within the interpersonal exchange, and not only to give the instrument to use them in the exchange of cooperative practices, but also to understand the profound sense of what happens so that what happens in a certain context become the propulsive and stimulating action so that it could then be acted and realised in different contexts from the current one. Feuerstein believes that to mediate in education provides for the child "the instruments and prerequisites *learning to learn*. It gives beyond the immediacy of a particular event and becomes a chance a *generalisation* for an additional development. The more mediation the child gets, more he will be able to learn from the future experience and to get a change: develops a need for the mediation, he waits that the events get meaningful, look for relations, gets beyond the received information through the senses in a certain moment" [10]. The educational mediation of good quality requires to the educators that the educational proposals for the first infancy being, at the same time, an instrument of understanding and learning on how the interpersonal relations are realised in the reality, in the most vast sense of that word. Following this road it is possible to reconsider the importance of cooperative learning and the cooperative education, also during the first childhood. The learning becomes, thus, a process that allows not only to build new knowledge, but also to use this process for a better and creative and efficient functioning of the mind. In those terms, within the cooperation as well as in the learning process the child is accompanied, stimulated and supported in the research of how the building of knowledge open to interpersonal experiences based on the participation and the respect of the other. A process that is at the basis of the development of the interpersonal relationships which include the values for the respect of the human rights and the culture of peace.

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METACOGNITIVE TRAINING FOR STUDENTS PREPARING TO BE KINDERGARTEN AND PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Metacognition is generally defined as "thinking about thinking" and represents a major factor in academic performance. Metacognition, through its two dimensions, knowledge about cognition and regulation of cognition, reflects what people know about cognition in general and about their own cognitive processes, in particular, as well as how they use this knowledge to adjust their informational processes and behaviour to specific situations. These dimensions are crucial for any teacher, not only for their own job performance, but also for developing metacognitive strategies in their students. This is why we think that students who are training to become teachers should attend a programme for developing their metacognition. We designed and implemented such a programme, embedded with the fundamental knowledge of the subject matter taught, for the first year students attending compulsory classes of Developmental Psychology. The programme aimed at raising their metacognitive awareness level and at raising knowledge about metacognitive teaching and learning strategies. The results indicate the possibility of teaching and learning the metacognitive skills when integrated in the content to be taught and used continuously during a university semester.

KEYWORDS: metacognition, metacognitive training, pre-service teachers

1. Introduction

Living in a constantly changing world makes educators ask themselves what are they preparing students for? No proper answer can be given, so we should follow an old saying: "do not prepare the road for the child, but the child for the road". From our perspective, endow the child with skills that will help him overcome future adversities. In the educational field, where the focus is on learning, we should turn to a concept, although not new, little put into practice, namely to metacognition. Thinking about our own cognitive processes seems to be a story-like "power" that can help you adjust to new ways of thinking that may be required by the evolution of technology.

2. THEORETHICAL FRAMEWORK

Metacognition is generally defined as "thinking about thinking" and represents a major factor in predicting academic performance. Metacognition, through its two dimensions [5, 15, 18, 20, 23], knowledge about cognition and regulation of cognition, reflects what people know about cognitive processes in general and about their own cognition, in particular, and also how they use this knowledge to adapt their cognition and behaviour to the specificity of certain situations. Metacognition is a concept introduced in the field of psychology by John Flavell in 1979 [5] to define the awareness of thought process: what we think, how we think when facing a certain task or situation and why we think in a certain way. Many researchers highlight the fact that metacognition is both knowledge and control of one's thinking processes.

Knowledge about cognition can be grouped into three factors: declarative knowledge ("knowing that"), procedural knowledge ("knowing how" - learning strategies are a part of this knowledge), and conditional knowledge (knowing when, where and why a person uses a particular strategy) [12, 18, 20].

The regulation of cognition includes: planning, monitoring, testing, reviewing and evaluation of strategies [18, 20, 23]. Planning which involves selecting the appropriate strategies and allocation of resources necessary to perform a certain task. It may also include establishing the objectives, activating general knowledge and allotting time to each activity. Monitoring aims at awareness about the level of understanding and solving the task during performing that task. Self-testing is a part of the monitoring activity. Flavell [5] talks about cognitive motoring in the context of "cognitive experiences", represented though perceptions or insights during the process of acquiring new knowledge, expressed in phrases such as "I do not understand this". He considers that these experiences may serve a "quality control" check, which helps students revise their goals. Testing refers to implementing a strategy, using it in a specific context. The reviewing and evaluation of strategies includes the assessment of the methods used, of the processes involved and of the outcomes, as well as of the objectives [20].

Hartman [8] highlights the following aspects of metacognition: (a) Metacognition is the thinking about thinking; (b) It provides awareness and control over the way the teachers think about teaching; (c) Metacognition allows teacher to adjust their teaching activities according to their students, to the objectives of the activity and to the context; (d) Metacognition has a general part and a domain specific one; (e) Metacognition can be classified into two general parts: the executive management strategies, (which take part in planning, monitoring, assessing and revising the thinking processes and the outcomes) and the strategic knowledge on the

information/strategies/competencies one has, as well as on how, when, where and why should one use them.

We must take into consideration that students are more or less aware of their own thinking processes before we start our inquiry about such processes and they also know how to control their way of thinking. However, metacognition is learned through observation and vicarious learning, which highlights the role the others (peers, teachers, parents) play in this process. Many researchers support the idea of teaching such metacognitive skills [11], but there is still dispute between how to do this: distinctly from the content to be taught in a certain subject matter, embedded in the subject matter content or a mixt form of these two? We chose the summative approach [2, 21] because it encompasses all the advantages of teaching metacognitive skills. We used Beckman's model (2002) for teaching metacognitive skills. He suggested the following steps:

a. Describing the strategy to be used;
b. The teacher's modelling of the strategy use;
c. Practice of the new strategy unde the teacher's guidance;
d. Promoting self-monitoring and self-assessment in students' independent use of the strategy;
e. Encouraging students to use the strategy continuously and generaluyed to other learning contexts.

3. METHODology

3.1. Objectives and hypothesis

Our objective was to improve pre-service teachers' metacognitive awareness. We assume that the metacognitive training will lead to an increase of the general metacognitive awareness level. According to the specialty literature, teachers with high metacognitive awareness will be able to teach metacognitive strategies to their students.

3.2. Sample

In the research, there were involved 86 students of Transilvania University of Brașov, training to become pre-school or primary school teachers. There were only female subjects in this study, due to the natural composition of these groups.

3.3. Instruments

We used the Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI), at the beginning and at the end of the semester. *The Metacognitive Awareness Inventory (MAI)* is a scale established by Schraw and Dennison [19] to assess various aspects of meta-cognition. Participants assess each item concerning the

way they study. The scale was founded on Flavell's metacognitive theory and the two scales reveal the two dimensions of metacognition: knowledge of cognition and regulation of cognition. At a similar level to that reported by the authors, the internal consistency of this scale is .76.

3.4. Procedure

We used an experimental design with a pre-test and a post-test phase, during the first semester of the university studies. The students were subjected to a metacognitive training programme, embedded in the content of their Developmental Psychology compulsory subject matter. The programmed aimed to make them aware of their metacognition and to develop their ability to consciously use metacognitive strategies. Teaching metacognitive strategies can be done in dedicated courses, during teaching any subject specific content or the two methods can be combined, emphasizing the advantages of the first two approaches [2, 19].

We aimed to inform students about the knowledge about cognition that can be used in learning (knowledge about metacognitive strategies, about how, when, where and why a person should use a particular strategy) and to offer them specific information about regulation of cognition (planning the strategy use, monitoring the implementation of a strategy, testing new strategies, reviewing and assessing the strategies used).

At the beginning of each meeting, a new strategy, method or technique was presented purely theoretically. Then the teacher modelled its use in practice, also using the think-aloud procedure. Afterwards, the course specific content was presented with student applications, especially designed for the use of the method presented.

The metacognitive strategies for teaching, learning and assessment that can be used in school were presented to the students and the specific Developmental Psychology content was presented using these strategies. Also, all practical activities were planned and performed within the metacognitive training framework. The teachers used modelling [7, 14] and presents think-aloud protocols [1, 3, 14, 22] at each activity. Among other methods involved in training students, we mention: reflective journals [1, 3, 6, 10, 14], reflections on activities [4, 7], walking through images [11], checklists of strategies [17], and semantic maps [3, 11, 16].

Modelling offers the teacher the possibility to make visible his own mental activities involved in solving a problem by saying aloud all the mental steps involved in reaching his goal [7, 14]. The *think-aloud protocols* represent a form of recording the students' thoughts while they are solving a problem and they are vocalising aloud all that crosses their mind, in this time [1, 4, 14, 22]. The interviewer can stay with the student until he finishes the problem, asking questions such as: „What are you thinking about?", „Why did you decide to do

that?". The protocols are later analysed, and the students are free to use their native language or the language they are learning. Throught these protocols data referring to the process of using the strategies can be optained. In a *reflexive journal,* students record their thoughts on what they are thinking about, on the level of consciousness involved, they comment on the decisions taken [1, 7, 10, 14]. This diary can be a tool for exploring awareness of the use of learning strategies and the learning process because completing such a journal can provide the stimulation necessary for the students to think about their own learning activity, but can also provide information about the effectiveness of the metacognitive. *Reflections on the activity* can be done in order to extract implicit knowledge abouthow students learn a foreign language, knowledge that will become a basis for the new things learned. It is not limited to the activities already carried out, but it helps to plan the following ones [7]. *Walking through the images* involves throwing a glance the images that accompany the text to be read to infer the meaning of the text and discussions of the partipants [11]. Any instrument designed to measure the level of metacogntive awareness can be used a *checklist of strategies* [17]. After filling in such a questionnaire, it seems useful for the students to talk about their choices and thus identify the most appropriate strategies or even learn new ones. *Semantic maps* [11, 16] assume organizing ideas. Students note what they already know about the topic in question, and then, while reading, then complete the semantic map, reflecting on the proposed topic and as a confirmation of understanding the text. They are considered tools for synthesizing knowledge.

4. RESULTS

The results, presented in Table no. 1, show that there are statistically significant differences between the metacognitive awareness between the two phases of the experiment, which demonstrates the effectiveness of the proposed training program. Students' metacognitive awareness has increased over the semester of training, on all the dimensions taken into consideration.

At the end of the semester, the students in the experimental knew more about their own cognition and knew how to regulate it. When taken apart, the results for each metacognitive dimension significantly improved after the training programme. Not only did the students know more about their own cognitive processes, but they were more able to manage their cognition through the regulatory processes they could employ on their own metacognition. Their overall metacognitive awareness significantly improved at the end of the training programme, as it can be seen in the table below.

Table no. 1. T-test for differences between means for pre-test – post-test phases

Variables	Mean differences	Standard deviation	t	df	p	d Cohen
General metacognition	268.19	44.64	46.91	60	.000	**.91**
Declarative knowledge	45.77	11.79	30.79	62	.000	**.61**
Procedural knowledge	25.15	5.14	38.79	62	.000	**.61**
Conditional knowledge	27.46	5.03	42.96	61	.000	**.91**
Planning	35.88	6.89	41.30	62	.000	**.91**
Monitoring	33.68	8.53	31.32	62	.000	**.61**
Information management	46.53	8.34	44.24	62	.000	**.61**
Strategies	22.66	3.46	51.86	62	.000	**.91**
Evaluation	30.14	8.68	27.32	61	.000	**.61**

5. CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained in the analysed group show that metacognitive skills can be successfully developed in students. Some of the students may have already been using metacognitive strategies intuitively, but the overall level of metacognition rose for all of them. We may conclude that a 14-week training programme, with weekly meetings focused on strategies to improve students' knowledge about cognition and the strategies of regulating their cognitive activity, embedded in the course specific content can improve their metacognitive awareness level.

Teaching metacognition implies that teachers practice metacognition and, even more, it is part of the compulsory curriculum. Under the circumstances of nowadays changing society, we consider metacognition to be the essential skill that teachers should develop both in themselves and their students [1]. Therefore, metacognition should be first learned and used by teachers and applied in teaching and learning methods and in writing textbooks and practiced every day, in all subjects [9]. This is why first year students preparing to become teachers were chosen for our research and we intend to replicate this experiment with following generation. As a future research direction, it would be interesting to do a longitudinal study, analysing the teachers' metacognitive level and their students', too.

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BENEFITS OF USING BLENDED LEARNING IN "PERFORMER" EDUCATION MASTER PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

Problem statement:

In our education master program "Teacher training for early childhood and small age education" from "PERFORMER" Project, we have operated with the blended learning (BL) strategy, aimed to support student-centered learning.

Purpose of study:

The establishment of the qualitative and quantitative benefits of using blended learning strategy in our master study program.

Methods:

Interactive methods and Virtual Learning Environments tools were used in teaching, learning and assessment process. The methods of collecting (observation, survey, training portfolio analysis, and test), organizing, processing and presenting quantitative and qualitative data were used, as well as for the experimental part.

Findings and results:

In the master study program "Teacher training for early childhood and small age education", BL strategy was explored both in the teaching and learning process, and in ongoing and final evaluation. By using this strategy, the professor caused the student to become responsible and participator in the gathering of data, construction of information's meanings, forming knowledge, problem solving and their reframing, through documentation, exploration and research, and applying what they gained in new different contexts. In this way, professors worked directly and closely with individual students and small groups (face-to-face or e-learning) by harnessing the power of interactive learning and precision of technology, for the highest purpose: student-centered learning. The quantitative results of the assessment showed that 32% of the students have obtained excellent grade, 52% optimum and 16% good, from the experimental group, compared to the results of the students from control group: 9 % excellent, 41% optimum, 28% good and 22% satisfactory.

Conclusion and recommendations:

From the qualitative and quantitative point of view, the impact of BL was shown in the efficiency of learning with this method as well as in the satisfaction of the students and in the certainties of the professors. Hence the recommendation is to persevere in perfecting this interactive learning strategy, which promotes student-centered learning.

KEYWORDS: blended learning, e-learning, face-to-face learning, interactive methods, student-centered learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is a result of two years of applying blended learning (BL) strategy in the master study program "Teacher training for early childhood and small age education" under the project „Perspectives of a Higher Quality Level of the Training of Specialists for Early Education and Primary Schooling" (PERFORMER). In fact, this project has proposed a joint-master study program between „Transilvania" University of Brașov as coordinator, and "1 Decembrie 1918" University of Alba Iulia, "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad as partners, and with an international body's expertise for curriculum development, of ISPEF (Instituto di Scienze Psicologiche della Educatione e della Formazione) Roma, Italia.

The main goal of this master study program was, is, and will be, to form and develop competences for the teachers who work in the field of early education and primary schooling. But these competences are needed to be formed and developed in a student-centered learning way.

2. MAIN TEXT

In order to meet the requirements of contemporary educational world which promotes student-centered learning, inverting the traditional teacher-centred understanding of the learning process and putting the students at the centre of the learning process, we proceeded to allow the students to actively participate in discovery of the learning processes from an autonomous viewpoint.

Because learning can be seen as a form of personal growth, the students from master study program were encouraged to use self-regulation practices in order to gain learning experiences applied in real life and constructing a new understanding of the content being learned in a proactive way. For that reason, we can state that learning has been conducted in a sense of constructivism theory, that the student have had the full control of his/her learning. [1]

The training and developing of the competencies require a different type of learning, a cognitive-constructivist one. Learning by reception and/or repetitive exercise is not enough. It requires active participation of the student in the construction and use of skills; he selects, combines and applies different knowledge, skills, attitudes, etc. in order to achieve authentic tasks and in different contexts. Clearly, competence is integral to student-centered learning. [2]

Student-centred learning should be integrated into the curriculum because it:

- Strengthens student motivation
- Promotes peer communication

- Reduces disruptive behaviour
- Builds student-professor relationships
- Promotes discovery/active learning
- Responsibility for one's own learning

In our didactical activities we followed those concepts, applying them into specific academic context, for forming and developing students competencies in teaching-learning-evaluation situations and in the idea of student-centered learning samples, for preparing them in another kind of didactical communication which conduces to the professional and social engagement.

On the other hand, in curriculum's implementation we have operated with the interactive training strategies aimed challenge and support active learning in which the student acts on the information for transforming it into a new, personal, and useful gain. Using these strategies, we caused the student to become responsible and participator in the construction of information's meanings, problem solving through exploration and research and applying what they gained in new different contexts.

Blended learning (BL) seems to offer the largest perspective for those requirements and accomplishes what education technology has long promised, but rarely delivered: greater student learning and improved teaching efficiency.

BL works because it combines two things in a way that makes each one better than they are on their own: professors' talent and technology tools. BL allows professors to do what they do best – work directly and closely with individual students and small groups – by harnessing the adaptive power and precision of technology.

The best blended learning approaches use technology to:

- ✓ help each student to master the content and skills they need,
- ✓ allow professors to get the most out of their planning and instructional time, and
- ✓ streamline operations with costs similar to – or less than – traditional schooling.

Nowadays, we, the professors, are provoked and invited to learn more about integrating technology for blended learning courses in higher education, knowing that the students are not so interested in learning but they have a huge attraction for technology, and so we will be better able to motivate them.

The power is in a Blended Learning equation:

Face-to-Face + Synchronous Conversations + Asynchronous Interactions = Strong Online Learning Environment

And if distance learning is to have the level of quality that we dream for, we, as educators, need to proactively be a part of the Blended Learning that is inevitably coming our way. It's not a question of „*if*"; it's a question of „*how*".

For showing *how* Blended Learning is interactive strategy, I can confess [3, 4] that it has been explored in our educational master program "Teacher training for early childhood and small age education", concrete, in the subjects such as: "Advanced studies of education in community", „Educational design in relation of the educational institution with the community", "Docimology - comparative perspectives" and „Quality management and assessment in an educational organization". In these subjects BL strategy was promoted both, in the teaching and learning process, and ongoing (formative) and final (summative) evaluation.

As the curriculum for the entire master study program was designed by the algorithm:

- 30% courses and seminars, carried out in f2f modality (by interactive methods),
- 30% e-learning (by LMS),
- 20% documentaries from suggested bibliography and webography,
- 20% internship in kindergartens, primary schools and secondary schools.

it is obvious that for the 4 subjects mentioned it was identical in structure.

From this description we deduce that face-to-face activities and virtual learning activities (e-learning) covers more or less equally the full curriculum of the whole master degree program.

Into the face-to-face activities we have successfully used interactive methods such as:

- Cooperative learning;
- Collaborative learning;
- Problem solving an reframing;
- Heuristic approach;
- Problematization;
- Algorithmization;
- Modeling;
- Brainstorming;
- Role play;
- Graphic organizer;
- Map-mind, etc.

The e-learning activities have consisted of:

- Virtual activities which took place by Learning Management System of our University (Moodle Platform) and newer, thanks of the platform of the project Performer. These asynchronous and synchronous ways consisted of:
  - Asynchronous – posting the Syllabus, the Student's Guide, course support, PowerPoint presentations, requirements for the students, answer files of the students and e-portfolio of the students;
  - Synchronous – chat, videoconferencing (on Skype) for enlightening discussions, so that students understand and practice the content in their own manner, personalized, but

guided by the professor; online tests to check the student's understanding of the content.

- Virtual activities involving emails with attachments, or collaborative writing of "the homework" under the Google Docs or Drive.

Both types of learning activities - face-to-face and e-learning - in other words blended learning, have caused training of the students to another standard and provoked them to another attitude towards himself/herself, the others and generally towards learning.

Because we have had enrolled two kinds of students into this master study program, some within the Performer project, and others, ordinary students, we have been able to do a comparative study concerning the impact of using or not using BL strategy.

Thus, the experimental group, on which was applied BL strategy, was composed of the 25 students belonging to the Performer project, and another 25 students who were admitted at the master but not on eligible places in the project, as control group, benefited for interactive learning on face-to-face learning activities

We applied for this research, in establishing the effects of using BL, on one side the interactive methods and Virtual Learning Environments (VLE) [5], for sustaining academic activities, and on the other hand, the methods of collecting (observation, survey, training portfolio analysis, and test), organizing, processing and presenting quantitative and qualitative data for the experimental part.

In terms of qualitative assessment, using as instruments of records the observation sheets and portfolios of student training (e-portfolio for experimental group and printed portfolio for control group) we have found:

- For the experimental group – much more responsibility for the learning requirements, a positive attitude towards work load, more contribution to the discussion, debates or problem solving in "our agora (or e-agora)", a lot of enthusiasm, more willingness to reflect put questions and find constructive solutions, being attracted into the practical application "all the acquisition" made into the learning process, into the school or kindergartner.
- For control group - not so high motivation for the attendance in the learning activities (always saying that they work...), less positive attitude for the work load, more difficult communication, not so pronounced desire to apply what they learned into application's schools or kindergartens

In terms of quantitative assessment using portfolios and final test, for all four subjects: "Advanced studies of education in community", „Educational design in relation of the educational institution with the community",

"Docimology - comparative perspectives" and „Quality management and assessment in an educational organization", the results was:

- For the experimental group - 32% of the students have obtained excellent (10) grade, 52% optimum (8, 9) and 16% good (7).
- For the control group - 9 % excellent (10) grade, 41% optimum (8, 9), 28% good (7) and 22% satisfactory (5, 6).

3. CONCLUSIONS

The results of the students involved in this study, from qualitative and quantitative point of view, lead to the conclusion that the benefits of the BL strategy, used into the curriculum of master study program, are relevant for the efficiency of learning, as well as in the satisfaction of the students and in the certainties of the professors. Blended learning is a reality and we, professors, as experts in education, must embrace it. Hence, the recommendation is to persevere in perfecting this interactive learning strategy, which promotes student-centered learning.

4. AKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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BEHAVIOUR AND EDUCATION POSTMODERN CONSIDERATIONS -

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Abstract:

The author reveals a few aspects of communicative behaviour in postmodernism, where values do not have enough constancy anymore and their selection is made without any criteria. The relationships between individuals (and communities) imply mental involvement and gestures, mimicry, tone are unconscious elements of individuals` expression. The lack of inhibitions and assuming certain "democratic" liberties lead to a waste of risk in hiding the individuals` true identity. Behaviours are the consequence of collective mentality and different cultural romances.

Keywords: behaviour, culture and civilization, mentality, postmodernism.

1. Postmodernism. We do not have the intension of debating the issue or history of postmodernism, only to the extent to which it is necessary to clear certain aspects of contemporary education. The approach between a concept and reality can determine serious wonderings, if the impact induces the idea of incongruence. Education develops a canonical tradition and educational systems are among the most rigorously structured, conservative and change retained. Postmodernism deconstructs, breaks the patterns, maintains uncertainty and relative values. An education without value-based guidelines, without models or vision has no logical support. What type of education prevails in a postmodern society, which is animated by diversity in spite all globalization tendencies?

Contemporary world has very few moments of stability. Not only the future is under the threat of "shock" (Toffler, 1973) but also the present (maybe even the projection of past). In "the global village", electronic communication networks unite voluntarily informational desires, determining a transfer of mentalities and behaviours. Communities used to preserve their traditions thanks to personality ethos. Currently, their identity has the cosmopolite opportunity (maybe even tendency) to veil its edges, to "escape" under the authority of identity nucleus. There is the chance – exploited or not – to crave for new mental configurations, based on voluntary acceptance of "the Other" by an appeal to ethic cohesion and a desire to deconstruct the hierarchies, until recently untouchable. „*Deconstruction*, states Derrida (1967), followed by

(1988), *involves displacement of traditional conceptual hierarchies*". In a world educated and educable for change and adaptation, de-construction can no longer be regarded as a fault but as the attempt to reshape tradition. The requirement for unpredictable constructions – determined by the "shock" of top knowledge resulted in public comfort technology – involves readjustment, destruction, reshaping. De-construction is required in order to construct something. Behavioural changes are determined not only by the perspectives of contemporary world but also by its essential dynamism.

Communities discard any inconvenience that might affect their adaptation to democratic liberties. *Identity ethos* and *cultural sacrifice* will not miss from such an inventory. Lack of scruples in "disaggregation of any authority" and relativity of self-values derive from such attitude, even though the community`s identity has been developed on concepts like these. The tendency to relativize one`s own values supported the idea of de-canonization, of breaking mental patterns, replacing "labels" until recently untouchable. When one "dared" to exclude Eminescu from vowed statements („*national poet", „poet laureate", „the most important ..."*) the "de-constructors`" gesture was perceived as a blasphemy. In the "thinkers`" gesture there wasn't any intention of questioning the real values of Eminescu`s poetry but they tried to construct a new epistemic foundation for another type of text analysis. The destruction of "idol" has strong ontological justification in the tendency to reshape and revalue him.

L. Vattimo (1993), theoretician of postmodernism, supports the idea that absolute values should be dissolved to allow the display of individual values. "Everything is permitted" without authority, because facts become contextual. Art itself – as phenomenon of creation, a mimesis of divine gestures – becomes democratic by blending with public existence. It gets out on the streets, dissolves in the mass-media, labels matchboxes, blends in creations and cohabits generously in hypermedia. Art has become "a fundamental event" (Heidegger, 1980) by its de-gentleness, as well as its weakness for unpredictable blending with kitsch.

Consequently, lack of value authority leads to a ontological transformation of the objective and subjective world „*into a huge site of surviving*" (L. Vattimo, 1993). The struggle for survival is training for personality duality. On the one hand, the human being craves for gathering its desires around a "core", on the other hand it likes democratic savagery. It finds in the (isotopic) closeness between *margin* and *core* a source of happiness and existential meaning.

This is our postmodern world, a world that we build on and caress with democratic liberties. Some of its features are: de-canonization of values, dismissal of classical values authority, decompressing of ethics, buckling the perception of time and space, humanisation of information and technology,

oscillation between identity vocation and globalizing aspiration, aggressiveness of sensual performance, epistemological indeterminacy, humanizing education.

All of the above concepts can be framed in the apothegm „*what is not forbidden is permitted*". The present generation is no longer interested in the past, it doesn`t peep to history, it looks at itself. This generation doesn`t have time for projections on the future because time doesn`t have three dimensions anymore; it is one-dimensional (te present matters!). Only „*here and now*" exists, mine, ours, a present that contains just pieces of time and reflections of anticipated time. Such flattened and reduced time is compensated by an extension of real and virtual time. No earthly distance is impossible; no space can hide its mysteries. Cosmic space is claimed, extra-terra has become optional space.

The insertion of art in daily life and the stimulation of sensual, epidermal voluptuousness is another postmodern challenge. Television shows with a mixture of free gestures, colourful scenery, naked breasts, VIPs with excessive make-up offer a new image supported by the consumers` tastes. In this mixture of sound and light, we can see actors, cabaret dancers, successful writers and poetry reciters, politicians, image seekers, cats` hairdressers, circus people and professional sportsmen. Seriousness seems abandoned, its place being taken by good moods and fun, the entire scene unfolding in the most insensitive *intellectual innocence*. „Commercial aspect" and its advertising polarize the interest for artistic performance, bringing about their impregnation with sensory experiences, stimulated by movement, colour, obscene gestures and compensatory aesthetics. Postmodern attitudes are also identified in virtual experiences. Buttoning from one channel to the other, "cultural surfing", serials, informational briefings join the show offered by websites; it is a huge and fascinating universe of an artificial but vivid, dynamic and attractive world. It is clearly a new type of civilization, with other guidelines than modernity; a world where one can live with imitations and adjuvants in the middle of a crowd exited by music, dynamism, and spectacular events.

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Global communication has changed the vision, "raised the human`s eyes" to the Others, and this *openness towards new horizons signifies "the standing up" of the ancient ancestor.* Communication constructs a new world in each person, society and inhabited place. Communication is the bower of a being, stated a philosopher, and wise men constructed performing tools so that information about Others and their wise deeds would be known by Everyone and immediately.

2. Affective involvement in communication. *Communication is a process*, which involves interaction in a ***context***. Networking between people is a social ***transaction*** ("*a human being it`s impossible not to communicate*",

Watzlawick (1972), and humans enter the communicative relationship with "contextual" elements like in an orchestra. Even though we refer to networking between individuals, ***the same issues are valid for groups, organizations, institutions and/or even self-communication.*** Aspects related to ***social psychology,*** interlocutors` peculiarities and guiding psychological factors should be reconsidered in order to determine an optimal communication. In interactive communication, the person X cannot discover the hidden intensions of person Y, as it cannot suspect its subsidiary intensions and motivations.

Reducing the process of communication to a mere information exchange means distorting its real value in the relationship between "speakers". It is believed (Abric, 2002 and others) that communication is influenced by certain factors, such as the ***psychological*** ones. The communicative process is motivated by individual needs and tensions, obviously of mental type; an individual has needs, needs cause tension, tension generates a behaviour required by reduction of dissatisfaction. There are both positive and negative desires (needs), which can torment and rebalance the interlocutors` mental state of mind. Communication cannot exclude individual specific affective aspects, which contains various tendencies and peculiarities.

On the other hand, each individual, group and institutions, owns a certain ***type of culture***. We interact with the Other based on cultural identity or on the intension of emotional balance; the interlocutors` affective subtleties and hidden objectives are related to situational psychology. After all, each individual is the bearer and representative of a culture, and by extension – the individuals` communication is a form of networking between cultures and mentalities.

3. Cultural mentality and civilization. ***a. Culture***. A definition in the dictionary of neologisms (1997) regards culture as „*an ensemble of material and spiritual values created by humanity, by the society"*. The definition induces confusion due to the usage in the same concept of both „material values" and „spiritual values". A dictionary of philosophy (1988) increases the confusion by including in this concept the notions „material and spiritual products" and „*conscious transformation of natural and social environment*". Such imprecision led to the identification of almost 300 attempts to define the concept. The *Larousse* Dictionary (1996) defines **culture** as „*an individuals` social and intellectual formation*" (deriving from the notion of „cult"), and Lucian Blaga determines culture in relationship with artistic values. Regardless of the multiple meanings that determine such an easy concept up to the moment of its **definition**, we will consider cultural products only those which are the result of a spiritual creativity process. Culture is connected to art genesis and intellectuality, to creative virtues of sciences, to proliferation of texts about culture. An educated man possesses intelligence, wisdom and creative impulses,

being able to generate creations and to appreciate axiological products resulted from cultural gestures. We put into concept literary works, aesthetic, musical, plastic creations, product design and any other consequence of artistic aesthetics. Concretely, culture includes ***Faustus*** and ***Miorița***, ***The Hanging Gardens*** and ***Versailles***, ***David*** and ***Laocoon***, ***The Last Supper*** and ***Ox Cart***, ***Romanian Rhapsody*** and ***Bolero***, ***Endless Column*** and ***The Eiffel Tower***, ***Ferarri*** and ***Pentium VI***, but also ***Aircraft carrier, the Submarine*** or ***Cosmic Missile.*** Culture, as concept has artistic, functional, institutional, scientific and technological definitions.

The man is a creator of culture, assigning meaning, content and configuration to his entire activity in an supreme and creative form. Generating culture, the man is ordained in divine deeds, perpetuating the myth of creation by Faustian and also Sisyphean repetition of his becoming. Man is ***synthetic consequence of a community culture.***

b. Civilization, another concept difficult to define, has a lot of dictionary entries. It comes from the Latin word ***„civis"*** („*citizen*"), i.e. inhabitant of a city, of a settlement in the community (as opposed to the isolated, the hermit, the Grobian). To be tolerated by the community as a citizen requires compliance with the rules of coexistence which the individual had to assimilate in behaviour and conduct. These rules are related to hygiene, communication, mutual respect, tolerance, decency, but mostly attachment to social values like traditions, customs, and rules of good coexistence. Finally, civilization involves proper social relations gathered around good manners and politeness.

The concept has evolved, having other connotations, by keeping and adding semantic tones. Some refer to including in "civilization" means by which man changes and organizes the environment; others refer to insurance of comfort and life aesthetics. Therefore, a consequence of the mankind`s effort to improve its habitat in the "citadel" in what can be meant by "home" (house, village, city, region, country, continent) is synthetized in the concept of "civilization". Specifically, *civilization* involves elements linked to comfort, material and utility needs, such as housing, food, clothes, behaviour, communication technology, mobility, economic-administrative activities, legal, political and civic organization. They reach the dimension of a community`s lifestyle and help configuring a civilization. Civilization entities have been set and it is said that they are the source of conflicts („*Humanity is divided into subgroups-tribes, nations, wider cultural entities normally called civilizations*" (**The Clash of Civilizations**). Huntington (1993) considers that in a civilized world there are seven civilizations that can start a conflict at any time due to different norms and cohabitation styles. Without insisting on division (A. Toynbee, 1956, identifies 21 civilizations), or on clogs that hinder

communication between them, we will show that confusion is maintained in establishing a coherent relationship between "culture" and "civilization".

c. The effects of culture are expressed in ***acts of culture,*** converted into ***products of civilization.*** The level of culture configures the level of civilization. Therefore, civilization is understood as an echo of culture, a material representation of the spirit of cultural creation. Only a superior culture will be able to build/generate a higher civilization. Without technical and scientific culture it is impossible to imagine socialization of information and communication techniques. Household equipment, public television, personal computers, cars, etc. are the consequence of progress in culture. When culture is in jeopardy of becoming history, civilization saves its opportunities. Therefore, between culture and civilization there is a mutual relationship of inseparability. Leading a civilized life, the man places himself in the echo of culture, just like when creating he improves his existential comfort: "***Intercultural communities*** *are cultural, ethnical, religious groups that live in the same space, have relationships of open interaction, exchange and mutual recognition showing respect for values, traditions and each other`s lifestyles.*" (Cozma, Seghedin, 2001).

4. Intercultural communicative style. Cultures and civilizations belong to an existential style. When the culture of a community is strongly influenced by religion, language, history, customs, values, symbols, behaviours – elements that assign uniqueness – civilization is unitary. The volume "*Ten thousand culture, one civilization",* says M.Malita would be a sketch of the geo-modernity in the 21st century. Cultures can coexist in one plenary civilization based on science, technology, administration, economy and lifestyle. When citizens (all of them) benefit from the advantages of a civilization that would satisfy their needs for a comfortable life, then they would withstand cultural diversity.

We can communicate and live in "interculturality" only to a certain standard of civilization. It is wrong to believe that we have the right (or request) to dance on a dance floor with a woman with dirty fingernails or to sit at the same table with someone with a shirt with torn elbows. Communication between people of different cultures tries to find ways of coexistence, of assuming civilized behaviour, of promoting equal dialogue. Culture encourages the individualism tendencies of communities, such as belonging to a race, nation, religion, geographic area, social or historical areal, etc. A civilized community (intercultural") becomes real and effective only if it removes blockages caused by the belonging to a community style, to a strongly individualized mentality. Coexisting means accepting the other" as s/he is, only when he is above a certain standard of civilization. Accepting the other involves

the triggering of emotional faculties that would exclude racial, social, national, ethnical, religious differences.

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To achieve communication in intercultural environments one needs to trigger relationships that would diminish uncertainties towards the "other" belonging to coexisting cultures (*The Other* is in the same "space", but is "another" due to cultural differences). These uncertainties are related to his cultural identity: language, ethical group, nationality, religion, habitat, social and economic status, authority. *Knowledge* about the other, *interest* for interaction, *ability* of involvement and transfer *skills* are required to remove these uncertainties (T. Cozma, 2001).

An important aspect of intercultural relating is about identifying *"sense shared by both sides",* namely negotiating understanding to diminish **uncertainty** (cognitive representation of the other) and **anxiety (**affective representation of the other**).** The above mentioned plead for the necessity of *intercultural competence*, defines as *"the ability to negotiate cultural significations and to perform adequate and effective communication behaviours that recognize different identities of interlocutors in a specific environment"* or *"the ability to use knowledge, action methods, affective experiences, positive attitudes in solving cultural interaction situations".*

Interaction requires certain abilities such as: tolerance for uncertainty, development of new relating categories, others besides the reference "mine", empathy, adapting communication, refrain from asserting prejudices, handling interaction. The balance of intercultural communication calls for the concept of *democracy*, through which the will of the majority does not impose authority and common good becomes supreme humanity value. Democracy generates variable geometry in cultural interactions, where each has the right to identity (respect for values, traditions, ways of living) without harming the Other.

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People still have a lot of innocence and spontaneity having a (social) interest in not being completely honest. Reason calls for objectivity and honesty in social relations and the heart has its reasons to be suspicious of a thinking mind**.** The first impression about an interlocutor includes feelings – and not a reason-based judgement. When you meet a girl for the first time, the first impression could be extremely subjective and fake: „*She is too elegant to be honest*" or „*She has no charm*", „*She is too beautiful to be smart*" etc. These are innocent cheatings that mark the moment and influence the status of a relationship. Communication with the other has its own deceitfulness derived from the duality of the reason-affection, thought-feeling relationship. Reasonable thinking tends to ensure decent, real, sincere, honest communication and the gestures are of genuine honesty revealing a Faustian

contradiction. When you tell a woman that she is beautiful looking at her askance, you grin unconsciously. The truth can be read in nonverbal communication, in body language which certifies the truth of what is being said. J. J. Rousseau supports the above mentioned by stating that „*reason created man but feelings lead him*".

The synergologist is like a wizard because he reads the truth in the man`s soul as it is projected by his gestures. In his own way, any individual has synergological talent. Reading the gestures, he senses the real conflict between words and deeds and discovers that words almost always speak lies. He „sees" what people hide, asking the "mirror of reversed eyes" to identify the transparency of the soul and to reveal the interlocutor`s true feelings placed in communicative relationship. He infiltrates in the privacy, in the hidden parts of the soul through gestures, body language, instinctive and honest body movements.

Certain basic gestures are familiar to everyone. A glum man is san and angry while a happy man laughs. A "yes" involves vertical body movement while "no" a horizontal one. The smile is a gesture of acceptance and frowning one of rejection. Shrugging shoulders means "I don`t know", and shaking the forefinger is a warning, etc. Gestures have their significance in the context in which they occur and have their random quantity. We could read the people`s gestures, starting from the position of the body, of hands and legs and continuing with the movement of the eyebrows, eyes and facial muscles (soul is placed in the eyes; there is social, relational, passionate, metaphorical look, as well as their opposites). („I don`t see what you want to say"). In other words, the means people have at their disposal as members of the same community and with the same mentality are *vocal and body language.*

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The conclusion of these considerations synthesizes the relationship between individuals in a postmodern society in which – as stated in the beginning- values are masked by a certain type of relating in an artificial context. People do not communicate, but their psychic relates, engaged in a competition of finding the real truth, innocently disguised in the complex personality of each individual. A postmodern man–like we are-adorns his existence according to the communicative events he is engaged in or is motivated to be a involved actor. *In fact, a communicative situation leaves the individual space of expression for Ego and a new Self-image.*

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MOTHER - TODDLER RELATIONSHIP BASED ON SYNERGOLOGICAL READING - AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Discrepancies that occur between the objective and subjective perception of the same phenomenon are reflected in contradictory experiences and generate gestures and mother and baby do unconsciously. Synergological reading conducted in the communication process between mother and child decodes divergent messages and inhibits the interrelationship. The child instinctively "reads" the adult's unconscious gestures that betray his real thoughts, and reacts strongly to them - by explosive or implosive negativism. The mother usually pays more attention closer to the verbal communication and captures only fragmentary gestures made unconsciously by the child. Among the objectives of our study there were the analysis of the range of unconscious gestures, the recording of the frequency of their manifestations in mother-child dyads, and establishing the correspondence between gestures, events and contexts. The sample included 27 mother-infant pairs, the subjects being monitored in four different contexts. The instruments used were: an observation grid comprising synergological indicators, a questionnaire targeting the mother - child relationship, a test of decoding unconscious gestures. The conclusions drawn from the data processing revealed many aspects that will be detailed in this article.

Keywords: mother - child interrelationship, synergology, communication

INTRODUCTION

The discrepancies that arise between the objective and subjective way of perceiving the same phenomenon are reflected in contradictory experiences and generate gestures both mother and baby do unconsciously. Synergology is the science that proposes models of reading unconscious body language [1], explaining the relationship between thoughts, words and body movements which taken separately would have no meaning (e.g., neck itching that occurs suddenly and requires moving one of the hands in that area). Generally, these gestures appear only under the impact of emotions [2].

SINERGOLOGIC READING AND MOTHER-CHILD INTER-RELATIONSHIP

Synergological reading conducted in the communication process between mother and child decodes divergent messages and inhibits networking [3]. The child instinctually reads adults' unconscious gestures that betray his true thoughts and reacts strongly to them - by explosive or implosive negativism. The mother, who pays more attention to the verbal language, captures only fragments of the child's unconscious gestures.

As they grow older, people learn to pay more attention to the verbal than to the non-verbal language; parents' synergological reading is poor, thus lies appear as a necessary certainty [4]: appearance surpasses substance. While words mean something, the body can convey something totally different [5]. In his studies on non-verbal gestures, Collett even considers that gestures are "autonomous behavioural indicators" [6] that could reveal the true feelings of the speaker. In general, body language supplements or underlines words. It so happens, however, that body language contradicts the verbal one, without the transmitter realizing it: this is the field of synergology [1]. Even if human beings are trying to hide and falsify their mimics, gestures, or posture, their wishes / feelings are clearly expressed in the brain and the body reacts to the brain's signals, manifesting a number of synergological indicators in their behaviour. The correct decoding ("reading") of emotional messages is a source of information that guides the way we behave. The ability to understand and discern others' emotions is essential to the manifestation of empathy and pro-social behaviour [7]. The development of the emotions - communication dyad can only be beneficial to the harmonious development of both children and adults, who can learn, along with their children, healthy ways of emotional and behavioural manifestation.

1. METHODOLOGY AND RESULTS

1.1. Hypothesis and objectives

The study assumed that if the mother performed a correct synergological reading, it would substantially improve the relationship between her and her child. This article only refers to the results of achieving objectives targeted at the range of unconscious gestures analysis (synergological indicators), at recording the frequency of their manifestations in a mother-child dyad and at establishing a correspondence between gestures, events and contexts.

1.2. Tools

The instruments used were: 1) *An observation grid for synergological behaviour* – it included four dimensions (head, limbs, posts, micro-itches), totalling 20 synergological indicators (skull, eyes, eyebrows, nose, mouth, chin, fingers, hands, arms, elbows, shoulders, legs, static positions, dynamic positions, micro-itches of face, neck, chin, nose, eyes, forearms); each indicator was assigned with 2 to 5 items for the registration of their frequency (position, tilt, orientation, etc.); the positive or negative connotation of the synergological indicators was established following the descriptors provided by P. Turchet [1]; 2) *Parent-Child Relationship Questionnaire* - it included 20 items, 5 items aimed at factual data and 15 items with open answers; 3) *The Unconscious Gestures Decoding Test* – it included 10 pictures, with 50 indicators, each image having between 3 and 6 synergological indicators; a point is assigned for each indicator which is correctly decoded; 1-10 points show a very low level of decoding, from 11 to 20 points indicate a low level decoding, from 21 to 30 points, an average decoding, between 31-40 points, show a high level of decoding, and between 41-50 points indicate a very high level of decoding.

1.3. Sample

The sample included 27 mother-toddler pairs; the subjects were monitored in four different contexts: on the playground, at dinner table, when changing clothes, and shopping in the store. Maternal age was between 21 and 35 years (four between 21 and 25 years old, 16 from 26 to 30 years old, and 7 between 31 and 35 years old) and the children were aged between 1 and 3 (12 children ranging from 1 to 2 years and 15 children between 2 and 3 years old). The whole lot came from urban areas, with good health condition for all. As concerning the mothers' education, 15 graduated high school and 12 had a university degree. The material conditions were poor for one mother, medium for 19, good for five, and very good for two.

1.4. Results

The connotation of the synergological indicators manifest in the mothers' non-verbal language was decoded as positive or negative based on the descriptors provided by Touchet and adapted to the context in which they were found. Their frequencies are shown summarized in Table 1, divided for each indicator. There is also presented the frequency of the children's positive or negative behavioural reactions in response to the defining elements of the indicators, depending on orientation, tilt, motion, etc.

Table 1. Summary of the frequency of the synergological indicators

No.	Dimension	Indicator	Connotation of the mother's synergological indic.		Child's behavioural reaction	
			positive	negative	positive	negative
1	Head	Skull	178	347	173	352
		Eyes	245	571	224	592
		Eyebrows	183	272	156	309
		Nose	76	149	71	154
		Mouth	141	366	114	389
		Chin	173	298	147	324
2	Limb	Fingers	67	342	67	342
		Palms	112	329	98	343
		Hands	46	217	42	221
		Shoulders	61	253	59	255
		Elbows	91	174	86	179
		Legs	118	286	113	291
3	Posts	Static	72	328	66	334
		Dynamic	129	152	122	159
4	Micro-itches at:	Neck	28	183	27	184
		Face	63	271	58	276
		Chin	172	232	168	236
		Nose	16	283	16	283
		Eyes	29	347	21	355
		Forearms	48	239	41	246

As it can be seen from the data recorded, high frequencies of negative synergological indicators are associated with high frequencies children's negative behaviours. Children decoded correctly, with amazing accuracy, the adult's gestures performed under the impact of emotions.

Table 2. The context-indicators-events relationship

Context	Frequency of indicators		Frequency of events	
	positive	negative	conflict	cooperation
On the playground	358 ♦	136	136	358 ♦
At dinner table	59	294 ♦	294 ♦	59
When changing clothes	71	367 ♦	367 ♦	71
Shopping in the store	127 ♦	139 ♦	139 ♦	127 ♦

The contexts are those that favour the emergence of synergological indicators, marking their positive or negative connotation, depending on the feelings they generate. When the interaction between mother and child is harsh (e.g., when serving food or when changing clothes), there is a dominance of negative indicators, seconded by conflicts. On the playground, where the interaction is reduced, the relation between mother and child is positive, cooperation behaviours dominating. Inevitably, there arise conflicts, too, but their percentage is lower (...%) than in other contexts. In stores, when shopping, the percentages are almost similar for cooperation and conflict situations, being influenced by the stands visited (e.g., conflict at stands with sweets or toys; cooperation at stands with vegetables or canned food).

CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions drawn from the data processing revealed many aspects that require the learning of synergological reading.

The imperative of parenting education results from a series of problems [8] such as: lack of information about the psychological profile of the child's age; use of educational methods based on family history; parents' inability to predict the effects of certain educational measures on the child's development (reward, praise, conflict resolution, encouraging adversity-collaboration behaviours); lack of basic knowledge on mental health (sleep schedule, alternation of resting and activity, endurance); overcrowding the children's programme with extracurricular activities; the existence of incompatibilities or discontinuities between the family's values and norms and those promoted by the nursery/school, etc. Parenting programs are beginning to consider the children's emotional side, too (The SELF KIT programme), emotional communication being of paramount importance in the parent-child relationship [9]. Non-verbal indicators of emotions expressed through unconscious facial expressions and gestures are hard to fake.

Developing mothers' synergological reading skills optimizes the relationship between them and their children, as the latter react according to the connotation of the synergological indicators transmitted.

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WAYS TO IMPROVE THE TRAINING OF TEACHERS FOR EARLY EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT:

The aim of this study is show that didactic competences required by teaching profession can be acquired through the Master`s programme Psychopedagogy of Early Education and Young Schooling. The Motto of each educational system should be "no child without education and care". Therefore, educational systems should be improved on all levels, starting with preschool and primary school education. In our study, we have tried to identify ways to increase quality in education by a thorough initial training of teachers for preschool and primary education. As mentioned by EURYDICE Report [1], the priorities of the European Commission are centred on education and professional training for early education and care, school graduation, prevention of early school leaving (ESL), development of higher education, graduates` insertion on the labour market, early professional formation (EPF) and lifelong learning. According to these strategies, early education and teacher training sets its main objectives for the years to come. Education and professional formation have been considered the most important objectives for a future development of the society. Teachers attend initial training to acquire and develop competences in early education and school. Future teachers enrol Bachelor and Master Studies in educational sciences, special education, social policies, psychology, adult education and history of universal culture.

KEYWORDS: competences, education, instruction, training, performance, strategies

1. INTRODUCTION

Education is the main objective of a society aiming at progress in all fields of activity. A nation that focuses on education stimulates the educational field and develops a strategic thinking. The improvement of education depends on the extent to which educational policies try to improve the selection of future teaching staff and the degree of their preparation for the didactic profession. The importance of education across European countries has increased in the past few years. Along with adhesion to the European Union, Romania took important measures to adjust the national educational system to European requirements on initial and continuous teacher training. Delors (2000) stated that: „*Modern societies show an increasing urge to change the teaching-learning process into a process that would support individual judgement and the feeling of responsibility in each individual, so as to allow pupils/students to*

develop their anticipatory abilities and to adapt to all changes around them. Educational process should develop the conditions in favour of the individual`s lifelong education". It is considered that education starts at conception and continues throughout its entire life. Apart from genetic and environmental factors, we consider education as one important factor in shaping a future personality capable of taking part in social activities, consuming and most importantly producing material and cultural goods.

Psychology studies emphasize the importance of creating an environment that would support the development of human personality, a warm, affectionate environment where instructive-educational influences make a contribution to shaping the human personality according to its inborn potential.

Children are the most valuable treasure of a nation, they are the future generation, and therefore investments in education and childcare are absolutely necessary. Teachers have the noble and responsible task of forming a generation capable of facing a society with many unknown elements.

Dan Potolea (2001) mentions some roles and competences that teachers have to assume:

- The role of expert;
- Didactic roles;
- Educational roles;
- Roles of researcher;
- Institutional and community roles;
- Roles regarding personal and professional development.

According to the National Education Law of 2011, teachers' initial training consists of:

a) Theoretical initial training in their field carried out in universities in accredited study programmes;

b) didactic or scientific master programme of 2 years;

c) teaching practice of one school year carried out in an educational unit under a mentor`s coordination.

The interest for professionalization of teaching career has increased lately, throughout Europe and especially in our country. Practitioners try to acquire professional competences in accordance with specific training standards for didactic profession.

2. Early education across Europe

A study conducted by the European Commission in 2012 shows an increased interest among Community countries to reform education. It is

believed that education should start at early ages through educational programme for children of 0 to 6-7 years of age and.

The law on improving the quality of education in all Member States was adopted in 2007. It stipulates that: "*teaching provides a service of considerable social relevance: teachers play a vital role in enabling people to identify and develop their talents and to fulfil their potential for personal growth and well-being, as well as helping them to acquire the complex range of knowledge, skills and key competences that they will need as citizens throughout their personal, social and professional lives"* (Conclusions of the Council and of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, on improving the quality of teacher education (Official Journal C 300, 12.12.2007).

According to the European Commission Report from October 2012, currently children from most European countries, except Denmark, Finland, Norway, Slovenia and Sweden are placed at risk due to economic recession. [2]. The socio-economic environment influences the possibility to attend school and organized learning in these areas. [3]. Still, compared to other parts of the world, in Europe, the percentage of children with access to education in pre-school years has increased from 85.2% in 2000 to 92.4% in 2010[3]. The European Commission took some measures related to early education which aim to increase the access to education of all children, including those at risk such as disadvantaged areas or Roma children. [4]

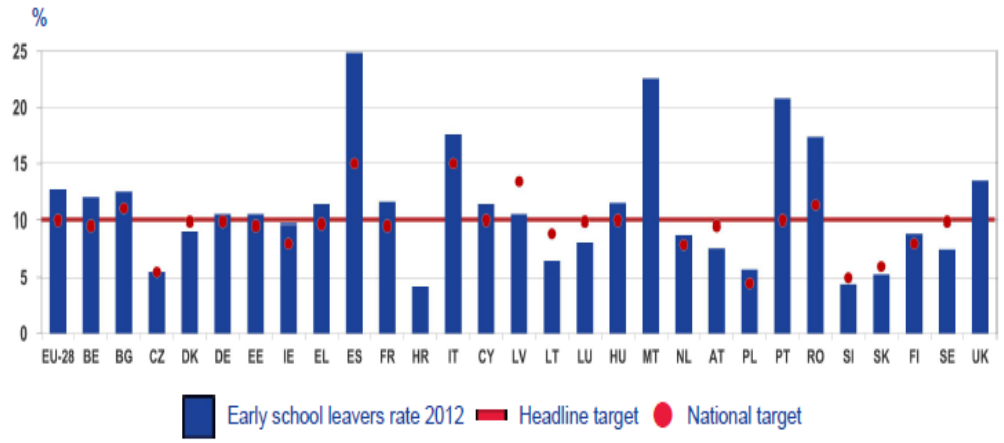

Fig.1.Level and minimum length of initial teacher education on pre-primary teachers

The studies on this topic reveal certain guidelines for the improvement of policies on early education. Emphasis is laid on priority direction which we present in the table below. [5]

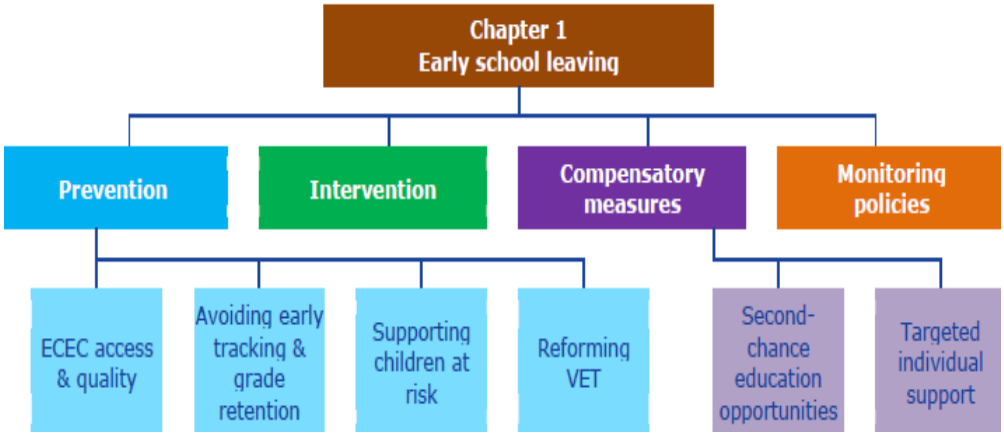

Fig.2. *Source: Eurostat (data extracted 25 April 2014).*

In most countries, educational reforms focused on the implementation of a curriculum starting with the age of 0. This curriculum was adopted based on certain principles developed for the benefit of children. It would implement educational support so that the child develops his/her personality in own pace, and would ensure emotional and material support for an optimal development. The curriculum tries to change mentalities and seeks orientation towards policies which support age- appropriate programmes, designed for the child`s level of understanding.

The Curriculum for Early Education was implemented in Romania according to the requirements of the Commission for Education and it follows the Union`s strategies and directives The entire educational process is based on the *Curriculum for Early Education* developed on two age levels: 0-3 years and 3-6 years. Preschool education starts at the age of 2-3; kindergartens are organized in groups according to the age of children: low group, middle group and preparatory group. Preschool education in Romania is not compulsory but most children 3 to 6 years of age attend one type of kindergarten: with normal programme between 8 and 12, prolonged programme between 6 and 16 and weekly programme from Monday to Friday.

Values promoted by the curriculum for early education**:**

• the child`s fundamental rights (the right to life and health, to family, to education, to be listened to and the freedom of speech);

• the child`s global development;

• inclusion, as process of promoting diversity and tolerance;

• non-discrimination and the exclusion of social, cultural, economic and gender inequity (equal chances for all children, irrespective of their gender, ethnic belonging, religion through a balanced educational approach).

3. Pre-primary and primary school teacher training

The directions for competence development required for teacher training have been set (Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualification, European Commission, DG EAC, 2005) [5].

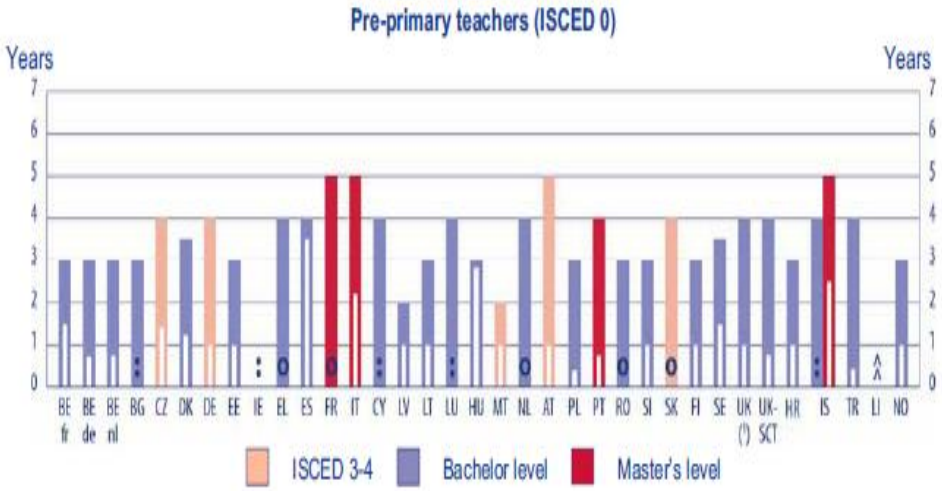

Fig.3. *Source: Eurostat (data extracted 25 April 2014).*

The training of specialists for early education is organized in most European countries by universities through three-four yearlong studies. Teenagers are more and more reluctant when it comes to working in education system due to the didactic profession`s lack of attractiveness. Therefore, state policies try to improve national education policies and make the didactic profession attractive for the best high school students, who would want to choose teaching out of passion and vocation: "*in their policies and programmers, countries widely recognize the changing role of teachers towards becoming collaborators, facilitators of learning, and lifelong learners, but there is still too little debate involving teachers themselves."* [6]

Most countries try to apply different strategies of making the didactic profession more attractive:

- Improving the recruitment of candidates for the teaching career;
- Improving the admission system to Bachelor and Master studies for teaching career;
- Thorough initial training;
- Support programmes for young teachers;
- Improving continuous learning programmes;
- Improving teachers` mobility programmes;

- Programmes of professional retraining;
- Improving promotion conditions;
- More attractive salaries;
- Changing mentalities towards teaching career;
- Improving work conditions. [7]

More economically developed countries have a better recruitment and retention system in teaching profession.

Table 1.1: Mapping of countries and education systems according to policy measures aiming at enhancing the attractiveness of the teaching profession

	Global and systemic strategy	Significant piecemeal policy measures	No significant targeted policy measures
Global shortage of qualified teachers	Norway	Austria, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg	Belgium (fr), Italy, The Netherlands, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden, Turkey
No global shortage of qualified teachers	Estonia, Ireland, Lithuania, Scotland	Belgium(nl), Czech Republic, England, France, Hungary, Poland, Portugal	Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Latvia, Malta, Spain

Fig.4. *Source: Eurostat (data extracted 25 April 2014)*

The quality of educational services offered by universities is mostly conditioned by the quality of human resources, namely the professional quality of teaching staff, the relevance of the curriculum but also by the manner of its practical implementation. The higher education system has to impose high quality human resources, high professional standards of teachers` promotion.

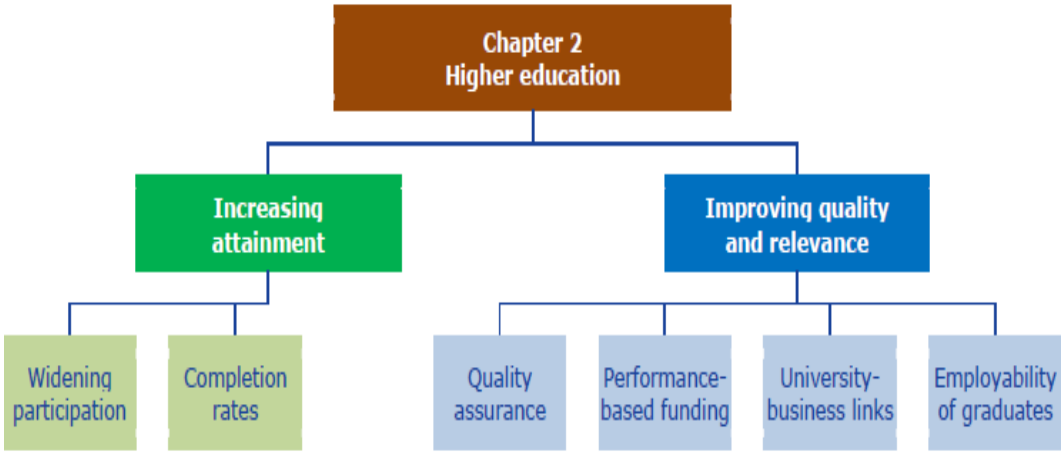

Fig.5. *Source: Eurostat (data extracted 25 April 2014).*

The teaching profession can be achieved by the controlling the involved factors:

- Identifying the training needs of future academic teaching staff;
- Investigating the motivational factors involved in choosing teaching career;
- Polling the students' attitude towards teaching career at the beginning, during and at the end of the psychopedagogic study programme;
- Students` awareness of their own abilities compared to the professional competences required by the standards for academic teaching career;
- The trainers` awareness of students` abilities and the stimulation of active involvement in their own training;

Since 2011, our country promotes *coherent and comprehensible educational policies* in initial training of academic teaching staff:

- Bachelor studies accompanied by psycho-pedagogic programmes of training for teaching career;
- Scientific or didactic Master programme;
- Doctoral studies.

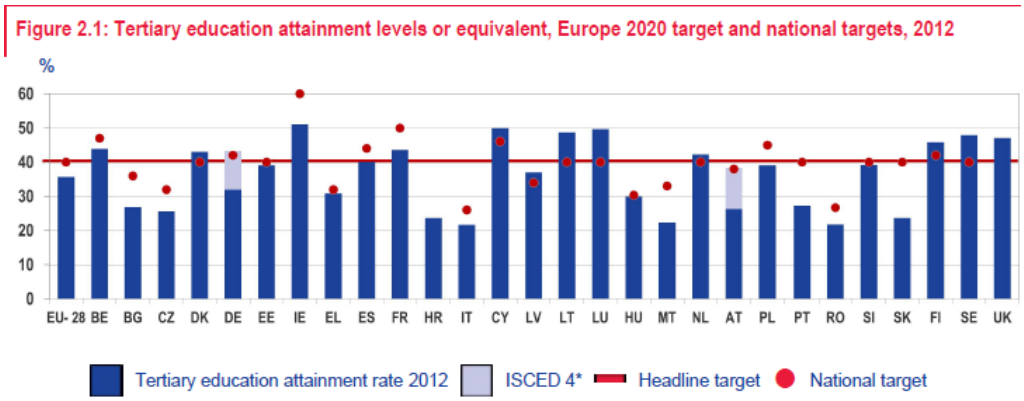

Fig.6. *Source: Eurostat (data extracted 25 April 2014).*

The Master certificate is an important premise for the beginning of teaching career; it basically makes a contribution to the training of undergraduate teaching staff.

By acquiring didactic competences, the teacher will be better prepared to face the challenges of a continuously changing society. Generally speaking, competence means:

- Set of potential behaviours (cognitive, affective, psycho-motor), which allow an individual to practice efficiently a complex activity;
- Set of a person`s abilities to fulfil all work-specific tasks (related to teaching profession) at a high level of;
- Minimal professional standard sometimes regulated by law, that a person has to reach in fulfilling certain tasks related to teaching profession.
- Competence is connected to a job, to a profession, a status, a professional or social referential situation; in this situation we are talking about the teaching profession. [8]

Professional training activity in terms of modern and postmodern psychology seeks certain principles embedded in specific strategic models:

- The incentive-personal model (based on stimulating the trainees motivation and on the development of their individual potential);
- The model of acquisition by social insertion (based on learning in real professional context);
- Humanistic model (which aims at acquiring general knowledge, intellectuals` training);

- Technical model (centred on acquiring professional knowledge in order to train specialists, and professionals)

Professional training is experiencing an unprecedented interest. Remarkable personalities have dealt with the issue of achieving teaching competence. Among them we would like to mention F.M. Gerard, X. Roegiers, J. Cardinet, J. E. Ormrod, R.W. Houston, F. Raynal, Dall'Alba G., Sandberg J., A. Reunier, P. Perrenoud, S. Marcus, N. Mitrofan, I. Jinga, C. Cucoş, M. Diaconu, R.M. Niculescu, R. Iucu, L. Antonesei, L. Gliga, I. Jinga, E. Istrate, S. Cristea, I. Neacşu.

The paradigms of professional training based on certain models are a useful guideline for professional training programmes of future teachers. Trainers` training is a strong point in modernizing education; it is the most important way of renewing quality *authentic* education according to *the demands of postmodern society.* [9]

4. Priorities

Our faculty, the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Psychology and Social Work tries to implement *coherent programmes of initial training for undergraduate teaching staff* (for example, didactic Master studies, scientific Master studies, post-graduate studies of training for teaching career). We are focused on developing study programmes according to *European requirements and the professional standards for undergraduate teaching staff,* on designing and developing *intensive programmes*, and an intensive psycho-pedagogic training programme for undergraduate teaching staff that would promote:

- *A flexible training offer,* adapted to specific learning needs, which facilitates the access to the development of undergraduate teaching career;
- *Increase the quality of academic teaching staff training* by integrating training strategies and techniques which are specific for undergraduate education;
- *The development of teaching staff competences* according to fields of interest, with positive impact upon the quality of undergraduate education;
- Support for the *beginning* as well as *the development of teaching career* by encouraging attendance at training courses;
- Ensuring a *effective functioning* of training programmes for future academic teaching staff by focusing the whole instructional process on the development/improvement of teaching and learning competences;
- The undergraduate`s teaching staff`s c*ontribution to research* that would make a contribution to their professional training. [10]

In our study programme, we have asked our Master students from two study programmes (*Psyhopedagogy of Early Education and Young Schooling and Interactive Pedagogy)* to rank the aspects that they find attractive in the teaching career according to a given list. The master students placed on top positions: the need for esteem, willingness to develop and improve, the chance for vocational fulfillment and the need to practice well the chosen profession (first place), on second place they mentioned: the need for esteem, the nature of profession itself, the possibility to obtain double certification, on the third place they have identified: increased chances for getting a more attractive work place, the possibility to train future generations, on the forth place they ticked job safety and on the fifth place, they mentioned autonomy. We consider that all these indicators are a mark of the need for self-fulfilment and professional training and are also intrinsic motivational factors in choosing teaching career.

The significance of teaching profession	**PETSM**		**PI**		**Total group**	
	%	**Rank**	**%**	**Rank**	**%**	**Rank**
Willingness to develop and improve	87,3	I	88,9	I	88,1	I
Need for esteem	58,7	II	59,3	II	59	II
Increased chances for getting a more attractive work place	37,5	III	32,7	III	35,1	III
The chance for vocational fulfilment	73,6	I	68,9	I	71,25	I
The possibility to train future generations	48,5	III	39,5	III	44	III
The need to practice well the chosen profession	79,5	I	76,4	I	77,95	I
The nature of profession itself	65,4	II	69,3	II	67,35	II
Autonomy	19,5	V	16,9	V	18,2	V
Job safety	28,6	IV	25,9	IV	27,25	IV
The possibility to obtain double certification	49,7	II	55,6	II	52,65	II

Table no1. Hierarchy of motivational elements for the teaching career

After graduating the Master programme *Psyhopedagogy of Early Education and Young Schooling*, students have mentioned a few aspects related to the quality of their training achieved through this programme. Below, we list some of its features:

- An extremely well-structured syllabus, adapted to the needs of modern education;

- Modules well-structured on units, which try to involve the student actively in learning activities;
- Connection between theoretical knowledge and their applicability;
- Availability for professional development of future teaching staff.

The goal of any university is the modernizing and improvement of educational act so that it would comply with the demands of knowledge based society, in times of competitive economic market and of a society based on European democratic values. [13]

Conclusions

The contemporary world is evolving so rapidly that all professional categories, especially trainers of trainers and teachers have to admit the fact that their initial training is not sufficient. Initial training should change into lifelong learning. Teaching activity demands constant training and improvement of the teacher's` competences and teaching techniques. Teacher training is facing times of permanent changes and reorientations, so that teachers would possess exactly those intellectual and human qualities that innovate their teaching activity. Quality education involves continuous improvement of professional performance as dictated by social changes. Education institutions try to reach the priority objective – continuous development of human resources so that competitiveness and excellence would be balanced with social cohesion and access freedom. Thus, they would lead to the improvement of the entire society.

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BIOLOGY HIGH SCHOOL SCIENCE CURRICULA FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

High school science curricula has to include side by side science-technology content knowledge as well as pedagogical content knowledge in a continuous interaction in order to answer issues of relevancy of both of them to students' needs.

Two main roles of science education for high schools students will be addressed, so science curricula will be adequate for the 21st century.

1.The role of Science Technology Society (STS) learning units, which have to use specific teaching/learning strategies, and specific learning settings, so students will acquire science-technology literacy connected to societal issues, which can facilitate their integration and participation in our advance society and will be able to find a job based on their learning

2.The role of moral education, values and attitudes via acquiring knowledge in science content knowledge as Dreyfus (1995) emphasized that "biological knowledge is a prerequisite for the development of students' values and attitudes.

Science knowledge role is not only for academic achievement and mastery of cognitive and meta- cognitive skills, but to educate students on the affective domain being active in the community life based on moral values and positive attitudes toward societal issues, like social justice, preservation of the environment and peace, the last two being addressed due to the fact of having a mutual impact connection in one of the STS learning unit presented in continuation.

1. SECTION 1 WILL INCLUDE THREE PARTS:

1.1. The model of the six mirrors of the classroom as developed by Hertz-Lazarowitz (1992), which can support teaching-learning in three complex cooperative learning methods:

1.2. Cooperative learning methods. The Group Investigations (Sharan & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1980, 1986), the Jigsaw method (Aronson et al, 1978) and Peer Tutoring in Small Investigative Groups (PTSIG , Lazarowitz & Karsenty (1990).

1.3. Three learning units developed on the STS approach and taught using the six mirrors of the classroom are presented in order to show the integration of methods of teaching-learning and the STS approach.

1.1. The six mirrors of the classroom in the traditional instruction

Figure 1 presents the six mirrors in four wings and shows the learning activities that occur in traditional (expository) classrooms. Those learning activities may be depicted as follows (See Figure 1). Mirror 1. The traditional classroom usually means direct, whole-classroom instruction (also called frontal or expository teaching). One can perceive the physical organization of the traditional classroom as fixed with little or no movement of the students within it.

Mirror 2. The teacher presents the learning tasks to the whole class, and then each student tackles it on his/her own.

Mirrors 3 and 4. The teacher communicates with the class as a whole with a high frequency of lecturing, disciplining, and commenting on negative events in the classroom.

Mirrors 5 and 6. Students' behaviors are mostly solitary on-task and off-task activities. Interactive behaviors, which include on-task and off-task and helping activities, occur about 25 percent of the time. Teachers do not initiate interactions among students – in fact, the interactions consist mainly of brief, clandestine types of activities.

Developmental observations showed that from first to twelfth grade, students maintained a stable interactive "on-task behavior" (about 15%), but increased their "off-task" interactive behaviors (Lazarowitz, Hertz-Lazarowitz, Baird and Bowlden, 1988). Teachers considered the increase in social "off-task" interactions to be a negative outcome, indicating increasing discipline problems and disturbances of the teacher's classroom (see Fig 1).

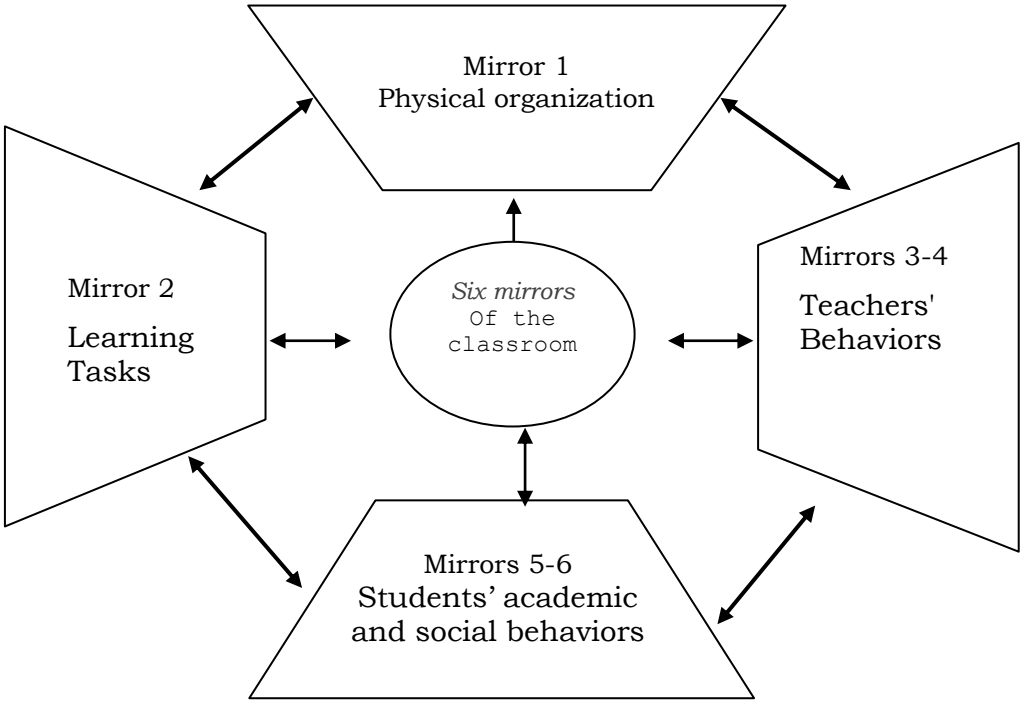

Figure 1: Six Mirrors of the Classroom in the traditional expository teaching.(Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992)

The model was designed to examine classroom processes and includes six aspects (mirrors) of the classroom *(1) organization, (2) learning tasks, (3) instructional behaviors of the teacher (4) communicative behaviors of the teacher (5) academic performance of the students and (6) social behaviors of the student.* Each mirror is described in terms of five levels of complexity from simple to complex (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992) as presented in Figure 2.

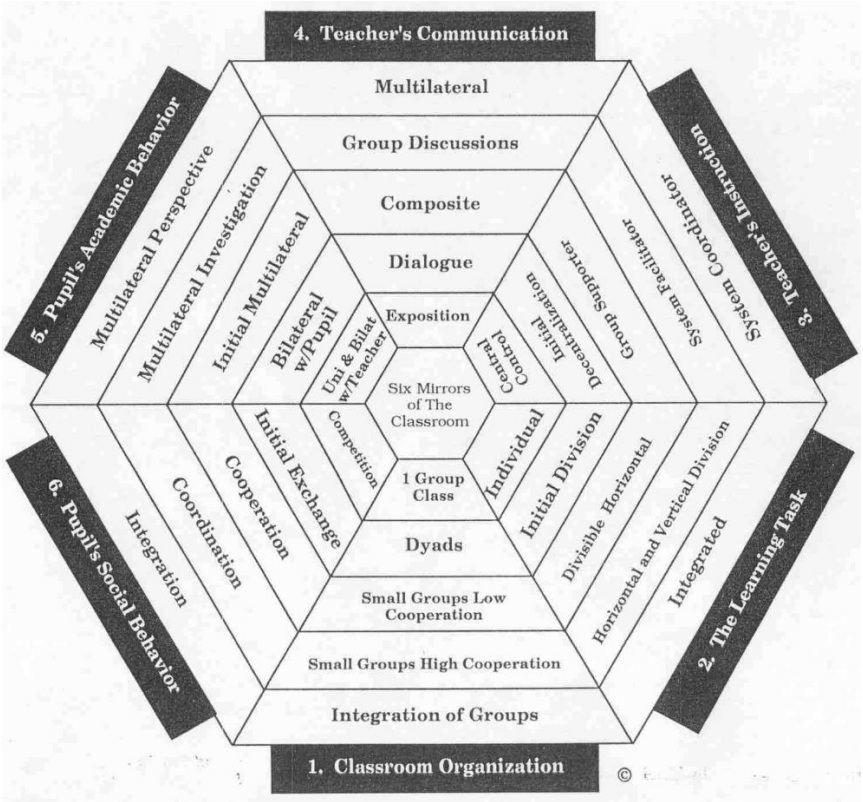

Figure 2. The Six-Mirrors of the Classroom (SMC) model (Hertz- Lazarowitz, 1992)

The model can serve as a conceptual framework to guide classroom observation in behavioral categories such as "on-task" and "off-task" behaviors, level of cooperation in the interaction of the students, and helping and social events that take place during the learning. It can be used to train teachers to design their classroom environment and move from traditional whole-classroom instruction to more active and then cooperative learning. The model and its measures assist teachers in testing the effects of cooperative learning on students' academic and social outcomes. The conceptual dynamics among the six mirrors permit the formulation of predictions and the analysis of a range of variables – for example, quality of on-task cooperation as expressed by content, frequency of in-group

communication, level of reasoning, and predicted academic and social outcomes**.**

The model can be used to train teachers to design their classroom environment, and move from traditional whole classroom instruction to more active and then cooperative learning.

Classroom structure and dynamics can be obtained, using video tapes and observers' coding. Studies' findings indicated that there were differences between traditional classrooms, where frontal teaching was dominant, as compared to active and cooperative classrooms, with considerable student interaction.

Co-operative learning in instructional and learning processes has some advantages: it provides in-depth learning, leads to diverse learning methods and social interaction. This integrative method increases interest in learning, leading to comprehension of content and successful learning. The basic premise in co-operative learning is that it motivates active learning by students, encourages group processing of information, and strengthens meta-cognitive activities (Lazarowitz & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1998).

In contrast to traditional classrooms, teachers designed their Cooperative Learning classrooms so that the physical setting (Mirror1) included 4-5 subsystems (groups), multiple resources for learning, and considerable movement and contact among the groups. Learning tasks (Mirror 2 were divided horizontally, as in a Jigsaw structure, or vertically and integrated, as in the Group Investigation method. In the jigsaw method, students are assigned to groups of about 4-6 members, with all groups working on the same topic. In each group, each member studies a different section of the topic, and then members from all groups who studied the same section meet in "expert groups" to discuss their section. Student then return to their groups and teach their group members about their section. In Group Investigation, students in the class form groups of 2-6 members, each group chooses a subtopic from the general topic assigned to the class, and produces a group report. Subsequently, each group shares its findings with the entire class in the form of presentations and class discussions. These Cooperative Learning tasks, which involved peer learning and peer teaching, were designed to increase interdependence and personal as well as collective responsibility.

The pattern of teacher's communication and instructional behaviors (mirror 3 and 4) included communication with the whole class for a short period of time, then with each of the groups as well as with individuals who needed help. The teacher observed a given group at a time and helped advance the group's discussion to a higher level. Most of the time teachers were helping, explaining, and giving feedback to students. Little disciplining took place and only a few negative comments were heard in the class.

In this context, students engaged quite frequently in interactive, cooperative and helping behaviors. It was observed that within lively and

stimulating group discussions, peer learning was at a high cognitive level. These descriptions of class activities and dynamics exemplify how the "anatomy of cooperation" model of the six mirrors enabled the observation and investigation of academic outcome.

1.2. Cooperative Leaning Methods in the Science Secondary Schools

The Jigsaw Method (Aronson et al 1978)

In the jigsaw method, the class is divided into small groups of heterogeneous five students who can treat each other as resources. The learning goals and materials are structured by the teacher and are divided into independent sub--units which can be learned separately so that one sub-unit does not depend on the mastery of others.

The jigsaw is composed from two cooperative structures; the jigsaw (5 students A to E) and the experts group (5 students with the same part 5a, 5b, 5c, etc.). In the expert group student master their part and prepare for peer--tutoring, then they return to jigsaw group to tutor their teammates and prepare for a test.

Group Investigation (GI) (Sharan and Hertz-Lazarowitz 1980, 1986)

Group investigation is rooted in Dewey's (1927) philosophy of education. GI integrates four basic features: investigation, interaction, interpretation and intrinsic motivation. These features are combined in the six stages of the GI model:

1. Class determines subtopics and organize into research groups; 2. Groups plan their investigation; 3. Groups carry out their investigation; 4. Groups plan their presentations; 5. Groups make their presentation; 6. Teacher and students evaluate their projects. In GI the investigation process is presented in each stage; groups select topics for investigation by their interest and curiosity. Thus in the GI classroom groups work on different, but related topics of investigation. They use a variety of resources to generate questions, gather information in the investigation and become active in constructing their knowledge. The teacher is a facilitator, a mentor and a collaborator in the student's inquiry process.

Peer Tutoring in Small Investigative Groups (PTSIG)

The method was developed by Lazarowitz and Karsenty (1990) as a combination of the Jigsaw method and Group Investigation (GI). The PTSIG was experimented in secondary school. The method include the following structures: The Jigsaw structure for peer--tutoring, and the GI structure for the expert counter group. The teacher as a curricula developer, designs the biology related learning tasks for each sub--unit, in an inquiry--investigative sequence of activities. Therefore, students work, especially in their expert group, on complex and rich learning tasks. In their expert--group students are reading, making observations on the objects studied and generate questions for laboratory investigative experiments. The tasks include open questions and

biological problems which could be solved only by using microscopes, preparing slides or performing experiments with other group members. After they finish their learning tasks in the expert group, they return to their Jigsaw group for peer tutoring. Usually, the different sub--topics which were investigated, are presented and discussed within the original Jigsaw group in order to acquire a general understanding and knowledge of the topics.
The evaluation is based on students' academic products in their expert groups, and their grades in a test on all the units. The students prepare for the final test with further reading. The teacher occasionally leads the discussion with the whole class to organize and conceptualize significant biological concepts. Topics such as the cells, animal physiology, photosynthesis in higher plants, and evolution are topics which can be naturally divided into five independent sub--units and can be learned in a jigsaw investigative method. Teachers--Researchers in Israel, who have implemented PTSGI, develop elaborate curricula to be used in high--school biology classrooms.
In both methods the investigative method the students and the teachers contain and practice complexity in each of the mirrors as presented in the 5th level of the model (Hertz- Lazarowitz, 1992 pp73-81).
The positive academic and social outcomes of Cooperative Learning are presented in many writings: Abrami, P. C., Poulsen, C. & Chambers, B., (2004), (Gillis & Ashman, 2003; Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1992, 2005, 2008;; Lazarowitz & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 1998; Lazarowitz,2006; Slavin, Hurley, & Chamberlain, 2003).

1.3. Modules developed in the STS approach as they were taught at the secondary school level.

Ionizing Radiation: Uses and Biological Effects

The learning unit Ionizing Radiation: Chemistry and Biological Effects (Nachshon, 2000) was written in a thematic and STS approach and included related subjects: a) the physics-chemistry of ionizing radiation—the particle radiation of Alpha and Beta
rays, electromagnetic radiation, gamma and X-ray radioactive phenomena and background radiation; b) biological aspects—the effects of radiation on different levels of biological organization: the molecules (DNA molecules), organelles, cell, tissues, and organisms; c) the technological aspects—radioisotopes as energy and radiation sources, the food industry, science research, the range of medical uses of X-ray photography and computerized tomography (CT); and d) societal aspects and issues uses of ionizing radiation for human needs, the use of radioisotopes for diagnosis and treatment in nuclear medicine, the use of nuclear power for electricity (advantages and disadvantages), and the use of this energy as possible weapons of mass destruction, the process of mutation, and the relationship between cancer and

damage repair mechanisms and ionizing radiation's immediate effects and long-term effects, which may affect cell life cycles. The implementation and evaluation in grades 10 and 11 revealed that students' fluency and elaboration on ideas were higher while they learned in cooperative groups rather than as individuals. One-third of the students asked higher order questions, and the questions of the other students were mainly on the knowledge and comprehension levels. Half of the students were interested in the physics of ionizing radiation and activities aimed at developing creative thinking. Students preferred to learn the subjects in the thematic mode, in group activities, and most of them mentioned the importance of the diversity in instructional strategies that were used. The academic achievement of students in control groups, who learned chemistry and physics subjects in a disciplinary approach, was significantly lower, whereas the achievement of those who studied the subjects in the STS mode was higher. All students mentioned that learning about nuclear and ionizing radiation and their uses for human needs in a thematic approach and STS mode helped them to overcome their fears, which had been based on a lack of knowledge and prejudice (Nachshon 2000).

Microorganisms

This learning unit was developed in Arabic and Hebrew for 9th grade Israeli and Arab students in the STS approach, by Khalil Mahmood (2002), investigated by Khalil, Hertz-Lazarowitz and Lazarowitz, 2009). The learning unit was structured around two main biological principles: the unity of the life in the world and the relationship between structure and function. The problems raised in the unit were concerned with health issues, environment, microorganisms and drainage canalization between neighborhood villages. This unit enabled to investigate students' achievement on the cognitive and on the affective domains, attitudes toward the preservation of the environment and understanding and peace between people who live close to each other (Khalil, M. 2007). The following topics were included in the learning unit: microorganisms and their structure, the physiological processes, microorganisms' role in the food web, carbon and nitrogen cycles, food industry, environment and the level of health society. The unit helped students to master practical skills in the laboratory work, and to develop scientific thinking and problem solving skills. The learning tasks included individual and small cooperative group, utilizing a variety of teaching and learning methods in the classroom and the laboratory work within the model of the six mirrors of the classroom. Students read scientific essays, watched videos, played group games, went on group trips in the nature, visited food industries and searched for information from different sources, internet and libraries. The learning unit was introduced to the students in such a manner as to raise students' motivation by being practical, connected with daily life and dealing with societal issues. In

this manner the relationship between science, technology, environment and society was emphasized.

It was assumed, that students would develop positive attitudes and be able to objectively judge the problems involved with the preservation of the environment, while understanding the important role of the microorganisms in the life web. The outcomes in the cognitive and affective domains were obtained by analyzing students' portfolios written while studying in the classroom, in the laboratory and during the execution of their home work. The results show that students gained in their academic achievement, developed positive attitudes toward the environment, and understood the role that people have concerning the preservation of nature and its relation to peace, (Khalil, 2000; 2002).

Evolution

In the study conducted by Ron and Lazarowitz, (1995) with 12^{th} grade students, the topic of evolution was taught in an instructional mode of cooperative learning groups within the model of the six mirrors of the classroom. . The topics were; Lamarck's, Darwin's and neutral theories, punctuated equilibrium, genetics diversity, natural selection, specialization and phylogenesis. The results showed that students' academic achievement were higher compared with the control group. The explanation was based on the fact that cooperative learning in an active mode of SMC facilitates students' verbal interaction and construction of the knowledge based on group interaction and cooperation (Salit Ron and Lazaroowitz R. 1997).

Teaching and learning in the classrooms and laboratory work offered many opportunities for the evaluation and grading procedures, beside the use of the classical test following the instruction of a unit, (Lazarowitz, 2000; Lazarowitz and Tamir, 1994).

In implementing these methods, a complex and rich teaching and learning processes took place in the classroom. The teacher had to become an engineer of the learning tasks, and a designer of the physical setting of learning, as he orchestrated instructional and communicative behaviors to produce quality learning that will maximize the social- academic performance of the students.

Laboratory work

Can ninth graders students identified as being in the concrete operational stage learn the concept of pH, which requires formal operational ability?

In their study, Witenoff and Lazarowitz, (1993) found that when the laboratory worksheets from which students perform the experiments, are restructured according to Farmer and Farrell, (1980, p. 64) suggestions, and taught in

cooperative groups, they achieved significantly higher grades than the control group. It can be seen that when the cognitive operational stages of students are identified and the learning material was restructured in order to fit students' cognitive stage and learning style, learners can succeed. The biology teaching and learning in the classrooms and laboratory work offers many opportunities for the evaluation and grading procedures, beside the use of the classical test following the instruction of a unit, (Lazarowitz, 2000; Lazarowitz and Tamir, 1994).

Implementing these methods, the six mirrors of the classroom integrated in cooperative small group instruction, a complex and rich teaching and learning processes are taking place in the classroom. The teacher has to become an engineer of the learning tasks, and a designer of the physical setting of learning, as the teacher has to orchestrate her/his instructional and communicative behaviors to produce quality learning that will maximize the social- academic performance of the students.

Teaching and learning STS modules in a cooperative approach within the model of the six mirrors of the classroom, requires classroom learning environments different from the traditional one.

The learning material and the teacher

How to prepare the learning material? The regular textbook cannot facilitate cooperative learning within the six mirrors of the classroom mode and active learning. They can serve only as sources of information. Is the role of the teacher to prepare subunits by choosing those subjects, which can be divided in 5 subunits , and which can be learned independently but when they are presented by each student, they display an entirety.

3. Teachers have to develop the subunits so that some of them will require higher cognitive demands and some demanding less and to distribute them accordingly. In these methods both students with higher and lower cognitive abilities can contribute their parts in the learning process. One of the dilemmas that can rise is the fact that students who finish to learn and prepare themselves earlier may feel unsure if other students can teach them or what to do with extra free time or if the teacher knows them as being better prepared. Here is the role of the teacher to identify them and to ask them to help the other students in their tasks given them the role of teachers' assistants.

4. To prepare additional learning material available in the classroom or laboratory, so students can move and look at them.

5. In contrast to the Learning together method in which students have not specific roles, in the 3 methods depicted earlier, each student is responsible for one part and depends on other for their parts. That way, students acquire skills of active learning, self and mutual responsibility and have to master cooperative skills needed so much today.

Those cooperative skills should be performed and mastered at the beginning and no one can hope that they will be acquired during the learning process itself. As it has been said students will be so much busy with the new method and with the new subject . so we can not expect that simultaneously they will display cooperative skills.
Specific drills are suggested in their book by Aronson, et all (1978).

Student-Teacher Interaction and Active Learning

As we see the teacher role is changing from provider the knowledge as is in the expository teaching, to be the provider of an environment in which students are responsible for the learning material, which was prepared in advance. The teacher can ask students to plane steps in order to accomplish the learning task in an active process. The class (course) moves from a teacher centered to student centered. Now the real role of the teacher can be displayed. The teacher can move now from one group to another, to stimulate, to ask, to answer and to devote more time to those who need him//her more and to praise students for their learning. We call this teacher the "floating teacher".

Students' Heterogeneity.

Students differ in their cognitive stages, abilities, learning styles, preferences, choices, interests and needs. In the frontal expository teaching class, students who are peripherals, cannot express their learning difficulties when the teacher will ask the entire class "did you understand?" or "do you have questions"? Is very interesting if in this situation and in the front of all the class, can be find one student that will announce "I did not understand".
In the cooperative group student can ask a student "tell me again" and the words used are more meaningful then those used by the teacher. The teacher can be also more helpful helping a student discretely then in front of the entire class.

Evaluation and Outcomes.

In the expository teaching classrooms the teacher teach (lecturing) and provide all the knowledge-information, while the students' activities resume on listening, taking notes and trying to memorize the facts. Could these activities be called "learning"? Teachers' lecture resume on asking the traditional questions " Did you understand"? or "Do you have questions"? This type of teaching-learning is based on "one way interaction ", which cannot provide equal dialog between teacher–students or among students- students. We were used to call it "teachers' centered mode"
What happen in the three cooperative learning depicted above?
a). Teachers roles were depicted above.
b). Students' activities varied according to the learning tasks

c) They read the tasks while each one received a task at a different cognitive level in order to meet the heterogeneous nature of the group members.
d) every student reads, prepare his/her part for teaching it to the other members of the group, each one in his/her mode by mentioning the important points or other methods, they check themselves for mastery of the knowledge and if they are ready to teach and prepare questions to ask their counterparts if they master the learning material and will be ready to take the test administered by the teacher at the end of the learning unit. As one can see, each student repeat the learning material by different ways (to learn is one think but to prepare it for teaching is a different activity).It was find that all these activities enable students to repeat in different ways, fact which assure a better memorization without being boredom. Students can interact, ask, and answer among themselves and with the teacher, who can suggest, stimulate and adding information so the cognitive levels of learning process rise. Beside these cognitive activities, two more kind of skills are enhanced. 1. The affective objectives, responsibility behavior, helping, listening, sharing and more. 2. If the laboratory work is involved, then the psychomotor skills are enhanced too. Bloom taxonomy (1956) was widely cited for almost a half of the century but only the cooperative learning enabled teachers and students to acquire the learning skills on the three domains advocated by him, the cognitive, affective and the psychomotor areas in an equal educative mode using them as learning and teaching tools.

2. **Moral, Ethics, and Human Values in Biology Education**

The need .to relate to moral ethics and values, while teaching students in Biology was mentioned by (Bybee, Harms, Ward, and Yager, 1980). In 1976 Gottlieb noted that public school teachers do not relate to these issues while teaching science. As a result one may assume that most of the students on the high school level and college are not exposed to moral, ethical and human value discussions while learning science and technology. Some of these students are the people who later in their lives will become science teachers, medical doctors, scientists and politicians or common citizens.

Should science teachers address ethics, moral, and human values as part of their educational role, in addition to teaching subjects like genetics, genetic engineering, the human genome, molecular biology, topics in ecology and population issues, subjects, which have today an important role in the society life. Can citizens with no scientific knowledge and its connection to moral, ethics and human values react to those issues raised in a democratic society, while they did not practiced in their past any kind of discussion based on evidences and not on prejudices? This question was raised by Dreyfus (1995) who wrote that "*teachers must try to present facts in their wider perspective of some biological principles, such as those of studies on behavior and ecology.*

This will enable students to develop the eclectic values of an educated member of society".

High School Biology and Societal Issues

Analyzing high school biology textbooks Rosenthal (1984), found that between 1963 and 1983 attention to societal issues decreased in. Those books had minimized the controversial aspects and avoided questions of ethics and values, lacked a global perspective and neglected the interdisciplinary nature of problems. Her conclusion was that while some bio-ethic aspects were mentioned, almost none of the societal problems such as environment, population and human behavior were referred to in the books of the 80's, contrary to the books of 1973. The general picture showed a declining emphasis of societal issues on the school textbooks.

Conner (2000, a) noted the importance of including *" bio-ethical issues in order to provide opportunities for students to be prepared to respond to issues in adult life by giving them experience in discussing personal, social and ethical dilemmas related to science and technology."*

The need to incorporate societal issues that are associated with science and technology subjects into science curricula was advocated by Layton (1993, while

relating to the instructional mode needed in order to relate to societal issues Gilbert and Hoepper, (1996) mentioned that social interaction is essential for creating situation, which can challenge, refine and affirm our values. Teachers must create open and supportive classroom discussions in which students bring a wide range of viewpoints and evaluate issues from their personal point of view, (Dawson, 1998).

Students should get learning opportunities which require the use of higher thinking skills, such as analysis, synthesis, critical reflection and evaluation of their ideas about social and ethical issues. These should be provided in the context of learning topics, which are relevant to students (Lipman, 1991, p. 50; Anderson 2003; Bryant 2002; Bryant and Baggott la Velle, 2003).

At the college level, Sadler and Zeidler (2005) explored how students negotiate and resolve genetic engineering dilemmas. They reported that students demonstrated "*evidence of rationalistic, emotive and intuitive forms of informal reasoning"* and most of them " *appreciated some of the moral implications of their decisions".* Sadler and Zeidler (2005) concluded that science classrooms are environments where in addition to reason, intuition and emotion are valued.

The literature cited above emphasized the need of using learning material, which include science and technology knowledge related to societal issues, and teaching/ learning strategies such as cooperative group learning,

which stimulate active learning, students-teachers interaction and discussions trying to use relevant knowledge regarding moral ethical and human values.
Previously, active learning was depicted in the six mirrors of the classroom model as well as cooperative group learning settings, followed by the STS learning units in, which two issues in the affective domain, the preservation of the environment and peace were discussed.

At this point we will present a study carried by Lazarowitz, and Ilit Bloch (2006) "Awareness of Societal Issues Among High School Biology Teachers Teaching Genetics." in, which the issue of moral, ethics and human values served as the main goals of investigation while teaching genetics, genetics engineering, molecular genetics, human heredity and evolution to high school students.

The purpose of this study was to investigate how aware of societal issues (values, moral, ethic, and legal issues) are high school biology teachers while teaching the above subjects mentioned above.

Meanwhile referring to science and technology teachers, Conner (2000, b) raised the problem that since they are often only specialists in their subject matter, they may encounter pedagogical difficulties which require discourse on STS issues. The need for guidance in these matters is probably pivotal in order for them to be able to act as facilitators on these issues.
In their study Lazarowitz and Bloch(2006) asked the following questions:
1. Are high school biology teachers aware of the social dilemmas while teaching subjects in genetics?
2. What are the subjects in genetics that, in the teacher's opinion, should be taught in high school?
3. Do these subjects include societal issues (values, moral and ethics)?
4. What are the reasons given by the teachers in favour or against including societal issues in their classes of genetics, molecular genetics, genetics engineering, and evolution?
5. Do teachers differ in their opinions as to their awareness of these issues due to their years of teaching experience, gender or religious faith?

The sample consisted of 30 biology teachers (female, N= 25, 83 % male, N=5, 17%) in urban and rural high schools. Seven teachers, 23%, had teaching experience of 5 years; 9 teachers, 30%, had teaching experience of 6 to 10 years, and 14 teachers, 47%, had teaching experience of 11 years and more. Regarding religious faith, 6 teachers (20%) were identified as being orthodox; 5 teachers (17%), as being traditional and 19 teachers, (63%), as being secular.

The small sample is due to the fact that very few biology teachers choose to teach the 5 points level of either genetics or evolution (the highest level required for the matriculation exams of students at the 11^{th} and 12^{th} grades).Teachers of these subjects were approached either by mail or personally by the researchers and asked to participate in the study. Therefore the sample

can be considered of reasonable size, representing the teachers' population teaching these subjects.

Personal information and professional opinions of the teachers were gathered from questionnaires and individual interviews carried out by the researcher and a Teachers' Questionnaire in which teachers were asked to provide personal information; gender, years of teaching experience and religious faith (orthodox, traditional or secular), and two seven open questions on the topics taught (molecular genetics, genetics engineering, human heredity, evolution) and teachers' opinions on the related topics as follows:

1. List the main topics in genetics, molecular genetics, genetic engineering and human heredity and how this content is related to the subject of evolution that you teach in your classes.
2. What subjects in the above mentioned topics do you emphasise the most?
3 If you were asked to change parts of the curriculum regarding these topics, which subjects would you recommend to extend?
4. If you were asked to include the topic of Cystic Fibrosis (CF) in the curriculum, into which subjects would you integrate in it?
4a. Are there other issues concerning CF that you would relate to in your teaching?
5. If you were asked to integrate the topic of the Fragile X Chromosome Syndrome (FXCS), in the curriculum, what related subjects would you like to include?
5a. What issues on FXCS would you relate to in your teaching?
6. If it was in your power to change or add content in your textbook, what topics on human heredity and genetic engineering would you suggest?
7. What subjects would you suggest to integrate into the teaching on the topic of embryo's cloning?

Individual Interviews.

Due to the small size of the sample, all the teachers (N= 30) were interviewed and tape recorded by the researcher, with their permissions.

The Guided-Focused Interview was found to be adequate for this study. (Sabar-Ben Jeshua N. 1997). This type of interview is based on a manual, with detailed questions related to the study goals, and the respondent had the freedom of reply and react and the interviewer could react to the new points raised by the interviewed.

The advantages of this type of interview are a) individual reactions; b) effective is use of time; c) consideration of important points; d) focus, but the person interviewed is free to react and present ideas. Thus the respondents' answers can be compared, clustered and analysed.

The analysis yielded four main categories: a) Genetics Population; b) Molecular Genetics; c) Genetic Engineering. D) Societal Issues: values, moral and ethical

implications. Additional categories were: Practical Issues, General Scientific Subjects and Pedagogical Issues. Teachers' answers were analysed according to categories for each research question and to years of teaching experience, gender and religious faith (secular, traditional and orthodox).

The results have shown that out of 125 responses most of them belong to scientific categories. The number in parenthesis, which follows a category, indicates how many times it was mentioned. Basic genetics (76 items, 60%); molecular genetics (24 items, 19%); and genetic engineering (18 items, 14%). Only 7 items (6%) were found to be related to the societal implications category. While one compares the number of topics between the scientific subjects and the societal issues then a big gap of 118 items vs. 7 only, becomes obviously. Topics primarily emphasized were genetic diseases, Mendel principles, sex determination and blood types in Basic Genetics and Population categories. In the second category, genetic engineering and application of medicine and agriculture were emphasised. Only three teachers mentioned the 7 items in the societal implication category.

Teachers' responses to question 2 were gathered in the same four categories and the results have show about the same distribution between the scientific categories and the societal implications regarding the question related to what teachers will mostly emphasise in their teaching. Although the responses are different in content, the same ratio appears between the scientific items and the societal ones. On this question, 25 teachers answered, but only four of them mentioned societal issues. Teachers' responses to question 3 were clustered in three categories: Only 13 teachers answered this question and 3 categories were identified as being based on 18 responses. Ten topics were suggested for the scientific and practical categories and 6 for the societal one. While teachers were willing to add ethical subjects, they preferred specialists to deal with genetic counselling and subjects like limits acceptable or prohibited regarding the genetic engineering issue. They indicated that they themselves were ready to deal with ethical problems. Again, while on scientific and practical subjects they were ready to add topics to their instruction, there was a tendency to refer the societal issues to others.

Teachers' responses to question 4 were clustered in two categories:

Teachers were required to add to their curriculum the topic of Cystic Fibrosis disease (CFd), and what subjects they will integrate, They mentioned 43 items on the scientific field and only 5 related to the societal area. This topic is not in their curriculum and is not found in the textbook they used. Though mentioning scientific topics, teachers did not necessarily manifested knowledge about the disease. Moreover, the majority of the teachers did not find it necessary, or simply did not consider it their role to relate to the societal aspects of the problem. It remains to be determined if teachers lack sensitivity to societal issues or do not regard it their role as science teachers to include values

and ethical aspects. One might recognise the need of including these aspects in teacher education.

When they were asked as to what subjects of the CFd topic they would relate as a teacher, they mentioned 42 items which were clustered in three categories: scientific (20 items, 48%); pedagogical (6 items, 14%); societal issues (16 items, 38%, provided by 9 teachers out of 30).

On question 5, when asked as what subjects on the topic of Fragile X Chromosome Syndrome (FXCS) they would like to integrate in their curriculum, teachers suggested 44 items: 41 of them on the scientific and only 3 related to societal aspects.

To question, 5a, what subjects on the topic of FXCS they would relate as a teacher, they mentioned 23 scientific items and only 5 societal issues.

Questions 4 and 5 yielded the same ratio of responses between the scientific and societal subjects related to CF and FXCS.

In question 6 teachers were asked that if they would be authorised to change or add to their genetics textbooks which included topics on human heredity and genetic engineering, what would they will suggest ? Only 21 items were provided by the teachers and those responses were clustered in two categories: scientific and societal areas. Only 12 teachers suggested 16 (76%) changes and additions to the scientific content related to genetic engineering, to update the content. As to the societal area, two teachers referred to the consequences on the use of genetic engineering, the need of articles on moral issues, euthanasia, genetic cloning and the application of genetic engineering to human problems, (5 items, 24%).

In question 7, teachers were asked to suggest topics on the subject of embryo cloning that they would like to integrate into their teaching. The responses were clustered into two categories, and the results have shown that the teachers (N=17) suggested 27 items, equally divided: In the scientific area, 14 items (52%) and on the societal issues 13 items (42%).

The teachers were concerned with the scientific content and the ethical aspects of human cloning, including the Dolly experience and charlatans and dictators who could use biotechnology for their purposes. The issue of effectiveness vs. ethics was raised as well, and their reaction was strongly on the affective domain.

Finally, teachers' responses on question 1 were analysed also by years of teaching experience, gender and faith.

There is a similar pattern of responses by the three groups of teachers relating to teaching experience. The greatest numbers of items are on Basic Genetics, followed by the other two groups, while the smallest number of items can be found in the societal issues. The only significant differences were found between the most experienced teachers and the other two groups in all the four categories. Teachers with more years of teaching experience tended to provide

more items in the four categories. One might expect that novice teachers would provide more items on Basic Genetics, Molecular Biology and Genetic Engineering, due to the fact that they had recently concluded their university studies, but this was not the case. There is no indication that university studies had any particular impact on these issues; obviously, they preferred to stick to their textbooks. On the other hand, the teachers with 11 and more years of teaching experience felt more secure in surpassing their textbooks, and expressed more willingness to deal with new scientific subjects and with more issues that could lead to discussion on the affective domain. These results lead to assume that experienced teachers felt more secure in introducing issues and subjects in their teaching beyond those in their textbooks. Those teachers could be considered as being in their third stage of professional development according to Fuller and Parson, (1969). They had probably overcome the survival period and the insecurity of not knowing enough science and pedagogy. They feel secure enough to address students' needs in terms of providing new and up to date learning material and relate to students' interests. Thus they are able to include affective values and ethical aspects, and use science in their daily life.

The other results indicated that the on four categories there are not did not any significant differences by gender and faith. The answers in the four categories showed no gender differences nor difference according to orthodox, traditional and secular teachers.

Discussion

The results indicate that among the teachers there is a medium to low level of awareness of societal issues, and the main emphasis is on the "pure" by scientific subjects taught for the matriculation exams. Most of the teachers do not include societal issues in their classes, as a planned part of their curriculum, but if students raise these issues, the teachers claimed to address them.

No differences in the teachers' opinions to societal aspects were found related to gender and religious faith. Teachers with more years of teaching experience tend to teach genetics with more of a STS approach than novice teachers. The novice teachers prefer to "stick" to basic and mandatory subjects.

The teachers explained not including debates on societal issues as an integral part of teaching genetics as follows: a) Their preoccupation with the matriculation examinations; b) Having to focus on subjects to be tested in these exams and having no time to prepare the students to them. All this drives the teachers to "stick to" the curriculum and teach it without any enrichment. Therefore, many teachers refrain teaching related to societal issues, which might have a moral or value orientation. One might assume that these attitudes are a result of the teachers' unwillingness to take a stand on issues that are not clearly part of the curriculum and could contradict school policy and parents'

values. Another explanation could be that if tools are given to the teachers in textbooks, pre-service and in-service teacher education courses in which they should acquire skills and confidence needed to lead debates during science classes, then students could make decisions based on evidence and not on prejudice and misconceptions. Another explanation for not relating to societal issues can be according to Hughes (2000): *"Teachers fear that extensive coverage of socio-science devaluates the curriculum, alienates traditional science students and jeopardises their own status as gatekeepers of scientific knowledge"*. But Zohar and Menet (2002) have shown that by integrating explicit teaching of argumentation into the instruction of dilemmas in human genetics enhances the performance in biological knowledge and students are able to transfer reasoning skills to the context of dilemmas taken from everyday life. Therefore strategies of leading class discussions on societal issues bounded to subjects' matter as were depicted earlier, should be developed and investigated in the future.

School policy, teamwork and the teacher's perception of their role can also be reasons for not including societal issues in teaching genetics. Gershon, (1993) asked *" what is the responsibility of the scientific community? Is and should science be neutral? Can knowledge be ethically dangerous? What is potentially more dangerous: knowledge or ignorance?"*
The answer to this question was actually answered during WWII, when, on the one hand the fraudulent use of knowledge led to genocide, and on the other hand ignorance was responsible for it as well. Citing Watson (2000, p.3), who wrote "*knowledge would liberate mankind from superstition* ", one may add that liberation from ignorance, prejudices and poverty not necessarily predict that circumstances cannot repeat themselves in the future. One may ask if it is the role of the universities to offer college courses on societal issues and bio-ethics (morals, ethics and values) not only in the philosophy departments but in that of sciences and technology too. The pre- and in- service courses for science teachers who teach genetics, evolution and related topics should include opportunities to discuss these issues in class (Muller- Hill, 1998, translator preface, Fraser, R.G. p. xii).

The roles of teachers at all levels should not be based on solely "dry" knowledge, but to address societal issues in open discussions, giving every one the opportunity to take a stand on science and technology developments. Only then we will be able to say that educating through the teaching science and technology can be relevant to students' needs as future citizens of our society. Knowledge cannot be neutral, it can only be human.

Recommendations

The findings of this study show the need for the implementation of discussions on societal issues related to science, technology and environment.

In order to facilitate it, it is necessary to include these components in teachers' pre- and in-service education programs in science and technology university level. High school curricula should also include relevant open questions on these issues in the respective textbooks chapters. Students should be informed, and learn about the relationships between science, technology and society. The opportunities of finding jobs in a highly scientific-technological oriented society depend on whether or not these subjects are made available and relevant to the students' needs and interests.

We propose that students should realise the relevancy of the science curricula to their daily life and human needs. However, teachers and educators on all levels should provide an educational environment in which scientific knowledge will be acquired, based on solid moral, ethics and human values. Teaching in an inquiry mode integrated with the STS approach, rather then the typical expository one, and new methods of teaching only does not assure humanistic and educational results.

Another issue which should be considered, was the trend of separating the instruction of science and technology in the 60's, in the then "new science curricula". This arose primarily as a result of political and social reasons, rather emanating from a profound philosophical debate. It is currently accepted that science and technology are interrelated, has a reciprocal influence on each other, and each contributing to the development of the other by a sequence of mutual contributions. Science and technology cannot be separated in the high school curricula and the teaching and cognitive skills involved should be firmly anchored on moral, ethical and human values as well.

It is our assumption that based on the crimes committed in World War II by German scientists, and now all over the world, and the possible future abuse of recent achievements in science and technology, decisions about their use should be based on ethical, moral, and human values. Therefore, instruction of science and technology should always be accompanied by opportunities in which students can relate and discuss their impact on human life and social justice.

Learning science and technology related to societal issues is one of the conditions that can free people from poverty, ignorance and prejudice. The results of scientific research should and can be objective, if its experiments are carried out according to the conventional rules accepted by the scientific community. However, the scientific results, findings and technological outcomes can be interpreted differently, based on the philosophical and moral values of those who make use of them, whether scientists or politicians.

We would like to end this part of our paper and to relate to the following:

1. It is astonishing to find in the "German Chronicles of the Identification, Prescription, and Extermination of those who were "different" (Muller-Hill,

1998, pp.7 - 22), that the list of people who led to the atrocities of the World War II contains almost equal numbers of scientists in eugenics, evolution, medicine, euthanasia and anthropologists, and Nazi politicians. It is difficult to distinguish who influenced whom to be involved in these atrocities.

2. One comes to the same conclusion in reading the last pages, of the "Name Index", pp. 233- 246 (Muller-Hill, 1998). The number of German doctors who committed suicide at the end of the war, either to avoid trial or due to their feelings after their involvement in what they called "Aryan race theory" implementation, is comparable to the list of politicians and army officers who stood trial and were executed.

The two paragraphs mentioned above raise a more vital question regarding the science education in the 21st century. Our recommendation is that in each chapter in classic genetics, genetic engineering, evolution and natural selection, molecular biology, medicine and technology, relevant historical events should be introduced, as occurred due to the misleading interpretations of scientific theories, or intentional misuse which entailed criminal war activities. These topics of human history should be accompanied by class discussions, in which no one dictates his/her beliefs, but all are required to take a stand on moral, ethical and human values from a personal point of view. These issues become more acute to scientists and educators in recent times due to the demagogical manner in which poverty and religious faith are manipulated.

We must educate to understanding and respect of all believes. It is only possible to free people from ignorance, prejudice and poverty by teaching science and technology in a STS approach, combined with social and art sciences, to provide them with a solid humanistic basis for life. Although science and technology are included in our curriculum, the third component, the societal issues, require more attention.

Science education should go a step further, so that due to the recent advances in molecular biology, genetic engineering, the human genome project, evolution, eugenics and technologies, (with their potential applications for good and bad). All these disciplines, should include courses which address societal and bio-ethics issues, in order that future scientists understand their role and be aware of how dangerous is their impact on society. This is particularly true regarding the instruction of subjects like molecular biology, genetics engineering, medicine and technology related applications. Curricula developers, educators and scientist have to identify the appropriate subjects relevant to science, technology and societal issues, which can be integrated in order to provide learning material to be used in schools for achieving the goals suggested in this chapter.

This enterprise may *"lessen the chance of a recurrence of a similar misuse and perversion of science and medicine in the future"*(Muller- Hill, 1998, Translator preface, Fraser, R.G. p. xii). These recommendations can and

should be applied in all the levels of formal education to all the science and technology subjects that could
potentially affect human life.

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WHAT STUDENTS IN PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY EDUCATION THINK ABOUT LEARNING TO LEARN?!

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ABSTRACT

Quality of Learning and Lifelong Learning remain a necessity for society, for each individual and a challenge for all teachers. The quality of education depends on the level of development and harmonization of general competencies and transversal competences. From the eight Key Competences, common to many occupations (approved by CNFPA Resolution No. 86/24.06.2008 and recognized at European Level) „learning to learn" competence is central for this study. The research is part of the observational phase of a larger study on the development and counselling of „learning to learn" competence in the Romanian University System.

This research in the Romanian space joins the European trend where, since 2008 the EU Council Report has encouraged the development of indicators and the development of research of „learning to learn "competence.

The objectives of this qualitative research are: to identify the dimensions of "learning to learn" competence from the perspective of students in Preschool and Primary Education from the current Romanian Education System, to assess students' perception upon the place and role of "learning to learn" competence and to emphasis successful ways/strategies in strengthening and developing "learning to learn". In order to achieve the objectives for this research we have used Focus Group method applied to three groups of students.

The results show that most students place this competence in the first place or at least in top three of the Key Competences. They also are able to name the dimensions of learning to learn as the speciality literature describes. The strategies indicated for developing and counselling learning to learn are a valuable guide for teachers.

KEYWORDS: transversal compeneces, 'learning to learn' abillities, students, Romanian education, focus group.

1. WHAT MEANS LEARNING TO LEARN?!

The expansion of the formal education (as time dedicated to formal learning) and the requirements for specialized training influences the relationship between education and labour market. European and world's standards ask for individuals increasingly competitive and better prepared. Therefore, the quality of specialist's preparation depends on the quality of the

education - general level of skills and in particular, the powers of transferable competences. Of the eight key skills, common to several occupations (approved by the National Council for Adult Professional Training (CNFP) No 86/24.06.2008 and recognized at European level)[1]: communication in the mother tongue; the communication in foreign languages; mathematics skills and core competencies in science and technology; skills of information and communication technologies; to learn how to learn; civic and interpersonal skills; entrepreneurial activities; and cultural expression we consider that learning to learn competence is very important and influences the development of others competences.

Changes implemented in the higher education system, especially after the Bologna Process, along with the many decisions legislative and at the level of educational policy of which recall only a few more representative of research procedure proposed: Quality concerns for higher education (introduction Romanian Agency for quality assurance in higher education - ARACIS), the introduction of European Qualifications Framework (EQF), The National Framework of Qualifications and Learning centred on the student and have the competent generated new requirements and challenges in academic practice.

At European level "learning to learn" is defined as the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organize one's own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one's learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual's competence [2]. According to researchers Hoskins and Fredriksson, U. (2008, p 29) learning to learn competence have three dimensions: affective, cognitive and meta-cognitive [3], with specific indicators for each dimension separately.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN

The research is part of the observational phase of a larger study on the development and counselling of „learning to learn" competence in the Romanian University System.

2.1 Research objectives

The objectives of this qualitative research were:

- ☑ to identify the dimensions of "learning to learn" competence from the perspective of students in Pedagogy of Preschool and

Primary Education from the current Romanian Education System;

- ☑ to establish the place (in students opinion) that learning to learn competence take between the eight Key Competence;
- ☑ to assess students' perception upon the self-development of "learning to learn" competence;
- ☑ to emphasis successful ways/strategies in strengthening and developing "learning to learn".

2.2. Participants

The participants of the three focus groups sums 21 female students (seven students in each group) from the "Transilvania" University of Brașov, Faculty of Psychology and Education Sciences, first year in Pedagogy of Preschool and Primary Education specialization. The selection criteria for the participation at focus group session were willingness and availability.

2.3. Research methodology

In order to achieve the objectives for this research we have used Focus Group method applied to three groups of students. These sessions was guided by an Interview protocol realised in order to respond to the research objectives, described above.

The Focus Groups activity was audio recorded and noted (for each student there was another student that observe and write down on an observation protocol). The recorded files were also transcribed and analysed.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

For the first objective, definition and the dimensions of "learning to learn" competence, students in Pedagogy of Preschool and Primary Education have mentioned the following:

- ✓ Group 1: „styles", „conditions", „rhythm", „time management", „motivation", „experience", „learning efficiency", „quick learning techniques".
- ✓ Group 2: „to find ways to learn to learn", „some read more, others use schemes to remember better".
- ✓ Group 3: „learning to learn involves some steps in learning", „learning schemes", „strategies and techniques for learning to learn means to accumulate information and knowledge easier, „to develop skills and competencies to learn", „knowledge and skills to implement knowledge".

Analysing the three group's responses about what is learning to learn we discover that the phrase is well known by the students, in the common meaning.

About the place learning to learn competence take between the eight European Key Competence (second objective) students have similar opinions. Some students consider that it is on the first or second place. There are students that are undecided – consider that all the key competences are important.

Asking for a self-evaluation of the learning to learn competence the students ranks between 5,5 and 9, as it can be seen in Fig 1.

The average for the first group is 6,07 for the second 7,57 and for the third is 8. This means a total average of 7,21. It is interesting that in the same group the differences between the ranks were smaller than between groups. This could be explained by the reciprocal influence. We also remarked that no student considered the rank 10 and they all agreed that learning to learn is a competence in continuing development.

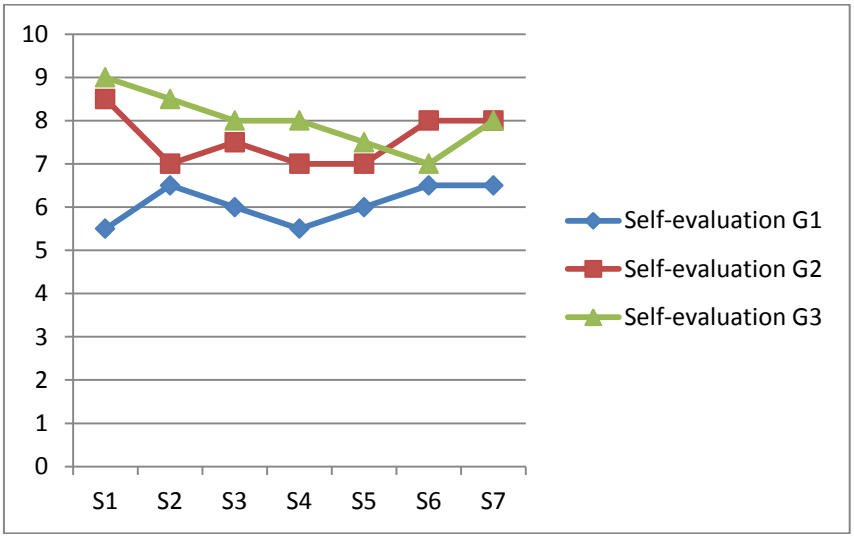

Fig. 1 Student's learning to learn competence - self-evaluation

In Table 1 we have presented some successful strategies that students considered useful in their experience, to develop and strengthening "learning to learn". The presented strategies emphasis on the affective component of the learning to learn competence. It is important to student to like the teacher and they have expectations form the teachers to "attract" them, to make them like the subject. They also have some legitimate expectations: to teach well, to explain well, linking theory to practice, to encourage them, to motivate.

Table 1 Successful strategies for teacher to develop student's learning to learn competence

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Successful strategies for "learning to learn" – suggestions for teachers.	-a teacher should initiate us in intellectual work techniques -it was easy and pleasant to learn discipline x because I liked the professor -to explain well, to use attractive methods through play -to motivate students, to be calm, to be open, to listen to students -more freedom, optional disciplines for those who want to learn	-have the prowess to display information, to tie the theme of the lesson to practice, to get you to seek new information about the theme. -teacher attitude, if you feel that enjoys it, knows very well what he preaches, the courage to let you search more information. -teacher must have the ability to attract the student, students to be interested, motivated to learn the curricula.	-resume easy when you learn well in class, frequent evaluations -if you like and are interested, understand what the teacher teach, -give examples, link to practice, made us be careful and to like -in teaching starts from what students think, use debate, is close to students

4. CONCLUSIONS

As we could see the students are more aware of the cognitive and affective dimensions of learning to learn competence and less on the meta-cognitive. From this perspective, they expect more to be supported, motivated, drawn (external elements) than it is for their own learning self-management (self-regulation, self-organization, self-empowering).

They also recognize the importance of motivation, will, concentration and individual particularities in learning and they are open and willing to the idea of counselling for learning - are interested to learn about methods and techniques to learn fast, efficient and feel the need to be encouraged and motivated.

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INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN WITH SEN IN THE EARLY EDUCATION VISION

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ABSTRACT

Inclusive education is a complex and lengthy process which requires continuous analysis, adjustments and development, in order to achieve inclusive policies and practices starting with the early education. In Romania there is a tradition of inclusive education, a tradition which was applied, in 2011, by the RENINCO Association.

This organisation, along with its international partners, has set up a professional body for the promotion and implementation of inclusive education in Romania named GREI (Grupul Român Pentru Educaţie Incluzivă / The Romanian Body for Inclusive Education), whose main objective is to connect Romania to the European and international efforts to achieve inclusive education, and to sustain and develop the Romanian mode initiative, including its implementation at national and European level.

The purpose of this paper is to present the findings of a study based on documents that contain the legislation, principles and strategies of integration of children with SEN in early education, with a view to implementing these in the integration of antepreschool children with SEN. It is well known that early identification of special needs offers the best chance for intervention and recuperation.

KEYWORDS: integration, inclusive education, special educational needs (SEN), early education, educational policy, disability

Inclusive education is a complex and lengthy process which requires continuous analysis, adjustments and development, in order to achieve inclusive policies and practices starting with the early education. The principle of inclusive education was officially promoted in the U.S. in the early '90s with Individuals Disabilities Education Act. In Romania there is a tradition of inclusive education, a tradition which was applied in:

- Inclusive education project (2007-2011) funded by the World Bank and the Romanian Government aims to ensure equal access for children who is in disadvantaged and vulnerable groups (including children with special needs) to a quality early education. Among the components of this project is training resources human for the managers of early education on issues related to inclusive education.

- Policy of the RENINCO Association, who in 2011 along with its international partners, has set up a professional body for the promotion and implementation of inclusive education in Romania named GREI (Grupul Român Pentru Educație Incluzivă / The Romanian Body for Inclusive Education); whose main objective is to connect Romania to the European and international efforts to achieve inclusive education, and to sustain and develop the Romanian initiative, including its implementation at national and european level.

Opinions of speciality highlights of inclusive education opportunity as early. In this sense, the results reported are selected by the European Agency for Development in Special Education Requirements (Mara, D., 2009, p 11). Thus, conditions that mainstream schools must meet to successfully include the students with special educational needs:

1. Motivation of teachers to create an inclusive environment in the classroom;
2. Knowledge, skills and expertise of teachers who working with students with special educational needs;
3. Supporting teachers from both the management of the educational institution and the other institutions;
4. Cooperation closely with parents of children with SEN is essential for successful inclusion;
5. A set of relevant policies to allow an inclusive framework of pupils with SEN.

The identification of special needs at an early age creates the possibility to recover as fast. So, inclusive education applies for early education also. Early education constitutes a pedagogical approach covering the period from birth to 6/7 years during which they held fundamental acquisitions in child development. World Conference at Jomtien (1990) which aimed Education for All emphasizes that learning begins at birth and goes on throughout life. The conference also brought to the fore the need to correlate the fields of health, nutrition and hygiene, social protection sphere of education, an education based on the concept of cognitive and emotional development of the child seeking to maximize and optimal context its potential. Early education becomes the first stage of preparation for formal education, who begins at the age of 6/7 years.

The values promoted by any curriculum for early childhood education are:

- Fundamental Rights of the Child (the right to life and health, the right family, the right to education, right to be heard and to express themselves freely etc.).
- full development of the child;
- Inclusion as a process to promote diversity and tolerance;

Highlights Inclusive Early Childhood Education can be found in:

1. Project for early education (2007-2011), which is financed by the Romanian Government and the Development Bank of the Council of Europe which envisages providing educational support for children with special needs from the very young (0-3 years) in order to facilitate their integration into mainstream preschool.
2. Project "Educational inclusion of preschool children in the Republic of Moldova", implemented by NGO "Woman and child-protection and support" Criuleni Development Agency with support from the Czech Republic and the Association "ADRA", Czech Republic

After analyzing the opinions and conclusions of these projects for inclusive early childhood education, the objectives who be achieved in inclusive early childhood education:

- Making the initial assessment early for children with SEN, so that measures medical and educational assistance to apply as early as possible to optimize effective recovery;
- Inform teachers and managers about learning disabilities and barriers they may face children with disabilities;
- Cultivating positive opinion towards the inclusion of children with SEN in mainstream kindergartens;
- Development of skills necessary to adapt the environment in kindergarten learning to overcome barriers faced by children with disabilities;
- Creating networking among teachers and managers of kindergartens and parents of children with disabilities or with special institutions;
- Develop the capacity in schools to raise funds for their special services provided to children with SEN;
- Supplementing the resources of funding by involving of another systems.

In institutionalization of pre-school children, all these objectivs are valid, because education begins at birth or even at the conception, according to the opinions of specialists in prenatal psychology (Lazar C., 2011). Although care institutions for children (0-3 years) are not considered institutions for the education of children, this is required. Therefore, it is of major importance for intervene legislative and organizational in this area so that pre-school childcare institutions become educational institutions like kindergartens. In terms of inclusive education, it is known that disabilities such as perception disabilities, mental disabilities or Down syndrome, etc. intervention is indicated in the first year of life, in many cases this causing successfully in recovering child's social integration.

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FAMILY ENVIRONMENT, EARLY EDUCATION AND THE SKILLS ACQUIRED AT THE END OF PRIMARY SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Our study targeted the relationships between parents status, their early educational practices, the period spent by the child in kindergarten, some of his intellectual acquisitions that facilitate the integration in compulsory education and, finally, school performances acquired later, in 4th grade. The research was realized by analyzing some statistics obtained under the auspices of IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement) by TIMSS and PIRLS research centers that perform, at certain intervals, international comparative studies evaluating the educational skills of young people at the end of different education cycles. In consequence, we were constrained to restrict our study only to the aspects of early education that were previously selected by the research teams of the IEA. So, there weren't information on forms of education / early childhood care from first years of children life or about the ones used by parents as a possible alternative to kindergarten. International comparability of data allowed us to reveal significant Romanian features which are related especially to kindergarten participation rate, parental involvement in early childhood education and children "school readiness" at the beginning of first grade (and, not at least, of the skills acquired in primary school). Child kindergarten participation and parent involvement in early education depend on their status (as well as the readiness of children to start primary school). The inequality of educational opportunity (in relation to parents training), is intense even in primary and this inequality is mediated probably by early education (more adequate for children having parents with higher education). Growth of the participation rate in kindergarten, over time, was not accompanied by improving the skills of students in grade IV, which suggests that those who most need formal early education are still deprived of it. Are needed, perhaps, educational centers aiming to "equalize opportunities" for these children.

KEYWORDS: early education, family background, skills assessment, unequal education opportunities

1. INTRODUCTION

Principally, we were interested, in our study, by two aspects: the unequal access to early education (parental and / or formal) depending on family background and, also, by the inequality of opportunities regarding later school performances. The secondary aspect that has been analyzed only in a very general manner was the relation between the rise of kindergarten participation and possible changes of skills acquired by students at the end of primary school.

We proposed this topic because we think that an essential problem of all societies and all educational systems is the fact that an important number of children cannot develop their entire genetic endowment because they don't have equal access to cultural and material resources. We believe that early care and education, starting with the moment of the birth and until the child start primary school, have the highest importance for the equality or inequality of opportunities in achieving the later professional career.

Our assumption is that readiness for primary school has an important influence on intellectual achievements since the first until the last day spent in the educational system. If we wish to live in a society where all children would have real chances to develop themselves depending on their natural aptitudes and not according to the family's status, we must act to reduce disparities in the quality of early education.

An important question for scientists, but, also, for policy makers within school system is the following: only simple enlargement of the formal early education is enough for reducing inequalities of chances regarding readiness for school? And, more, another closely linked problem to the previous (to which we tried only to suggest an answer): higher kindergarten participation rate would increase the global level of the students' intellectual skills during school time?

In the scientific literature that we consulted (e.g. Jstor database articles that contain words „early education" in their title, published in the last decade), we found neither theoretical support nor results of scientific research concerning an important part of aspects targeted in our study.

Before clarifying the issues that we had analyzed in our paper, we must ask ourselves about the exact meaning of "early education" concept, because it seems to include different kind of activities, practices, social actors acting in specific environments (at home or in different types of institutions), and, not at least, in distinct periods of child life.

Here are some possible interrogations: everybody can offer early education or there are minimum quality standards which must be reached? We are talking about kindergarten teachers, staff of day care centres, other specialists in educational science, parents, grandparents, siblings, other relatives, persons hired to "take care" or, why not, to offer professional educational services at home? Is early education a tool for reducing disparities regarding the opportunity to harness resources provides by school at the start of compulsory education? If so, we must help only the young that are culturally deprived? Or, more probably, the topic refers to all the children, who should benefit by such an education that allows the maximum development of their native potential? Not at least, social policy makers must meditate if early education should be coordinated at a central level or, perhaps, local communities in partnership with non-governmental organizations can provide better opportunities for social and intellectual development of preschoolers (culturally deprived or not).

It is obvious that our article can't review the scientific literature about such enormous number of problems related to early education. So, we shall try to identify an operational definition which is suitable for the methodology used in the research whose data we are using in our study.

Magnuson and Waldfogel [1] consider that early child education can be categorized in three principal kinds: parental education, informal (non parental) care (by a relative, nanny, or babysitter in the child's own home or where day care providers inhabit), and care/education centres or pre-school institutions (day care centres, nursery school, pre-kindergarten, kindergarten, early education programs, like Head Start).

Rosenberg and Chagas [2] described the concept of early child care and education (ECCE) from the perspective of the need for administrative integration of preschools and day care centres, both institutions intending to educate and care for small children. The concept of ECCE, consider the authors, sets a new role for the educator or caretaker and new targets for the child care centres, having at least three dimensions: the physical protection of the child, the accent on the child's individuality, and providing complementary care services as support for families where the mother works outside home.

Brown [3] debate the problem of integration the practices of early childhood education into elementary school. He claims that prekindergarten (pre-k) programs become more and more present as a support for elementary schools from the United States. The author shows that a lot of aspects like the high interest (in terms of social and political) for increasing school achievements, the studies about cognitive development, diachronic research that argue the direct relation between pre-k programs on children's social and academic acquisitions have generated the expansion of pre-k education. The reason for the growing access rate in pre-k programs is to provide for young children the learning opportunities needed for readiness regarding the start of compulsory school.

We will end now this brief selection among descriptions of early education (care) and of some issues related to it because, on one hand, the significance of the concept is frequently took for granted and, on the other hand, when the content of the notion is specified, the differences, at this level, between societies / educational systems seems to be important (as a last example, Restuccia and Urrutia [4], in a econometric model of intergenerational transmission of earnings, refer to early education in a very broad sense, including primary school and lower secondary).

In these circumstances, we preferred to refer at the Romanian specificity of early child education, as it is defined in the official Government documents, including the formal aspects stipulated by the education law.

In 2008, Ministry of Education, Research and Youth established the general frame for early education of children with ages between born moment and 6/7 years and elaborated a guidance material designed to stimulate child

development from birth to 3 years (which is currently valid) [5]. According to this document, early education refers to the pedagogical approach covering the period of life from birth to 6/7 years old, when the child starts school and also when significant changes occur in the development area of child. These are, according to the Romanian Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, the goals, which must be fulfilled through the early education:

- The free, full and harmonious development of the child's personality, according to its own rhythm and its general needs, supporting his independent and creative formation;
- Developing the ability to interact with other children, with adults and with the environment to acquire new knowledge, skills, attitudes and conducts;
- Encouraging the exploration, exercises, tests and experiments, as an independent experiences of learning;
- Discovery by each child of its own identity, of personal autonomy and the development of a positive self-image;
- Supporting the child in the acquisition of knowledge, capacities, skills and attitudes necessary for his entry into school and lifelong

Speaking, further, about Romanian model of early child education, we must interrogate National Education Law [6] to reveal the general frame of formal organization of preschool and primary system:

- Early education (0-6 years), consisting of the ante-preschool (0-3 years) and preschool (3-6 years), which includes little group, middle group and big group;
- Primary, which includes preparatory class and classes I-IV;

We highlight that early education is not compulsory in Romania (only preparatory class, which make the transition between preschool and primary education). About the structures through which early education is made, the law stipulates rules for both ante-preschool and preschool education:

- Ante-preschool education is organized in nurseries and, where appropriate, in kindergartens and day care centres.
- The organization of early education ante-preschool units, educational content, quality standards and organizational methodology is determined by the Ministry of Education
- Teachers from ante-preschool education must perform the quality standards set by law.
- Preschool education is organized in kindergartens with normal schedule, extended and weekly
- County and local authorities the must provide the conditions to progressively generalize the preschool education.

Day Centers for Early Education and Care can have a formal structure, under the auspices of Education Ministry, as shows a fragment from

Organization regulation and functioning of this kind of institution [7]:
(1) The Centre of Early Education and Care is a public facility specialized in social, medical and educational services, meant to sustain growth, care and early education for children aged between 3 months and 4 years.
(2) The mission of the Centre for Early Care and Education is to provide care, supervision for children attending nursery and to develop early educational programs appropriate to children age, their needs and developmental potential and own characteristics.
(3) Nurseries of the Centre for Early Care and Education operate as centres with daily work schedule.

In addition to exclusive government-financed centres, in Romania there is a certain number of Centres for Early Education and Care, established by partnership between state institutions and international bodies (and EU funded) [8] or carried out by NGOs through projects supported also by the European Union.

We stop here the brief tentative to identify the modalities in which early education (care) is realized in Romania, with the observation that non-formal aspects are very important, both as a substitute and as a support for ante-preschool institutions, kindergartens or Day Centres. Being in the worst situation, an important part of Romanian children under 7 years benefit only by the intellectual stimulation provided by parents, grandparents, brothers or other relatives who, frequently, don't have elementary knowledge about the developmental needs of a young child.

2. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS

Our research was based on secondary analysis of the results obtained under the auspices of IEA (International Association for the Evaluation of educational skills, Boston College) [9] within TIMSS [10] and PIRLS [11] research centers. Due to this, only a limited number of aspects of early education were available: the importance of participation in kindergarten, a part of the parental educational practices along preschool period and certain intellectual acquisitions of children at school entry.

On the other hand, data that we analyzed allowed us not only to reveal certain relationships between early education and later school performance but, also, to make comparisons between Romania and other countries from Europe or around the world (regarding certain early intellectual acquisitions, some parental educational practices and, also, by the effect of this two aspects on children' later school achievements.

Last but not least, we tried to reveal if family background is associated with early parental education practices (and, similarly, with early educational acquisitions of children).

We highlight the fact that Research Centers coordinated by IEA platform are making international assessments for 4th and 8th grade pupils on mathematics and science (TIMSS) respectively for fourth grade on the competence of operating with language (PIRLS), evaluations which were repeated constantly during the last decades and which were designed to allow longitudinal comparisons. For the first research center (TIMSS) the period is 4 years, the first study being conducted in 1995 and for the second (PIRLS), the interval is 5 years, with the startup in 2001 (as such in 2011 were realized both studies and scientists used a methodology in order to build common databases for each of the countries that participated in both assessments).

Our analysis will focus primarily on issues related to early education included in the research of 2011, because those can be related with the skills at math, science and language usage mastered at the end of the primary cycle and, as well, with certain parental behaviors and intellectual acquisitions of the children which might influence the school life of the youngest students (as we already shown, aspects of familial background will be considered, too).

Despite the focus on the transversal perspective, we will try to highlight, for 2001-2011 period, the association between some important transformations that occurred in kindergarten enrollment and the evolution of school performance for 4th grade students.

It is obvious that this longitudinal relation between the two aspects of educational system mentioned above has a limited significance because other variables that may affect school performance are not controlled (governmental investment in kindergartens and primary schools, the quality of education - teacher's qualification and skills, curriculum adequacy, the quality of educational management, and so on).

However, if an important increase of children' participation to preschool education (supposing a significant enlargement of government spending), for a relatively long period, doesn't go along with a rise of school performances, it is very likely that educational system passes through a real crisis. Difficulties that characterize formal education in Romania are strongly argued by all the results obtained by our students at international evaluations, which positioned us on last place or one of the worst places compared to other European countries (we refer to studies realized by prestigious scientific centers, as TIMSS, PIRLS and PISA [12], working under auspices of OECD). Unfortunately, longitudinal data, comparable from one evaluation to another, for the 4th grade students, were available only in PIRLS study (referring at reading skills) because, until 2011, Romania participated only with the 8th grade students at the assessment of mathematic and science abilities made by TIMSS.

We presented the evolution of Romanian Education System (in terms of student's competence level from the 4th grade - as reflected by the assessments made by PIRLS research center from 2001 to 2011) and we compared this

information with the changes of kindergarten participation rate from the same period (data delivered by EUROSTAT) [13]. We underline however, that, essentially, our study has a transversal nature, being focused on analyzing the SPSS databases containing the answers to the joint questionnaires used by PIRLS and TIMSS in 2011, addressed to 4th grade children and their parents (we used also „almanacs" containing the mean levels of scores at mathematic and reading calculated within the categories of answers to items of questionnaires addressed to children and their parents).

3. RESULTS

We start our demarche with the longitudinal approach of Education System which provides a comparative perspective but which has, also, the lowest level of rigor due to the great number of factors that interfere in the relation between kindergarten access and later school performance. We highlight, however, that, concerning reading achievements in the 4th grade, Romania was on the 16th position from 18 European countries in 2001 and on the last place in 2006 and 2011 (data refers only at countries for which exist diachronic information both about reading skills - PIRLS - and kindergarten participation - EUROSTAT).

3.1 Changes in kindergarten enrolment rate and school performance

Of the countries that have experienced an ascendant rate of kindergarten enrolment for children having 3, 4 and 5 years, Poland, Norway, Slovenia and Germany were marked by statistically significant improvement of reading outcomes in the 4th grade. The same participation rate trend which exists in Romania, Lithuania, Austria, Bulgaria and Sweden was associated with a downward of school performance (Germany has shown an increase followed by a decrease). Near-complete participation of children at preschool, in countries as Belgium, Spain, France, has not led to changes in student's acquisitions during 2001-2011 (the same preschool enrolment pattern was accompanied in Italy of an increase then by a decrease and, in Netherlands, by a decrease).

Probable, the extension (even large) of preschool system is not enough for an overall improvement of early education because kindergarten outcomes depends on their global resources and, also, because its efficiency is related to the non-formal education quality – especially, made by parents (in addition, despite preschool enlargement, poor children have low participation rates).

3.2 Participation to kindergarten, early parental education and later school achievements

We specify that our study targeted only the relation between variables, not the construction of a causal model. So, the research has an exploratory nature, at questionnaire item level, due, in part, to the rarity of the field researches regarding early education realized in Romania.

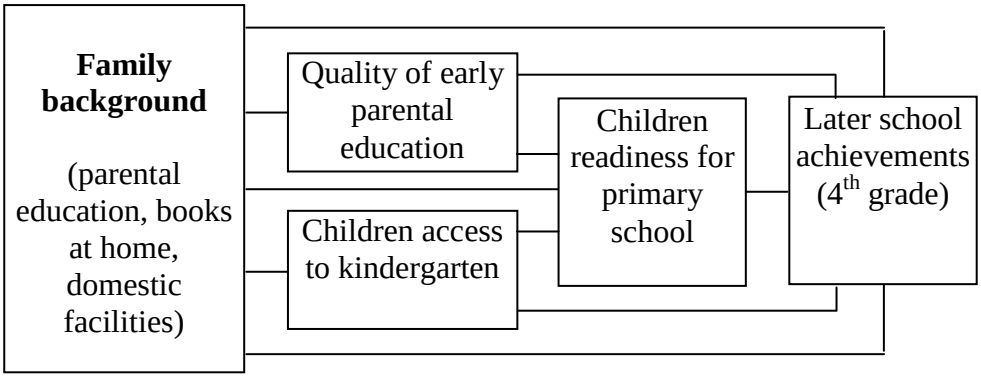

Fig. 1 Variables put into relation within transversal analyze

In every considered country, the number of years spent in kindergarten is directly related to achievements at math, science and reading, in the 4th grade. Concerning the proportion of 4th grade students (from 2011) who spent 3 or more years in preschool, Romania occupy the 14th place from 32 countries of the world (over average level) and the 12th position between 23 European countries.

In Romania, parents' education is strongly related with the number of years spent by their child in preschool (for mother, Gamma = 0.481, for father Gamma = 0.467; for both P =.000). The number of books at home is also associated with early formal education of child (for the total nr. of books Gamma = 0.406 and for child books Gamma = 0.412; for both P =.000).

The home facilities (computer, study desk, internet, books, child's mobile phone, car, lcd TV, child's own room) are all positively associated with time spent in kindergarten (gamma between 0.528 and 0.168, in descending order) and, also, with father's education (gamma between 0.687 and 0.284, in a resembling order).

Mother's education is strongly associated with the answer „frequently" on the incidence of the following early education activities made together with the child: Reading books, Tell stories, Sing songs, Play with alphabet toys, Talk about things done together, Talk about what they had read together, Play word games, Write letters or words, Read aloud signs and labels, Say counting rhymes or sing counting, Play with number toys, Count different things, Play games involving shapes, Play with building blocks or construction toys, Play board or card games (gamma between 0.535 and 0.288; P =.000 for all coefficients).

The frequency of all interactions between mother and child mentioned above are directly related to child's school achievements in the 4th grade in math, science and reading.

Highest school level reached by mothers has, also, a positive relation with readiness for school of the child (in reading skills, especially), expressed by his capacity of doing „very well" following things: Recognize most of the

letters, Read some words, Read sentences, Write letters of the alphabet, Write some words (gamma between .416 and 0.198; P =.000 for all coefficients). The same maternal characteristic is in association with all dummy variables denoting the existence of some early acquisitions in math as these: Count by himself up to 100 or more, Recognize more than 4 shapes (e.g. triangles), Recognize all 10 written numbers, Write all 10 numbers, Do simple addition, Do simple subtraction (gamma between 0.612 and 0.381; P =.000 for all coefficients).

All variables referring to child's knowledge and skills in math and reading are strongly positive correlated with school abilities evaluated in the 4th grade.

Not at last, items referring at the quality of parental early education and the number of years spent by the child in kindergarten are, both, positively related to the readiness for school.

4. DISCUSSION

At European level, Romania has a average rate of preschool participation, a medium parental implication in early education of their children (who know little about math and reading at the start of primary school) and worst scores at educational skills from 4th grade.

Between Romanian children there are very important inequalities of chances (by reference to family background - in particular parental education) on access to educational resources such as kindergarten participation, early intellectual stimulation in order to achieve school readiness. These unequal opportunities are reflected, further, in children's achievements from the start of primary school and at the end of this educational cycle (ISCED 1). Data suggest that early education is polarized between well educated parents (with a good economic status), who offer high quality early education and children access to preschool and, at the opposite pole, families with low resources, having poor pedagogic skills, who don't consider kindergarten as being an important option for the children school readiness. Inequalities in education opportunities are difficult to be reduced, partly because our society became more polarized in poor and rich people and, also, because structural changes from preschool system don't reach the goal to provide for every little child the intellectual stimulation which would allow him to develop his own native potential. We believe that it's not possible to equalize children's opportunities without a national program on early ante-preschool education, with compulsory nature at least for families where there are culturally deprived children, program which must target not only children but parents' attitudes and practices.

The limits of our study come from its exploratory nature, at item level, without the control of variables; so, we made only a little step in empirical research of early education from Romania.

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WHEN EARLY EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ARE THE RESULT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. THE CASE OF IRISH EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

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Abstract
In Ireland, early education programs followed a particular path in their development due to a high empowerment of the parents, who, by constitution, were held responsible for their preschool children education. Today, nation wide education policies are highly influenced by nonguvernmental organizations at the community level. The aim of the present article is to disentangle the effects of this context over the organization of the preschool programs as well as over the filosofy that lie beneth teachers training programs. We will present the main forms of preschool programs as well as the nonguvernmental organizations that offer training, counseling, and support for the institutions that provide early education programs. We will also analyse teachers training programs from the curriculum perspective.

Key words: early childhood education, curriculum development, education policies

Early education system in Ireland followed an atypical development due to cultural trends surrounding children education. In the past, early education was entirely the responsibility of the family. Parents had the right and the duty to offer religious, moral, cognitive, physical and social education to their children. They were empowered by the constitution to get involved in their children education. The state was responsible only for children whose parents could not accomplish this duty due to low income or other difficult social conditions. In this context, preschool education in specialized institutions was not mandatory, parents being those who used to decide the educational path for their children. Once women got more involved in the work market, the enrolment of their preschool children in different institutions became a necessity. Since the state did not offer preschool programs, parents were those who developed nonprofit organizations at the community level (eg. National Children's Nurseries Association, Irish Preschool Play Association, Early Childhood Organization, Montessori Schools) in order to facilitate the development of services for preschool children. For instance, The National

Children's Nurseries Association dates back in 1988 and have the purpose of promoting high standards of quality childcare through information and support for providers of services. Also Irish Preschool Play Association (IPPA) is the largest nonguvernamental organization developed to promote and support early childhood services. Founded in 1969, IPPA pioneered the provision of early childhood education, developed policy guidelines, quality standards and provided nationally and internationally accredited training. These organizations advocate today for quality services in early education by offering training, counseling and support for providers of educational programs and by actively getting involved in changing educational policies at the national level. Under their close supervision, early education programs developed first at the practical level as a response to the community needs lacking clear directives from the Ministry of Education (Kelleher, McGough & Ware, 2006). This aspect is reflected in the philosophy that lies beneath the organization of programs for professional development of teachers, practical activities holding a considerable quota in the curriculum. Also, persons with teaching experience are prioritized when enrolling in education programs.

As a direct effect of lacking centralized national education policies, a variety of services offering early education programs, developed at the community level (Eurydice, 2009-2010). The programs are diverse, both by curriculum and layout. Here is a short overview of institutions that offer early education programs:

1. Playgroups are the most spread form of caring and educating preschool children, age between 3 and 6 years old. The Irish Association of Preschool Education through Playgroups offers training to providers of such services. Part of the costs is covered by nonprofit organizations.
2. Naionrai are institutions that provide the same type of care and education as playgroups but they are intended for the exclusive use of Irish language speakers and are totally financed by the state.
3. Montessori schools are widely spread in Ireland. There are approximately 500 such schools that offer services for children between 3 and 6 years old. Most of them are private. The training is offered by Montessori International Organization and by Irish Montessori Society.

4. School after school programs are services addressed to children over 4 years old.

Most of these institutions offer private services and parents are those who must pay. There are possibilities to educate a preschool child without paying. They are offered by primary schools. Most ofthese schools are property of Catholic Church who, by constitution, has the right to get involved in educational activities within the community. These schools organize two classes where children as young as 4 years old can be enrolled. Called infant classes, they are in most cases the first option for parents because the offered services are free. The classes are frequently crowded with children and the teaching methods are quite similar with those used in primary schools. These are the most invocated critics about infant classes. Despite the fact that the presence is not mandatory, statistics show that at 4 years old, 44% of children are enrolled in infant classes while at 5 years old the percent reaches 100 (Annual Statistical Report 2008/09: Department of Education and Skills). Among the free services for preschool children is the program Early Start. This goes back to "94 and was aimed at children aged 3 to 4 years old, children from families with low socio-economic status. The purpose of the program was to prevent later school dropout. From 2010, this program extended to the entire population of children 3 to 4 years old. All preschool institutions can be providers if they follow the state regulations proposed by National Council for Curriculum and the criteria of quality elaborated by Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education. These criteria encompass standards referring to children's rights, school-family partnerships, play as teaching method, curriculum implementation, assessment policies, children health and well-being. Parents involvement proved to be beneficial by having positive effects on the development of quality services for children. The later gained recognition from the ministry of education completed this process of services development that started from community needs.

Teachers training

The diversity of services dedicated to preschool children leaded to a plethora of teachers training programs, programs that vary as level of qualification. In an attempt to bring to the same level the teachers training programs, since 2000 teachers professional profile for early education

included competences in the following fields: child development, education and play, social environment, health, nutrition, child protection, communication, professional development, management and administration. The bachelor programs design to develop these competencies are strongly focused on practical activities that represent half of the curricula. Also, the importance of parents and community involvment in children education is recognized by having a significant part of the curricula focused on how to develop school – community partnerships.

The concept of early education in Ireland

The debates referring to the concept of early education are centered on the relation between education and care. The low of early education from 1998 (The white paper of childhood education) stipulate that care should be the aim of the programs until three years old, while education should be the main purpose after 3 years old (Corrigan, 2002).

Curriculum for early education

Infant classes follow a standardized curriculum, centered on study subjects, elaborated by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. For the other early education services, in more than half of the institutions, the curriculum is developed at the local level. If in infant classes, curriculum is centered on subject areas, the alternative early education programs develop their curriculum following the principles of student centered education and active involvement in learning, Montessori pedagogy or learning through play pedagogy. Trying to incorporate all these practices, in 2009, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment came with the first framework for curriculum development (AISTEAR, 2009). This framework is actually a guide for curriculum development, guide that proposes four interrelated themes considered relevant for children development. They are well-being, identity and belonging, communicating, exploring and thinking. For each theme, aims and learning goals are proposed. The document does not impose a curriculum content. Providers of early education programs are invited to develop their own curriculum according to community needs. The purpose of this framework is to act as a complementary resource in curriculum development in order to bring some coherence to the preschool

educational system, a system that can be characterized by curriculum diversity (Daly & Forster, 2010).

Conclusions

The process of early childhood education system development in Ireland is an illustrative example of how good practices can be succesfully developed starting from comuunity needs and following a button up track. The empowerement of the parents by constitution proved to be a beneficial context for the development of qualitative services for preschool children. Following the old saying that it takes a village to rise a child, we can conlcude that the parents and the community knows best what is good for their children and their voices should be hear when designing education programs and policies.

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HOME LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AS A PREDICTOR OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN'S ACHIEVEMENT

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ABSTRACT

In the literature, children's achievement is often associated with family background and characteristics, but also with parental educational practices, or the home learning environment that families create for their children. The objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between different family variables and children's achievement. More specific, we intended to identify which aspects of the family environment predict better children's social and cognitive development: the parents' education, family income, or the home learning environment that parents create for their children. In the study we used self-reported data, based on questionnaires administrated to parents of preschool children. The questionnaire contained items about the activities that parents engaged at home with their children, activities that had the potential to provide learning experiences and to contribute to children's social and cognitive development, such as reading to children, playing with them, painting and drawing, and so on. Data were analyzed using hierarchical linear regression. Our results support the importance of the home learning environment and its prevalence in generating social and cognitive development, comparing to family characteristics.

KEYWORDS: home learning environment, parental practices, preschool children' s achievement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Family is an important factor that influences directly the personality development of children, from all points of view: social, emotional, intellectual and physical. Inside the family children have their first social experiences, learn the rules of moral conduct, and develop their own moral values. Family occasions first knowledge experiences of children. Inside the family children learn language, the volume, richness of vocabulary and correct expression largely depending on family effort made in this regard. As the first factor of education, family provides the child most knowledge about the surrounding environment: plants, animals, various phenomena, occupations of people, various objects, etc. Parents try to explain their children the meaning of phenomena, the relations between objects, phenomena, events and people, thus contributing to the early development of observation, memory, thinking and curiosity of children.

There is a wide range of family factors that exert long-term influences upon children's cognitive and social development, from the parents' level of education, the occupational status of parents, and their income to the home learning environment that parents create for their children. Extensive literature highlights the greater importance to achievement of parental involvement rather than the family's socio-demographic characteristics.

Many studies link children social and cognitive development in the early years to parents' educational practices in general [1, 2], but more specifically, to parental practices that have the potential to provide learning experiences for children, such as: reading to children, using complex language, responsiveness and warmth in interactions, playing with numbers, painting and drawing, learning about numbers and letters, going to the library [3, 4, 5].

2. STUDY AIMS

This study is focused on the influence on preschool children achievement of a group of family variables, both socio-demographic and educational (parental practices that provide learning or home learning environment). We intended to examine the relationship of both family and socio-demographic variables to children's cognitive and social development and determine which type of variable better predicts the achievement of children.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Participants

The sample consisted of 36 Romanian parents, aged between 28 and 41, parents with preschool children aged between 5 and 6, from county of Brașov, Romania.

3.2. Measurements

3.2.1. Cognitive and social development of children

Children social and cognitive development was measured using an observation scale containing behavioural indices measured on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means that the behaviour was manifested very rarely, and 5 that the child displayed the behaviour very often. In order to calculate the children's total score, we summed the points for each of the two domain subscales (sample items for cognitive and social domains: "uses spatial relations: above, below, near, upper, lower, etc"; uses temporal relations: "today, yesterday, tomorrow, earlier, later"; "identifies and names objects shaped as triangle, circle, square, rectangle in the environment and in printed material"; "demonstrates initiative in interaction with others"; "demonstrates openness in helping others"; "cooperates when works and plays in groups"; "demonstrates appropriate behaviour (respect) in relationships with adults"). The score of 40 represented the maximum score a child could obtain for social domain, and 70 the maximum score for the cognitive domain.

3.2.2. Family variables: socio – demographics and educational practices (home learning environment)

3.2.2.1. Family income

Each family was assigned to one of the three types of income: (1) low family income, (2) medium family income, or (3) high family income. The three categories were recorded as 0, 1 and 2.

3.2.2.2. Parents' educational level

Measures of parents' educational level had five categories [6]: both parents with elementary level completed (1), one parent with elementary level and the other with high school diploma (2), both parents with high school completed (3), one parent with high school completed and the other is college or university graduated (4), and both parents are college or university-graduated (5).

3.2.2.3. Parental educational practices (home learning environment)

Measures of parental educational practices or home learning environment were based on a questionnaire administrated to parents of preschool children. The questionnaire contained 15 items about the activities that parents engaged at home with their children, activities that had the potential to provide learning experiences and to contribute to children's social and cognitive development, such as: reading to children, playing with them, painting and drawing, playing with numbers and letters, learning poems and riddles, singing and dancing together, hiking with children, visiting various attractions (zoo, cities, castles, museums etc), going to the theatre for children, children having a clear eating, resting and playing program, watching TV together, etc. The frequency of each of the 15 activities or practices was coded on a 0 – 7 scale (0= not occurring, 7= very frequent), and the 15 scores were added to produce a total score with a possible range of 0 – 105.

4. RESULTS

In order to examine the relationship between different variables and the children achievement, we used the statistical procedure of SPSS Windows, Pearson r (Pearson-Product Moment Correlation Coefficient). Correlations among variables demonstrate positive correlations between parents' educational level, family income and cognitive development and social development of children (r= 0.23 – 0.28). The results also show significant strong correlations between children cognitive achievements and the total score of home learning environment (r=0.18). The same relation was identified between social achievements and home learning environment total score (r= 0.21).

In order to examine if home learning environment that parents create for their children is a better predictor of children cognitive and social development than family background and family characteristics, we used multilevel models which included the home learning environment total score in addition to the family socio-demographic factors (level of education and family income).

By adding the score for home learning environment to the model, the explanatory power of the model increased with 19% for cognitive development and with 16% for social development.

The results support the conclusion that the home learning environment is an important independent predictor of cognitive and social development of preschool children and its influence is above that of the parent level of education and family income.

We also wanted to see which of the 15 home activities predicts children cognitive and social achievement. To address this question, each of the 15 home activity was individually tested in regression analysis. The activities that proved to provide clear learning opportunities and had significant positive effects on boosting cognitive and social development were: frequency of being read to, playing different games, playing with numbers and letters, painting and drawing, being taught poems and riddles, going to theatre, visiting various attractions.

5. CONCLUISION

This study demonstrated that the influence of parental educational practices upon child development is pervasive. It may be possible that the strong relationship that we found between the home learning environment and social and cognitive development of preschool children is mediated by some intervening unmeasured factors like family values and expectations or children motivation to learn. Whatever the mechanism, it is clear that the home learning environment is a significant factor that exerts a long-term influence on cognitive and social development of children.

The study shows that parents should be aware of the great impact that they have on educational attainment of their children. A better family setting, with explicit educational activities, provides children a better start in school and life.

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INFOASILO: OBSERVATION METHOD FOR EDUCATION IN THE WEB 2.0 ERA

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ABSTRACT

The paper is aimed to illustrate an application developed to support and facilitate educators in their work.

KEYWORDS: Education, Observation method, Qualitative data, Web 2.0, Socio-constructivist approach.

1. INTRODUCTION

Observation is the main qualitative method in the field of human and social sciences. It allows to collect information on the subject behaviours in his/her context, reporting them in an almost direct way and avoiding to reduce them to a number or an occurrence. Observing children is a fundamental activity in educational processes. In fact educators need to collect data on children in order to control that they are learning and developing, to offer them the right contexts and experiences to sustain and scaffold their growth. To be actually useful, observing children should be a systematic and well conducted activity in order to avoid dangerous misunderstandings. Anyway being an expert observer is not easy as well as to take notes of children behaviours and actions: educators, for example, need at the same time to observe children while managing the ongoing activities and the current relationships. Moreover observing is a time consuming activity, because it is mainly conducted with a paper and pencil technique.

For all these difficulties observation is not well accepted in educational contexts, even if educators are often convinced that it would be actually a necessary and useful good practice.

This is the reason why, as researchers committed in the area of teachers and educators training, we developed an online environment [1] that provides them with guidelines and some utilities to store and organize the observed data (Web-OB), then transforming it in an application for tablet.

2. WEB-OBSERVATION ONLINE SYSTEM

2.1. The Web Observation application

The Web Observation application (WEB-OB) was addressed to educators and teachers to offer a scaffolding to their daily observational activity and to facilitate the accomplishment of good practices in this field. The environment was structured into two parts: the first was named *building* and was thought to allow the users to carry out an almost complete and correct observation text; the second part provided some tools to connect the users in a *community*, especially communities of practice [2].

Web-Ob was structured as following:

- a tutorial package designed to acquire competences in the observation method and facilitate the transition from a naive approach to an expert one in the observation activity;
- a system to store information and retrieve them from the available database (automatically updated data on children, how many observations a specific user carried out and accomplished, how many children were observed, how many times a child was observed, how many times a child was observed with respect to a specific finality, the chronology of observations on a child, info on the contexts frequently chosen by the users to observe);
- a part with collaborative devices such as blogs, forums, social networks, wiki, to share information and discuss amongst educators and/or parents.

With regard to the observation texts, written in the box available for the description of the actions of the observed child, they can whenever be retrieved and modified. They can also be automatically processed in order to verify the absence/presence of naive observation text figures and/or expert observation text figures. In fact we know from our previous researches that a *good enough* observation text is generally characterized by:

– low percentage of qualifying adjectives referred to the protagonist of the actions;

– high percentage of nouns and verbs of action referring to objective details;

– presence of cognitive verbs [3, 4].

So that the written text could be automatically analysed from a morphological and/or grammatical point of view, providing quantitative data.

The second part of the environment was also important, as we considered the knowledge building process as a social one [5]. As a socio constructivist tool, Web-Ob offered the possibility to make use of collaborative devices such as blogs, web forums, social networks, wiki. There were an

internal blog and a forum but also links to other Web 2.0 applications such as social networking, wiki, social bookmarking.

This part was not a secondary one, it was not less important with respect to the building part. In fact the community part was not intended as a space within which to participate and share refined observation texts or even conclusions, in order to validate them. On the contrary it was intended as a space to confront and negotiate meanings, doubts, hypothesis, in a continuous formal and informal mediation among the community of users [6]. A useful device at users' disposal for a reciprocal help, in order to carry on, share and negotiate observation practices.

In this part the users could add their documents and different materials, they could discuss, express doubts, provide evidences, put in correspondence, etc. This was also the part in which we developed the shared library, in the meanwhile providing an environment that could be improved along the way, through the participation of colleagues and researchers.

Web-Ob could be considered at least:

- a self-training course on expert observation method,
- a tool to apply an expert observation method,
- an instrument to assess children development,
- a device to fulfil personal dossier and portfolios, both of children and educators,
- an application to develop educative and didactic personalized projects,
- a social medium to cooperate for auto refresher educators' training,
- a social system finalized to facilitate co-construction and negotiation of meanings within communities of practices;
- a social system to share with parents information and data about their children.

3. INFOASILO APPLICATION 2.0

Due to the increasing use of smart devices in the daily life as well as in the work places, in the last time we developed the online environment in a system that can be easily used to collect data, to organize and retrieve them in a coherent and multipurpose way using tablets [7].

Like in Web-Ob, the user can take advantage of a useful path for her/his observation activity, having the main information available at every time they needed. If an educator would like to use the app, at the beginning he/she is asked to fill in some windows in which to provide stable data such as:

- the name of the school,
- the name and surname of the educator/teacher/observer/user/parent,
- the name and surname of the children,
- the date of birth of every child,
- the list of the daily activities;

- the list of the different places and contexts in which the daily activities take place (providing information about the situation in which the observation is conducted).

The new system provides sliding bars, in addition, through which the educator may choose among:

- a list of possible finalities of the observation (for example to figure out a profile of the child or to collect data to solve learning problems/behaviour problems/interpersonal problems, etc.),
- a list of the possible focuses of the observation (for example the relationship between child and known adult/adults or the relationship between child and unknown adult/adults or the relationship between child and another child, etc.),
- a list of different theoretical frameworks (such as Montessori method, Gardner's multiple intelligence theory, developmental phases of child growth, Kuno Beller's tables, mixed approach) among which to make a choice based on the approach typically used by the educator,
- a list of fundamental indicators linked to the different theories (for example, using MI theory, a list of indicators to define and limit the area of musical behaviours is presented like the following:
  - listens and responds with interest to a variety of sounds: human voice, music, environmental sounds
  - enjoys opportunities to hear music or environmental sounds;
  - eager to learn music from musicians;
  - uses vocabulary and notations of music;
  - responds to music kinaesthetically by conducting, performing, creating, dancing;
  - recognizes different musical styles, genres, cultural variations;
  - develops a personal frame of reference for listening to music;
  - enjoys improvising and playing with sounds;
  - sings and/or plays an instrument alone or with others;
  - interprets meaning from music;
  - analyzes and critiques musical selections;
  - creates original compositions and/or musical instruments).

The lists of finalities, focuses and indicators are open, and educators are allowed to change and add their own finalities, focuses and indicators. In this way the observation job is really facilitated, because the observer only needs to make some choices, just with a touch on the device screen to set up the main information.

Then he/she can find a box in which to describe the behaviours of the observed child in terms of actions, non verbal communication, and verbal expressions, adding in another box her/his interpretation of the observed

activity and situation, that is to say the way in which actions and behaviours referred to the observed child can be connected and become meaningful through the use of a theoretical framework.

A part is available to put in evidence other comments or notes, such as suggestions for further observations, advices for educative or didactic interventions, and so on.

Once logged in, the application remembers the identity of the educator who has logged in and shows him/her the information of interest. The main screen presents the list of activity groups, in addition to other general information. On the left side, the sliding menu always allows the user a quick access to the different functionalities of the program such as:

– take a written note;
– take a voice note;
– take pictures;
– make short videos;
– store snapshots in a central database (Fig. 1).

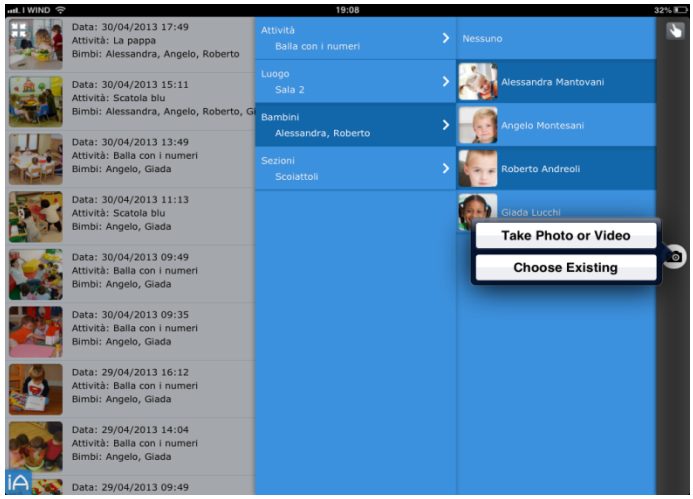

Fig. 1 – An Infoasilo screenshot

The functioning of the system is based on tags, i.e. pieces of information which can be linked to images in order to use and catalogue them in a clever and fast way. Before taking a picture, or after having taken it, educators can specify which activity they are carrying on, where they were and which child or group of children are retracted in the picture. All these actions require just a few touches on the screen. Time is saved and observations can be made with relative comfort by the educator, even if he/she is committed in an activity.

The app automatically adds the tag of the educators identity and of the time, and matches this information to the picture/video itself, in order to make it easy to search it in the archive or to use it as base for a new observation. For example, in a few seconds it is possible to extract from the archive all the pictures retracting the same child while playing or doing a specific activity, or create a new observation without the need of entering the basic information which are already included in the picture thanks to tags.

In addition the program enables to automatically earn some quantitative data such as:

1. how many observations a specific user carried out and accomplished;
2. how many children were observed;
3. how many times a child was observed;
4. how many times a child was observed with respect to a specific finality;
5. the chronology of observations on a child (for example to check her/his development and evolution in specific fields)
6. info on the contexts frequently chosen by the users to observe
7. ... and so on.

The program affords the possibility to store all these information and to retrieve them from the available database (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2 – Educator observing children and using the application

3.1. Observational text: an example

The kind of observational texts we referred above, are shown below (Tab. 1). The theoretical framework, in this case, is Multiple Intelligence Theory [8].

Table 1. The observational texts

Child's name and surname: C.S.	**Spatial intelligence**
6 months h 10:30 Location: section	Spatial activity: the educator spreads a number of coloured balls on the floor, letting the children follow them with their eyes. C. watches the balls showed by the educator. He shifts his gaze up and down. He follows the trajectories of some balls on the floor. **C. seems able to orient his gaze in order to follow the movements of objects.**
13 months h 10:20 Location: hall	The teacher asks the children to move to the section of the infants for the activity. C. smiles and heads straight for room. **C. shows to know the location of the named room. He confidently moves into the school.**
27 months h 10:00 Location: class	A sheet with a grid is delivered to each child, then two-tone cardstock squares are made available. C. notices the paper and then spontaneously attacks each square within its own space in the grid. **C. seems to take into account the grid and the coloured boundaries.**
32 months h 10:50 Location: section	The children are engaged in an activity with geometric shapes-square, triangle, trapezoid and circle. C. recognizes the forms and pastes them in the corresponding places. **C. shows to recognize shapes and is precise in outline.**

3.2. To store and retrieve information

The program allows users to retrieve info and to print them, following one or more criteria (for example the educator needs to have all the chronologically tidied up observation on a child, in which is documented his or her relationships with the other children, in order to reflect and - maybe - to provide educative actions in this field).

The program also provides the possibility to manage the attitude of the educator towards the children/the contexts/the abilities/etc. In fact, through the monitoring of how many observations one user did, how many children she/he observed or not, how many contexts she or he selected or not, the user herself/himself is enabled to self manage the professional behaviour, redirecting his/her actions and adopting educative strategies.

3.3. The interaction with parents

The system is figured out to allow parents to receive information about their son/daughter. Data connected to meals, health, bodily evacuations, are available in real time on parents smart devices, such as a tablet or a cellphone. For these kind of data educator is only asked to put a check mark into the appropriate box.

Moreover educator may want to share more qualitative data such as his/her observation, in order to make it possible for the parents to monitor their children growth. For these kind of information, educator is asked to make choices and select among the amount of observations, sharing only those considered meaningful and important, because showing an improvement, a success, a development (Fig. 3).

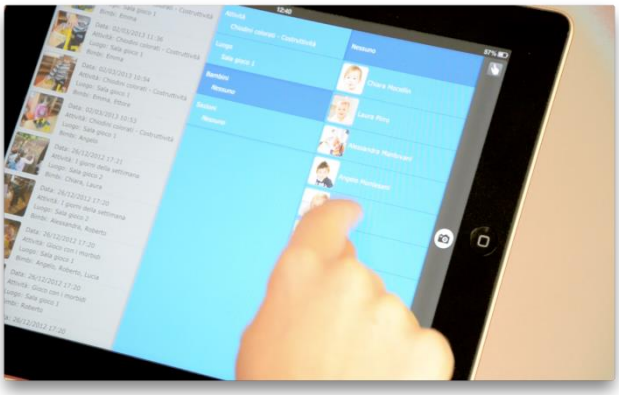

Fig. 3 - The social part of the application

In fact, using the ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner [9], the environments of child's development are considered as a series of concentric systems, linked through direct or indirect relations and hierarchy. The microsystems in which a child lives, such as the family or the nursery or the kindergarten, not always have cooperative communication, either because of the difficulty to have opportunities to meet, and of the different representations of the same child which educators and parents often posses. This difference is largely perceived as an obstacle to the knowledge of the child. But, as the family is the first micro system in which children develop and learn, then parents are to be considered a useful observation "tool". They can collaborate to better understand their children. The reconstruction of what a child does and shows when living and acting in different micro systems has to be considered an enrichment at the meso-system level. Once parents have access to the observational texts related to their child, they can discuss with the educators the meanings they attributed to their child behaviour, reaching a more comprehensive knowledge. Parents can also insert their own feedbacks and/or other observational data, collected in different situations within the family. The app is designed to give the opportunity to significant adults to easily interact, developing a synergy that takes into explicit account of how a child behaves in various micro systems.

In addition, at the end of the year, all the observations considered valuable and important can be easily collected together by the educators for the

parents, who receive a portfolio with these information, enriched with photos, drawings, and other selected documents. Portfolio is aimed to allow parents to better understand the way in which educators are working, and also to show child's trajectories of development within the nursery or the infant school.

4. Conclusions

Observation is a qualitative way to manage children education: educators observe and evaluate children's behaviors in order to be aware of their zone of proximal development [10] and then to decide and choose the kind of contexts to provide them to facilitate their improvements. Observation is as necessary than difficult to realize, because it is time consuming and needs a strong commitment to be accomplished. Infoasilo is an application for tablets designed in order to support educators who want to use observation as a method to project and figure out educative trajectories of development for their children in a high quality way.

Thank to the system, a lot of data are consistently available and actions are automatically completed, so that educators work is extremely facilitated when collecting data about children's behaviors. Using Infoasilo, educators are also enabled to self-monitor and assess their own job, as the application provides both quantitative and qualitative outputs about their work, such as: the number of observations completed, the number of children observed, the variety of contexts taken into consideration, and so on.

Moreover, a systematic interaction between educators and parents is guaranteed, thank to the possibility to share data such as pictures, videos, observation texts.

Anyway the application is only an instrument and the quality of the observations depends on educators competences in managing the observation method. Training paths are required to ensure a good work in this field.

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ARE COMPETENCIES AND COMMITTED LEARNING STYLE CONCEPTS TO BE CONNECTED TO EARLY EDUCATION?

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents a plea for the need of professionalization of human resource involved in early, pre-school and primary education. The necessity of a continuum interrelationship of a professionalized educator, child and family along a wider period of time during the first ontogenesis stages is also explained and argued.

The issue of real and fake controversy in the literature on modern curricula emphasis is brief overview.

The opportunity to use the concepts of ***competencies*** *for the early stages of ontogenesis is also substantiated, by highlighting the developmental process of these competencies until the crystallization of the competent personality and further the refinement and development of practical skills.*

The need of grounding in early childhood what would later become an effective learning style, committed learning is explained. The adults' insertion in the social and professional life of our millennium depends on the level of development of this learning style.

The end of the article summarizes the experience of an interesting Masters program (PERFORMER) aiming to train based on a new curricular model the human resources for early, preschool, and primary education teachers.

KEYWORDS: c*ommitted learning; competencies – competence; professionalization of human resource involved in early, pre-school and primary education.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Education theoretical area became more and more a contradiction field for theoreticians and an implicitly rejected domain for the practitioners of education. Unfortunately, this truth is not explicitly accepted because of a kind of fashion to discuss theory in all the important meetings but to not take seriously it into account when the education becomes a genuine practice.

Contradictory considered approaches are found in the literature: CBC (competency based curriculum) vs. OBC (Objective based curriculum), or, in other terms: CBE vs. OBE, where the term curriculum is replaced with the term education are lingeringly analyzed. These approaches are put in connection with different psychological theories about learning as behaviorism, constructivism and others. Such analyses have undoubtedly their importance and contribution

for an in depth understanding of the complexity of the educational process within the onto-genesis context. The proper reconsideration of teaching – assessing components focused on the effective students' learning process is based on a correct understanding of the aim of education. But the effort to find contradictions where they do not genuinely exist and sometime even to invent them for the debate sake does not appear as an effective approach for practice in education field. It remains a sterile attempt to theorize without proper effects in developing positive experience in educational practice.

Only one genuine contradiction is to be considered among the mentioned terms: the contradiction between so called *teacher centered curriculum and student centered curriculum*. The others (competence centered-action centered, objective centered) are all focused on a learner who follows the sets of the learning situations designed by the educator. This learner, within a student centered curriculum is an active one, accompanied along his or her learning process by the teachers aware about their designing, monitoring and assessing role. The educators firstly settle expected outcomes for their students, named with different words according to the languages: aims, goals, objectives (in English) or finalities with specific categories (in Latin languages). They all have in common the same differentiation among their degree of generality. The educators design then learning situations, putting together within a synchronic structure contents, teaching and assessing methods all considered inside of a specified time; a following moment is that of implementing the designed learning situations following the route towards the competences designed as expected outcomes. The objective centered curriculum follows in fact the same philosophy but the accent is put on defining atomized objectives on very concrete behaviors with an openly declared intention to find measurable behaviors. This philosophy met a strong criticism but particularly for this focus on measurement based on too devised behaviors not because of the intention to establish the outcomes for the students involved within the educational process.

All the considerations above do not mean that the theory of education or curriculum is considered obsolete, on the contrary. I would highlight that generally the theoretical fundamentals for practice no matter the field considered are extremely important but as fundamentals, not as fields of battles for theoreticians who sometime contemplate the practical field through the windows of the academic tower of ivory.

2. THE LONG WAY OF DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES

The topic of professionalization of the educators who work in early education (with a special focus on 0-3 years old age of their ”learners”) involves some necessary discussion about several theoretical issues, in terms already emphasized, not for the theory sake but for a genuine understanding of what a formal curriculum for this age should mean.

A first concept to be analyzed is the terms of competencies-competence. It is not my intention to extend the analysis to the details of the connected and contradictory meanings of these two concepts as they appear in the literature. But a debate about the appropriateness of using these concepts when one speaks about early education is necessary. I do not believe that one can use the singular form of competence when it is about a baby or a toddler. This singular form should be connected to the concept of personality as an attribute of an already developed personality. But even in the moment of establishing the APGAR score the deep meaning of competencies is involved.

This score, introduced in 1953 by Virginia Apgar [Apgar, V. 2014], assesses five important parameters that illustrate the potential of a new born when he or she enter the gate of the life as a candidate for humanity as H. Piéron said [1951]. This gate that should be widely opened, as Helen Key [1910] asked to be for *his majesty the child*, is a first step, and the APGAR score is the first assessment of the competencies specific for a new born, the potential of educability and the basics for the education itself. "The birth and life of a competent personality"[Niculescu R.M. 2010] represents a long and thorny way. It consists further, after the moment of birth, in a consistent process with three main steps: a) a first step of developing of what one can call as concrete evolving competencies specific for each stage in Piagetian terms, through formal education supported by the non-formal and informal hypostasis; this development cover the entire period towards maturity; b) a second step represents the crystallization of a competent personality (with a defined profile consisting in general competencies and specific competencies for a specified professional field; in this statement *competence* word appears as an attribute of the personality c) the last step continues the dynamic of the consistent process of competencies evolution through what one can call as concrete competencies in practice, or applied competencies; their involvement in practical activities means a further and nuanced evolution. Thus, one can say that the competencies evolution is a lifelong continuous process.

I have stated these issues for a very practical reason. It is imperious necessary to be understood that education does not start only sometime in the school period of life for the simple reason that competencies start to be developed from the very beginning of the life; it is important to notice that this moment is nowadays placed even before the birth date in the specific moment of conception).

In these terms it becomes important to know what the early education should do. The outcomes of this period must be the inputs of the next period (preschool education) as well as the outcomes of preschool age must be the inputs of the primary education stage, and so far.

The designing curriculum process must start with establishing the outcomes of the last stage of the education for a mature and professionalized

personality. From this point further, with a top-down route, the outcomes of each stage of education are designed. But the fulfillment of the outcomes has a down-top route and the starting point is the birth moment.

Within the curriculum design process the finalities are presumed and expected outcomes but they are described in terms of competencies through the competency components: *knowledge, skills (or abilities/ capacities) as operators, and attitudes as vectors*. It is no use in this context to detail another long and sometime sterile debated about the right use of these terms especially because essentially the contradictions appears not exactly on a conceptual level but more on a linguistic one, because of a sensible and nuanced meaning used in different languages. The mentioned finalities (a more French term) are usually named as *goals and objectives* with a clear direction showed by *aims* (in English), a conceptual category that states the direction ”aiming” to reach the proposed outcomes.

3. COMMITTED LEARNING STYLE A NEED OF THE FUTURE AND A PRODUCT OF THE PAST

The strong demand of the new millennium for education is a genuine change of paradigm. Thus the education turns from a teacher centered paradigm to a child in action and self involvement approach. Consequently, through curriculum and beyond it, in a trans-curricular (or trans-disciplinary) manner the development of the presumed competencies as necessary outcomes becomes an obvious effective aspect of the new paradigm. To have a competent personality when the maturity is installed appears as a “must” nowadays and this involves that the young adult have to be capable to a committed learning approach in order to cope the social and professional challenges. The committed learning must be understood not as an attitude towards the learning process but much more than this: an already functional learning style. Within a learning society as the third millennium human society is considered, this new learning approach appears as strictly necessary.

The committed learning style has several distinctive features: the cognitive capacity of the learners to find new useful knowledge for solving the challenging problems they are confronted with, to engage themselves with intrinsic motivation, curiosity, and inquiry within the complex learning process. The learning process itself is understood as a *studying* process, involving *willingness* and the *awareness* of its dynamic aims. This style implies *activity, practice, co-operation with other learners, a high level of communication and team* working skills. Such a complex learning style is not to be developed only in the last part of the genesis of the human’s personality. It needs a long, dynamic, and well designed and implemented way. Perseverance and continuity from babies' and toddlers’ age towards maturity is needed.

Otherwise is like one builds a tower block starting to the third, fifth floor or even the six floors. The formal education starts unfortunately at three, four or even five years old in the happiest situations all over the world. This is happening in an era when the adults of a family are more and more both involved within a professional activity while their children need an adequate education. The necessity of a genuine and responsible focus on a formal early education appears as a core demand of the new era generated by this complex context put into connection with the requests of a proper developing of the mentioned committed learning style as a condition of the development of an effective and successful adult.

4. HIGHLIGHTED QUESTIONS

Several questions are to be highlighted.

How is the society of today ready to genuinely focus the attention on the lifelong learning concept, understood from its early roots?

What kind of institutions are the best for an effective enrolment and education of babies and toddlers?

Who the professional of education for these ages are, and how they must be trained?

If society has not any doubt about the need of professionals as pediatricians can one consider as a deep necessity the professionalization for early education as well?

Can we further accept an imbalance of taking care about the body of our children versus the healthy development of their mind and soul?

Can one consider the professionalization for early, preschool and primary education as a genuine necessity as long as it is openly recognized the role of professionals as pediatricians?

The continuum early, preschool and primary education is put into these terms because as the mother must be the only one in the life, the second educator entering into the child's life must have certain continuity. This new educator must accompany the child long enough while the entering of other professionals into the formal educational process have to be a smooth and rational demarche. These are rhetorical questions but they do need a responsible answer.

5. PERFORMER PROJECT A CONTEXT OF POSSIBLE ANSWERS

The project PERFORMER can be considered as a possible answer for some of these questions as a starting point for the thorny process of confronting such a demanding reality.

This project is an innovative approach of professionalizing human resources for early, preschool and primary education, with roots in an interesting Italian experience developed by ISPEF Rome. The adapted model

has been implemented in Romanian tertiary level with a joint effort of three Romanian universities as partners: Transilvania of Brașov, Aurel Vlaicu of Arad and *1 Decembrie* of Alba Iulia. The experience of our two years of a new master program and of three years of working under the umbrella of an EU project gives the chance of some interesting conclusions.

1. The considered continuum of early, preschool and primary education seems to be strength at least from two reasons: babies, toddlers and young children who are put into educational institution need continuity in their relation with another educator than their parents. The necessary consistency of the influence of emotions for the cognitive, ethic and psychomotor development of children is not to be argued in this context because it is almost unanimously accepted.
2. A proper training of professionals able to manage the educational process along the first eleven years of ontogenesis would be a plus for an effective partnership between the professionals of formal education and children's parents in the benefit of the kids.
3. The blended approach of the training program of our master seems to offer more opportunities and strengths than weaknesses and threatens.
4. A serious and intrinsic motivation of the people involved (scholars and students) can lead towards exciting and effective outcomes, in terms of new and necessary competencies for the graduates and a nuanced new philosophy for scholars.
5. Unfortunately, the rigors of an EU project have sometimes functioned as a Procustean bed with threatening and disturbing effects. The need of proofs for everything is done; the burdensome bureaucracy can turn the attention from the essence of the work to appearance, surface leading to superficiality. This is not strength or a condition of a genuine quality. The focus on what must be proved turns the attention from what is necessary and effective to be done. The rush for "surface and evidences" can alter even the relation between educator and learner; devastating effects of the hidden curriculum could become more than dangerous. One of them is a deep decrease of motivation for work.

All these issues are claimed with shyness or only hidden into a decreasing motivation for involvement in this type of projects, and they can be solved with a reasonable and well intended approach for everybody's benefit.

A clear conclusion arises beyond all these difficulties we had to cope with: the PERFORMER PROJECT was a successful one in its essence. This essence is represented by the approach of the human resources training for an extremely important segment of education: the early year's education in a formal context.

6. STUDENTS OPINION ABOUT THE MASTER PROGRAM

One of the items of the evaluation within the context of a curriculum module (*Quality management within the educational institutions*) was focused on the students' meta – analysis of their formative route along the two years of study.

This request was intended as a training itself for the students' thesis structure which is a less traditional one. It asks their focus on a topic belonging to one of the twelve modules of curriculum as a core issue to be developed but not before a reflective pass through the whole curriculum trying to identify the stones offered by each one for the in depth development of the core issue. After the presentation of the main topic a new reflection process is demanded, this time on the openings of the core issue towards the profession or to the fields represented by the curricular modules.

The students' reflection put into the essay has many things in common with the results of the observational research initiated and implemented within the monitoring process of the project. Some core ideas are to be presented within a common paper with an author coming from the students' group.

The question of Antoine de Saint Exupery when reflecting about the childhood role is a remarkable one that highlights the huge importance of this age for human's life. He says: *where come I from? I come from my Childhood as from a country.*

The final idea of this paper stresses the necessity of taking care about the *back country* of each adult: his or her childhood.

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PERFORMER - A PATH TO NEW PERFORMANCES AND PROFESSIONS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The master programme – EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY OF PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL offered and still offers a valuable and almost unique niche in the training and educational market provided by higher education institutions beside other public or private providers. In the context of European and national policy implementation regarding early childhood education field, the master enables graduates to be much more competitive in labor market. Alongside the skills developed by completing the training program, the master gives the possibility of establishing a group of experts in early childhood education and eligible to work in the public and private contexts. This qualitative research included the analysis of graduates' reflections on the journey of learning alongside the two-year master program and self-management in terms of quality of learning.

KEYWORDS: early childhood care and education, teacher training,

1. INTRODUCTION

The master study programme titled *EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY OF PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL* is provided in the framework of the Sectorial Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources through the "*Perspective of master training of early education and young age schooling specialists - PERFORMER"* project. The afore mentioned project contributes, through its proposed results, in achieving one of the most important objectives of the programme, thus contributing to the sustainable increase of productivity for highly trained specialists. Given the role of the master study programme to provide early education professionals, there are created the prerequisites for a highly trained workforce, able to adapt to new technologies and the ever-changing labor market requirements which is essential for a competitive and dynamic economy. In particular, the PERFORMER project master's study programme is oriented towards training early education professionals.

Based on the diagnosis that fundaments the Sectorial Operational Programme for the Development of Human Resources (POS DRU) and the projects ran under its coordination, the National Reform Programme 2007 - 2010 underlines the fact that *investments are needed in modernizing education and professional training, especially in the field of early / preschool education.*

This is done in the context of the need for the education and training system to respond to the labor market changes and an increased demand for high quality education. All of this is directly linked to *the level of qualification of the human resources involved in education* and the lifelong learning programmes.

Romania achieved a real progress in the latest years relative to early education through implementing various national programmes and projects and by enforcing an adequate legal framework.

The programmes / projects that achieved the most positive impact have been the Early Education Programme for Areas of Stimulation (1991 - 1998) - national programme implemented at national level with the aid of UNICEF Romania aimed at developing highly trained teachers, interdisciplinary teams, new areas of stimulation applicable in the classroom with small groups, a new curricular approach - , the Early Education Reform Project - financed by EBRD and the European Commission and the Inclusive Early Education Project - supported by the World Bank.

The legislative framework that supported early education included the establishment of the "preparation" grade (2002 - 2005) through the Ministry Order (M.O.) no. 3799/22.05.2002, the Early Education Curriculum (for the preschool level 3-6/7 years old) through the M.O. no. 5233/01.09.2008 and providing on the Education ministry official website support materials for those who interact with the child between 0 and 3 years old (as part of the 0 - 3 years old curriculum), adoption of the Fundamental Highlights in Learning and Early Development of the child, from birth to the age of 7 (M.O. no 3851/17.05.2010) as well as the approval, through the M.O. no 3850/17.05.2010 of the *Standards for the teaching - learning documentation in early education* and the *Minimal endowment for early education services targeted at 3 - 6/7 years old children.*

Currently, an important pillar in early education in Romania is the National Education Act (no 1/2011). As a result of this law, professionals in education base their activity on a new early education curriculum, (for the infant level and the preschool level), standard finalities for early education, clear relations between the infant - preschool - preparatory class levels as well as training for the teaching staff.

These nationally implemented measures contribute to the European early education objectives set by the Communication from the European Commission - *Early Childhood Education and Care: Providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow*, Brussels, 17.2.2011 - COM (2011) 66 - which states that " Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is the essential foundation for successful lifelong learning, social integration, personal development and later employability" and the *Council conclusions on early childhood education and care: providing all our children with the best start for the world of tomorrow* (2011/C 175/03) - Official Journal of the European Union 15.6.2011 which says that "high quality early childhood education and

care provides a wide range of short- and long-term benefits for both individuals and society at large".

2. CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR EARLY EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS

Continuing education represents the totality of the education endeavors of a person during the course of his / hers existence, including initial training, lifelong learning, ulterior training programmes aimed at forming and developing intellectual / moral / physical feats. From a social perspective, lifelong learning / continuing education are terms that are replacing gradually words such as "learning" or "education" in the daily vocabulary. Their often use illustrates an evolution in the policies and practices of professional insertion (prolonging the learning period after the teen years). The notion of "training", poli-semantically, refers the ensemble of general knowledge, both technical and practical, that are involved in practicing a trade as well as behaviors, attitudes and dispositions that allow job integration as well as social integration. The objectives of initial education and continuing training for the teaching professionals involved in early education must take into account the need for a successful implementation of the early education policies as well as the multiplication of the roles of the teacher - manager, councilor, resource, mediator, etc.).

Mr. Romita Iucu (2007, p.27) observes this dynamic regarding the expansion of the social and relational framework of the teacher - "the modern paradigms which regard the teacher as a member of a well defined organizational structure (the school), of a community (either local of professional) require a different level of acceptance of the roles and professional identities, underlining the pragmatically, reflexive and creative side of the training process".

By arguing the expansion of the roles assumed by the teaching professionals in infant, preschool and primary education, the *EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY OF PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL* master study programme answer to these particular needs for the training services sector.

2.1. The impact of the masters study programme in training early education professionals.

The masters study programme, through its planned activities, has been addressed to a wide spectrum of occupations in the educational fields (including some professional niches) such as mentor, school inspector, school principal, instructional designer, pedagogical research assistant, etc. 75 students from 3 universities have attended the masters programme. The research that assessed the relevance of the study programme involved 25 students from the *Transilvania* University of Brașov, Faculty of Psychology and Education

Sciences. The objective of the analysis is to identify teaching routes over the course of the 2 years from the perspective of the self management of teaching quality.

The subjects / students have been invited to write an essay regarding the self management of teaching quality from the perspective of the relationship between the teaching process and the following elements: classes/seminaries, documents provided by the professors, documents identified by the student, practical activities and feedback from the professors. Out of the 25 students, 18 actually submitted the essays that had an average length of 1,5 pages.

The following categories have been defined after the analysis of the submitted essays:

- The motivation behind choosing this master study programme
- Strengths of the master study programme
- Opportunities provided as a result in participating in the masters study programme
- The study programme as an investment in continuous training
- The professor's role in the teaching process
- Threats / obstacles in the teaching process
- Weaknesses of the programme

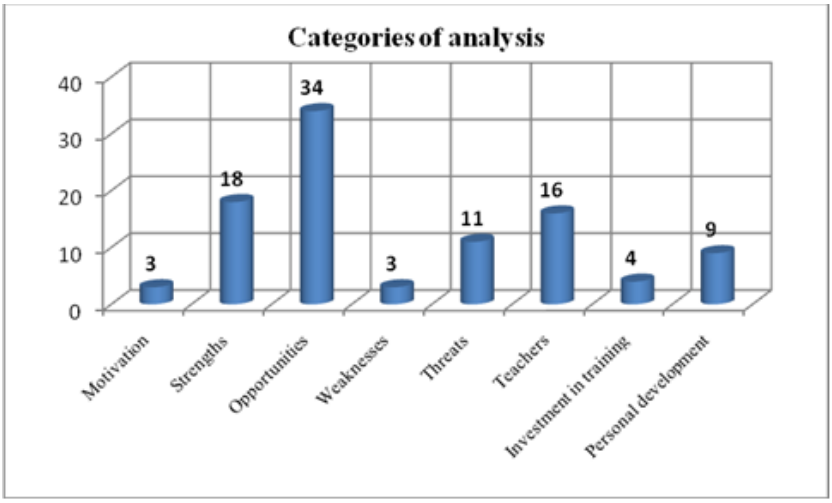

Fig. 1. Analysis categories for the submitted essays

As the graphic above is showing, the masters study programme has been evaluated, by most students, as a opportunity in the learning process. The lowest values were recorded in perceiving the programme as a weakness or as an investment in continuous training.

In relation with the theme of the essay, *the motivation* of attending the masters study programme has been identified, in all instances, with the

necessity to adapt the professional activity to the direct beneficiaries of early education - the children.

During the analysis of the *strengths and opportunities*, the definitive conclusion has been that the most mentioned elements have been the specific elements of the programme translated into knowledge, abilities and attitudes.

General competences regarding analysis, reflection, arguing and interpreting as well as general personality traits included in the study programme have been identified through mentions of the conceptual clarifications in the field of education and early development, the ability to expose reasoning, analysis, reflection, interpretation, the ability to create and work in a team, active involvement.

Managerial competences have been included by the students in their essays by mentioning elements related to the management of groups and relationships, adapting of the learning activities to the available timeframe (both in terms of finalizing an activity as well as time as a resource), identifying new professional areas, fine tuning the pedagogical endeavors, personal development, etc.

Communication competences have been identified in the essays through mentions of the ability to expose / present reasoning, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialists in early education and outside professionals. Such competences have been practiced by the students through oral evaluations of projects as well as oral exams.

Design competences have been used during professional activities (at infant, preschool and primary school level) as well as during teaching scenarios where elements from the personal professional experience have been included.

Methodological competences have been developed by managing the own teaching process as well as that of the direct beneficiaries of early education (through self management, feedback and constant evaluation), stress management (as a motivational factor as well as a disturbance). During team activities, the professional experiences shared and analyzed have been integrated in the learning process as best practices.

Social competences: the ability to animate groups of children / adults.

Research competences have been implicitly indicated by the students through experiments achieved in a professional capacity as well as those observed in practice locations.

Evaluation competences have been indirectly developed through feedback and evaluation by the professors.

Within the submitted essays, the teaching process from the masters study programme has been perceived in direct relation to the *professional training and development* as a component of lifelong learning, personal development, evolving from teacher to education provider, identifying professional niches, belonging to a professional group of experts, changes in the

education system (integration of early education principles, decentralization, organizational chances and evolutions). Also, this study programme has been identified as a way to adapt to a certain social dynamic wit direct impact on education in relation to the *investment in training and developing the human resource* in the context of globalization, national and international competitiveness, work productivity early education policy implementation at European and national level.

The weaknesses associated with the masters study programme has been the poor time management which did not allow for an extensive documentation, a deep analysis of the discussed themes, and has been an obstacle in participating in all proposed activities.

One of the most important factors in the teaching process has been identified by the student as being the *professor* (generically) and its role as a feedback provider. Also, the roles of the professor as perceived by the students included documentation provider, task designer, professional role model, facilitator, expert, etc.

The main *threats / obstacles* in the teaching process associated with the masters study programme that have been identified by the students regarded the novelty of the activities in relation to the previous teaching (initial and continuous) experiences. Thus, a new activity classification has been used, with categories such as A for academic activities, B for eLearning activities, C for group activities, D for supplementary documentations. The students acknowledged the fact that C type activities have been an impediment due both to the divergent objectives of the group members, inconsistent levels of involvement from the group members, different learning styles and exchanging the structure of the group. The students have mentioned as threats / obstacles in the learning process the schedule of the activities and the number of tasks assigned.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Teaching early education professionals is one of the most important steps toward a coherent and consistent implementation of the specific policies of the field and the EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY OF PRESCHOOL AND PRIMARY SCHOOL masters study programme represents an unique opportunity for the continuous training.

The firs need that derive from updating the relevant legislative framework is the elaboration / reforming of the early education curriculum (consistent with the obligatory education curriculum) and informing / training and counseling the teaching staff that will conduct educational activities in the infant, preschool and preparatory grade classrooms.

Such measures determine the expansion of professional and social roles assigned to a preschool teacher. Besides his / hers teaching activity, at the preschool education level there is a need to involve and work alongside professional nongovernmental associations, civil society bodies, public authorities with competences in the educational field. Also, special attention needs to be assigned to the reality that the market for educational services is a educational habitus that has the potential both for covering training needs for the teaching staff as well as for disseminating early education best practices.

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THE NECESSITY OF CURRICULAR DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION WITHIN *LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION* AREA

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ABSTRACT

This paper aims to focus on the teachers' awareness of the necessity of reform in preschool curriculum, more precisely within Language and communication area. We are interested to identify the extent to which teachers in early education identify effective strategies to improve communication skill at preschool age and are aware of the necessity of curricular reform. The current curriculum was designed in 2008 by the Ministry of Education and Research, based on data regarding the educational dynamics between 1999 and 2006. The necessity of curriculum development, in a field of study or in a preschool/school cycle, is a necessity for continuously adjusting teaching/learning experiences to the new demands of knowledge and society. The mere highlighting of the necessity of preschool curriculum change, in a clearly defined area, involves consideration of both certain objective determinations leading to curriculum update as a consequence of the real need of education, and certain "symptomatic areas" that require a change of curriculum. The main objective of this paper is to identify the awareness of the necessity for curriculum development in early education within Language and communication area. The designed research strategy is standard, transversal, in three phases: quantitative, qualitative and mixed (comparative, quantitative-qualitative), through the agency of methods based on a survey questionnaire, applied to representatives of all 31 kindergartens in Braşov city, namely on a structured group interview, with teachers-experts from their original institution (Kindergarten no.29 Braşov), having a professional experience of over 10 years in preschool teaching, achieved through Delphi technique.

KEYWORDS: Bachman model, curricular development, early education, language and communication.

1. INTRODUCTION

The current paper, aiming at identifying the need for curriculum reform in the area of *Language and Communication*, is the outcome of some previous researches with regard to the communicative competence formation and development in kindergarten preschool children. The study proposing a theoretically substantiated model of current scientific knowledge in this area, adequate for the preschool age particularities and the national formative

realities, we considered it worthy to continue the research in depth and to bring about the manner in which the need for curriculum reform in the area of Language and Communication is perceived by the preschool teachers. Within the present research, we intended to use the results obtained in our previous researches and to optimize them, in agreement with the learning partners of preschool children, their teachers.

2. STAGE OF SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH IN THE AREA

In order to make a distinction, the stage of scientific research in the area has to be valued both from the perspective of development psychology, and from the perspective of the communicative competence study. Regarding the development psychology, the Romanian specialized literature includes Ursula Șchiopu's studies (1963; 1981 in collaboration with Emil Verza), and those of Emil and Florin Verza (2000), among its most important titles. To these, other relevant studies may be added, written by Pantilimon Golu, Emil Verza and Mielu Zlate (1993), Elena Bonchiş (2000), Iolanda Mitrofan (2001), Tinca Creţu (2001/2009), Graţiela Sion (2007), Ioana Lepădatu (2008), Elena Cocoradă (2009) etc. In consensus with the understanding of the new subjects, we bring about a change of perspective, due to the French and Walloon school, according to which, the understanding consonant with the current curriculum framework regards the interactive social constructivism[15] (Bogaert *et al.*, 2012, p.18). In accordance with the previous researches (Lesenciuc, 2012), by analyzing preschool age's particularities and the possibilities of developing the communicative abilities/competence in late-preschool aged children, we proposed a reconfiguration of the communicative profile of the preschool child, considering the following dimensions: vocabulary enrichment, independent word formation, pronunciation, assimilation of basic syntactic structure, story organization based on conventions: introduction-body-conclusion, talking in terms of own experience, expressing action intentions, producing effects on communication partners, management of non-verbal communicative behavior and understanding facial expressions of communication partners.

From the perspective of the communicative competence, specialized research in Romania is only at its incipient phase. Similarly, at international level, research is not older than fifty years. Originating in Noam Chomsky's studies (1957, but mainly 1968) regarding the linguistic competence, defined as an ideal

[15] This interactive socio-constructivist approach does not regard only the learning model promoted by the Ministry of National Education, but also a dominant theory, in relation with the development psychology, integrating constructivist, social and interactive elements. The model relies on recent studies belonging to Tardif (1992), Astolfi (1993), Stordeur (1996) and, especially, Jonnaert & Vander Borght (1999).

locutor's (sender's) or receiver's capacity of producing or understanding an infinity of grammatically correct sentences, studies such as those signed by Habermas (1971), Hymes (1972), Savignon (1972), Canale & Swain (1980), Canale (1983), Halliday (1985), van Ek (1986), Bachman (1990), Celce-Murcia *et al.*(1995), or Celce-Murcia (2008) led to the configuration of a table of competences included within the communicative competence, as follows:

Table1. Component elements of the communicative competence

competence / model	linguistic/ grammatical	discursive	socio-linguistic	illocutionary	social/ action-based	strategic
Chomsky (1965)	YES					
Hymes (1972)	YES		YES			
Canale & Swain (1980)	YES	YES	YES			YES
Canale (1983)	YES	YES	YES			YES
Van Ek (1986)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Bachman (1990)	YES	YES	YES	YES		YES
Celce-Murcia *et al.* (1995)	YES	YES	YES		YES	YES
Celce-Murcia (2008)	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

When speaking about elements included within the communicative competence, yet, going beyond the basic equivalence *communicative competence = linguistic competence*, which is still producing effects within the Romanian education, we can affirm that the most complex model is the one proposed by Lyle F. Bachman, in 1990. Special attention should be given to van Ek's model (1986), which was used to define the general competences of the Common European Framework of Reference[16] (EC, 2002, p.30; pp.108-130).

[16] European Council (EC, 2002, p.5) defines the common framework as follows: "The European Council provides common basis for the elaboration of study programs, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks etc. across Europe. It describes in a comprehensive way what language learners have to learn to do in order to use a language for communication and what knowledge and skills they have to develop so as to be able to act effectively. The description also covers the cultural context in which language is set. The Framework also defines levels of proficiency which allow learners' progress to be measured at each stage of learning and on a lifelong basis."

Bachman proposed a model named the *communicative language ability* (CLA), the communicative competence component elements being the following: the linguistic competence, referring to elements used in language-based communication; the strategic competence, aiming at the capacity of implementing the component parts of the linguistic competence in the particular use of language, in various contexts, respectively, the psycho-physiological mechanisms of an individual, regarding neurological and psychological processes able to facilitate the use of language. The linguistic competence includes other competences such as: grammatical, textual, illocutionary and socio-linguistic. The Bachman model constituted the basis for the projection and voicing of an assessment system of the communicative competences, especially within the North-American cultural space. Thus, we can enumerate some of the reference documents, in this respect: *Language Assessment System. Interpretation Guide* (2008) al Indiana English Language Proficiency Assessment Program, with the mentioning that the set of tests Language Assessment System (LAS) Links Placement Tests were proposed by Lyle F. Bachman (*LAS Links. Interpretation Guide*, 2008, pp.29-34); *Early Childhood Assessment* (2008), instrument coordinated by Catherine E. Snow and Susan B. Van Heme, whose specialized board in *Testing and Assessment* for the American preschool education was coordinated by Lyle F. Bachman; *The Kindergarten Program* (2006) of Canada, *Supporting English Language Learners in Kindergarten. A Practical Guide for Ontario Educators* (2007) and, especially, *Manitoba Curriculum Framework of Outcomes* (2007) a.o. We chose the Bachman model because it involved a complex and directly applicable approach in the specialized practice, and it was proven through results obtained within the North American preschool environment, in recent years.

3. CURRENT CURRICULAR FRAMEWORK

The curriculum framework in effect is the one projected by the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth, in 2008, and it is based on the educational dynamic of the years 1999-2006. By means of this document, the following experience areas were analyzed: aesthetic and creative, man and society, language and communication, sciences and psycho-motric. The area *Language and Communication "covers the good command of oral and written proficiency, as well as the ability of comprehending verbal and oral communication"* (CÎP, 2008, p.10), which means that it is projected on different coordinates from the competences included within the communicative competence in Bachman model. The curriculum coordinates are component elements of one of the two forms that the communicative act may take, in accordance with the predominant communication channel, namely, the verbal communication. Within the projective limits of the preschool education

curriculum, oral communication implies a higher emphasis, due to the preschool-age characteristics, as compared to the written communication. In other words, we can reduce the preschool curriculum framework in the area of *Language and Communication* to the oral communication, aiming mainly at producing effects on interlocutors, which is a prevalence of the illocutionary function. Starting from this design, out of the four general objectives (GO); three are directly related to oral communication, whereas the fourth is in reference to the written communication (*CÎP*, 2008, p.27; *CÎP*, 2009, p.39):

- GO1: developing the capacity of oral proficiency, comprehension and correct use of the verbal structures meanings orally expressed;
- GO2: teaching a correct oral proficiency, from phonetic, lexical and syntactical perspective;
- GO3: developing creativity and expressivity in oral communication;
- GO4: developing the capacity of understanding and transmitting intentions, thoughts, and meanings conveyed through written language.

The four objectives were divided into nineteen specific objectives, most of them being in direct connection with the competences included in the Bachman model, but there are also objectives that exceed the reference area of *Language and Communication*; their role is to connect areas, for example, *"to understand and discriminate between shapes, sizes, colors – objects, images, geometrical shapes, types of contours etc.* "(*CÎP*, 2008, p.28; *CÎP*, 2009, p.39).

In harmony with these objectives, there were also created forms of assessment in the area of *Language and communication*, specific for the age segment of 5-6 years old. The first three objectives were translated into homonymous indicators, and they were related to a number of items, as follows: GO1 – 8 items; GO2 – 6 items; GO3 – 3 items; whereas objective number four was divided into two indicators, "capacity of understanding and transmitting intentions, thoughts, meanings conveyed through written language – READING", with 9 items, respectively, "capacity of understanding and transmitting intentions, thoughts, meanings conveyed through written language – WRITING", with 5 items. In the current formula, GO1 – 8 items; GO2 - 6 items; GO3 – 3 items and GO4 – 14 items, the assessment form has been used for one year, including the school year of 2012-2013, based on the Formal Communication no. 65.310/26.10.2012, issued by the Directorate General for Lifelong Education and Learning within the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports, sent to County School Inspectorates, the previous formula was GO1 – 7 items; GO2 – 5 items; GO3 – 2 items and GO4 – 23 items (11 – READING and 12 – WRITING).

This discrepancy between the preschool-age particularities and its corresponding forming requirements, rather meeting the forming requirements at grade "0" level (preparatory grade), made us reanalyze the assessment form and propose formulas for curriculum reconfiguration, with regard to the area of

Language and Communication at preschool ages. We projected the current research considering the preschool teaching staff's need for knowledge analysis related to forming competences included within the communicative competence, respectively, the analysis of the awareness degree in relation with the curriculum reform in the area of *Language and Communication*, for an adequate projection of the general objectives and for a correct assessment of the communicative profile of the preschool-aged child.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research objectives

The general objective of the present research derives from the initial projection upon the necessity of early childhood education curriculum development in the area of *Language and Communication.* The analysis of the theoretical corpus and the review of previous research results are naturally projected to be followed by an applied research whose general objective may be formulated as:

GO: The general objective of the research is to identify the awareness degree of the need for early childhood education curriculum development, in the area of *Language and Communication*.

For the achievement of this objective, the following specific objectives (SO) need to be accomplished:

SO1: the comparative analysis of standard and proposed assessment instruments, in the area of Language and Communication;

SO2: the comparative analysis of data obtained through quantitative research methods and data obtained through mixed research methods;

SO3: proposal for the reconfiguration of the general framework of forming/developing the communication competence, in accordance with society's new demands and the preschool child's needs to adjust to society's dynamics and knowledge.

4.2. Working hypotheses

We formulated the following working hypotheses (H) in our approach:

H1: The more familiar the preschool teachers are with the competences system included within the communicative competence, the higher the awareness degree becomes, in relation with the necessity of curriculum development in the area of *Language and Communication*. This hypothesis derives from the presumption that, in the absence of a configuration of competences included within the communicative competence deriving from the practical need of adjustment to a further school and extra-school life, teachers are used to the objective-framework system that defines the current *Preschool education curriculum*.

H2: Should the subjects of our investigation (preschool teachers) come across other assessment instruments, designed in agreement with some classical models for developing the communicative competence, then the awareness with regard to the necessity of changing the assessment sheets/forms will be higher. This hypothesis is generated by the assumption that once the communicative competence has been structured, following its creation, development and assessment based on a firm theoretical model, it will naturally generate a re-assessment of the current training, development and assessment framework of the communicative abilities at preschool age, through curriculum instruments projected by the Ministry of Education.

4.3. Research type

The research topic, together with its study objectives, leads to the outlining of a transversal, *standard research strategy*, achieved in three phases: quantitative, qualitative and mixed (quantitative-qualitative, comparative). The first two phases regard the research based on interaction with people, whereas the third phase focuses on the comparative analysis of results obtained throughout the first two phases and the documents analysis. The main research method is the *survey*, by means of which focus is laid on stimulating the verbal behavior of subjects, who are representatives of preschool institutions from the city of Brașov. The survey interpretation will be achieved throughout the third phase of our research. The projected survey is accomplished by means of a *questionnaire*, containing closed questions, individually self-administered. The next method is a structured, *group interview*, conducted with teachers from the education institution of origin (Kindergarten no.29, Brașov), with a preschool-teaching experience of more than 10 years and holding a specific degree of expertise in this profession. The interview is conducted by means of a particular technique, namely, the *Delphi* technique. Through this interview, the intention was to obtain relevant data, in relation with the research objective and following a negotiation of personal opinions and a consensus connected with expressing a viewpoint of a preschool educational institution where, two years ago, an ameliorative educational program was piloted, a program consisting of games-exercises for language and communication development, having the role of stimulating the communicative abilities/competence.

4.4. Research instruments elaboration and research organization

The instruments related to data collection are the questionnaire and the collective interview form, presented in annexes 3 and 4, containing 11 items, respectively, three debate topics. The research was conducted throughout the following dates: between 5th and 15th of May - for data collection as a result of the questionnaire administration and the completion of the group-interview; 16th and 30th of May – for results interpretation.

The quantitative research was conducted within the 31 kindergartens (K) existent in the city of Brașov, as follows: K1 and K2 of the Schei quarter; K3, K8, K13, K14/14A and K15 of the central quarter of Brașov; K17 from Valea Cetății quarter; K18 and K21 of the Noua quarter; K19, K22, K23, K24, K25, K26 and K27 of the Astra quarter; K28 and K29 of the Florilor quarter; K36 from the Scriitorilor quarter; K12 and K31 of the Triaj quarter; K9, K10, K11, K32/35, K33 and K34 of the Tractor quarter; K4/37, K5 and K7 of the Bartolomeu quarter. The qualitative research was achieved in K29.

5. RESEARCH OUTCOMES

The research contributes to identifying the degree to which kindergarten teachers recognize the need for effective strategies to improve the communicative abilities in preschool-aged children, are aware of the sum of particular aspects brought about by the preschool education projective documents, and, especially, are aware of the need for curriculum reform in the area of *Language and communication*. The paper accomplishment implied a transdisciplinary approach, preponderantly communicative, pedagogical and psychological, more precisely, starting from the psycho-pedagogical communicative models, going through the didactics of early childhood and early school educational activities, docimology and assessment, education sociology, quality management, community problems reflected by the educational act, with a focus laid on educational projection and curriculum management, in agreement with the research methods in education and finishing with peer relations and psycho-pedagogical intervention in education. This approach focused on a topic that should, at least, be of interest for the early childhood education, so long as the current projective documents do not realistically aim at achieving competences, but rather at meeting some objectives, which do not guarantee for forming particular competences, but for some particular abilities regarding school finalities and finalities of living within communities.

The investigative enterprise was accomplished so as to guide the theoretical approach toward the practical reality of Brașov's education environment, more precisely, the preschool education, and, much more precisely, toward the development of the communicative competence in Brașov's kindergartens. Aiming mainly at identifying the awareness degree of the need for curriculum development in preschool education, in the area of "*Language and Communication*", and, further on, the comparative analysis of data obtained through quantitative research methods and through mixed research methods and proposing a reconfiguration of the general framework of forming/developing the communicative competence, in accordance with society's new demands and the preschool child's needs so as to adjust to society's dynamics and knowledge, we obtained the following outcomes:

Table 2. Research outcomes

Research phases	General objective	Specific objectives	Methods (transversal)	Techniques	Means	Instruments	Outcomes
Quantitative phase	Identification of the awareness degree of the need for early childhood education curriculum development, in the area of *Language and Communication*.	SO3: proposal for the reconfiguration of the general framework of forming/developing the communication competence, in accordance with society's new demands and the preschool child's needs to adjust to society's dynamics and knowledge.	Data collection	Survey	Individually self-administered questionnaire	Pencil-and-paper test	- subjects under investigation agreed only partially with the current curriculum framework in the area of "Language and Communication"; - corresponding values between the current assessment form items and the communicative competence component parts in Bachman model were mostly the same with the real corresponding values; -once the awareness of the competence forming possibilities has come in place, subjects mostly found the changing of assessment forms necessary, contrary to results obtained for the first indicator;
Qualitative phase			Data collection	Group interview	Delphi	Interview guide	-- subjects under investigation disagreed with the current curriculum framework in the area of "Language and Communication"; - following the investigation regarding the correspondence between the current assessment form items and the communicative competence component parts in Bachman model, there appeared qualitative observations, stressing on the discrepancy between general objectives and specific objectives of preschool curriculum, related to the area "Language and Communication" and the projection based on objectives rather than competences; - subjects mostly found the changing of assessment forms necessary, contrary to results obtained for the first indicator;

Comparative, mixed phase		SO1: the comparative analysis of standard and proposed assessment instruments, in the area of Language and Communication; SO2: the comparative analysis of data obtained through quantitative research methods and data obtained through mixed research methods;	Data analysis	Qualitative analysis	Comparative analysis		- the adequacy level of the current assessment forms in the area of "Language and Communication" to the need for projecting the communicative competence differs a lot, from the perspective of the questionnaire respondents and that of expert participants in the group interview; - the current context of preschool education requires an adequate curriculum development and an alignment to changes already in place, in accordance with the curriculum management steps at strategic level; - the preschool communicative profile projected by the current curriculum framework does not differ, in the view of the quantitative research subjects, respectively, qualitative research ones, in what concerns competences developed by the current curriculum framework: GC –TC –NVC; - the final item reveals an almost identical need for curriculum framework change, although in case of Braşov kindergarten teachers this necessity was perceived and assumed during the questionnaire administration, whereas in case of experts it had been previously been identified; - the research objectives were accomplished, the research hypothesis no.1 was confirmed, whereas the research hypothesis no.2 was partially confirmed.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The present paper contributed to:

- development the theoretical framework configured by previous researches and its adjustment to the Romanian education environment regarding preschool-aged children;
- elaboration of research instruments and their application so as to identify the awareness degree of the need for curriculum development in preschool education, in the area of "*Language and Communication*";
- reconfiguration of the real preschool children's communicative profile;
- qualitative analysis of the national curriculum framework with regard to the area of "*Language and Communication*";
- reconfiguration of the observation sheet used for assessing preschool children from the perspective of a real communicative competence development;

- projection of the area of "*Language and Communication*" from the preschool education curriculum, based on competences (C) to be formed (and not on basis of general or specific objectives), as follows:
  - **C1 (GC):** adequate use of words for correct communication, in agreement with deduced grammar rules;
  - **C2 (TC):** expressing coherent string of ideas;
  - **C3 (IC):** obtaining effects upon communication partners;
  - **C4 (SLC):** adequate communication in standard language, irrespective of ethnical origin, dialect or sub-dialect used within families;
  - **C5 (SC):** expressing message or communicative intention, irrespective of linguistic constraints or context;
  - **C6 (NVC):** adequate interpretation of signs, gestures or facial expressions of communication partners and control over own gestures and facial expressions;

Starting from the projective framework of the current paper, a quantitative retesting might be performed, aiming at identifying the real need for curriculum development in the area "*Language and Communication*", at the level of county school inspectorates or even at the level of Ministry of Education. In this respect, we find it useful to continue research at an ampler level, so as to obtain relevant data for the entire Romanian preschool teaching population, to publicly debate the real need for reform, to pilot a new curriculum framework in the area of "*Language and Communication*", under the circumstances of an adequate projection in relation with the communicative competence, and not only to meet general objectives or specific ones with regard to school finalities, and, maybe, to achieve the curriculum reform in this area, starting from the projective framework proposed by the current paper.

Once the general objective and specific objectives of the research have been achieved, as well as the general objective of the current paper, and we have had the confirmation, to a greater or smaller extent, of the working hypotheses, we consider that the present paper is a valid projective attempt, which might constitute the starting point for curriculum development, more precisely, the starting point for a diagnosis-analysis necessary for projecting a new curriculum.

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KINDERGARTEN RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ROMANIA. THEORETICAL ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES OF USING THE CASE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The present article deals with an issue which has relatively recently attracted the attention of the curriculum authors in Romania, the need to support the religious education that kindergarten teachers carry on with parental consent in kindergarten. The aim of this paper is to present some theoretical aspects and to raise a number of questions with a clarifying role for the direction in which the moral and religious training in kindergartens in Romania should follow. The paper is set up as an ascending endeavour, having in its final presentation the summary of a case of child significantly sustained in the recovery of his mental and emotional development as a result of an intervention having in the foreground the religious story. Increasingly used in education, the case study method also involves, for the moral and religious education in kindergarten, a number of facets: educational method, research method, method of educational counselling.

KEYWORDS: moral-religious education, kindergarten, research methods, case study

1. PRELIMINARIES

For the educational system in Romania, the issue of moral and religious education in kindergarten is a particular one. Basically, after 1989, the year of the fall of the atheist communist regime, religious values have regained the right to be available for the children and young people in the national education system, so that they may receive a complete education [1]. Whereas for the school education cycles, those nearly two decades and a half have meant taking some significant steps towards a necessary normality, the education in kindergartens has a major handicap in the curriculum development plan. Yet, in Romania, there is not a consistent document and support materials for the activities that the teachers in kindergarten carry out for the moral-religious formation of children. The main reasons for this situation are, we believe, the lack of a pedagogical model for religious education in kindergartens, inherited from the Communist period and of low concern of the decision makers to use the models of best practice, including the ones in European countries with experience in this area, such as Italy.

As it happens in other European countries, attending religious education activities must have the parental consent in the case of minor children. From the

point of view of religious pedagogy, if for people their eternal destiny is important, then the education cannot circumvent this issue [2]. The fundamental question for moral-religious education in kindergarten is related to its purposes, in relation to the models promoted by modern society.

In the context of the trend of growing globalisation in recent decades, moral and religious education in kindergarten can give children the support elements for understanding the values of the family and the community to which they belong, as a prerequisite for the explicit inclusion of these values in the process of building their own personalities. Also, the moral and religious education in kindergarten can support the physical, mental, moral and affective stages of the development through the inner formative potential that the religious knowledge used from at a certain age can have.

2. INTERROGATIONS RELATED TO THE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN KINDERGARTEN

The novelty of the educational approaches in the field of moral and religious education for pre-primary cycle, the absence of specialised works to support local initiatives in this area, but especially the incipient stage in which the Romanian school is in its attempt to suggest a stable curricular model led us to suggest a set of interrogations, formulated as a result of interviews with teachers involved in carrying out such activities. We preferred this way of working in order to formulate synthetic expectations and needs of support and development of those involved in the design and implementation of activities with religious or moral content, who even try to synthesise in an optional curriculum the experience in kindergartens or groups in which the concerns listed are already a reality. We believe that for the current stage of development of moral and religious education in kindergartens in Romania formulating a set of interrogations constitutes an approach able to sustain the necessary conceptual and procedural delimitations.

a. Psycho-pedagogical contextualisations

- What are the learning contents which can support the formation of desirable behaviours in preschoolers?
- Are the moral and religious habits formed in response to external demands or predominantly as an imitation of the behaviour of others?
- What are the representations or the impressions that sustain an acceptable level of formation of the first elements of moral conscience?
- How can positive emotions submitted by the characters in the religious stories support the formation of moral conscience in children?
- How can the religious feeling of children, manifested before the emergence of religious thinking be harnessed?

b. ER status in kindergarten

- Is an explicit cooperation between kindergarten and family needed in achieving the moral-religious activities?
- How useful is the optional curriculum for religion to kindergarten teachers?
- What are the elements that facilitate the success of project-based activities, respectively for a moral-religious optional curriculum in the kindergarten?

c. The resources involved in the teaching process

- Are the kindergarten teachers, almost all without theological studies, willing to learn new things to cope with the rigours of an optional curriculum of religion?
- What are the training needs in theological and psycho-pedagogical aspects in order to organise moral and religious activities in kindergarten?
- How could kindergarten teachers contribute to the future development of the curriculum for preschoolers?
- How large must the teacher's autonomy be in the establishment of religion, or project-based activities?
- Can curriculum compensate for the differences in the material conditions of the kindergartens?

d. The model curriculum

- What are the religious needs of a child in kindergarten?
- What model curriculum should be adopted to support an effective teaching approach?
- Is it necessary for the curriculum to provide alternative models in achieving aims?
-How does the curriculum solve the problem of ideological differences between parents of preschool children?
- How can religious activities in kindergarten and those in the first school classes sopport each other (social skills, communication, physical development)?

e. The learning content

- What learning content can support children to highlight their individuality and personal experience?
- What should be the proportion of religious / moral in different types of activities carried out with the kids?
- Is it necessary to include in the curriculum some learning contents for which the presence of a theologian is required?
- What learning contents can help develop the creativity and the language in preschool?

- What learning contents can sustain positive feelings towards children with other faiths and cultures?

3. FOR A CONTENT OF THE MORAL-RELIGIOUS LEARNING WHICH CAN BE USED IN THE PREPARATION OF THE ACTIVITY PROJECTS FOR THE CHILDREN IN KINDERGARTEN

We believe that one of the most important aspects in achieving religious activities in kindergarten, in the form of optional courses or project-type activities, is given by the ability of the teacher to select learning content and the aims set related to the available resources they have, and to harness the defining elements of local culture.

Given the particularities of religious education issues in kindergarten, where teachers are specialised most often in a different domain from the theological one, their knowledge of moral and religious education pertaining to the sphere of self-education, we provide below some guidelines for future stages of curriculum development in this area.

The examples suggested circumscribed the theme "Children and the beauty of the world", which requires different approaches in a continuum, from a group of preschoolers to another, on aspects of the beauty that surrounds us, the use of beautiful words, which support the relationship with their fellows and with God and continuing with the need of children to learn the beautiful things, both in formal and in informal environments.

	First Level 3-4 years	**Second Level 4-5 years**	**Third Level 5-6 years**
Children and the beauty of the world	**When everything around us is beautiful** • **My body is clean** (what it means to be clean, why it is good to be clean) • **I live in a clean environment** (environments where children live, the responsibility of all to keep the places clean, attachment to things, care for the place where I work,	**Words that make our life beautiful** • **I talk to people nicely** (the effects of my words on others, what truths cannot be told, the magic words, what I do when I want something) • **I talk to God in prayer** (what I tell God, my position when I talk to him, when I	**Let's learn about the beauty of life** • **I learn about beautiful things** (where I learn about beautiful things, who teaches me?, my attitude and behaviour towards my teacher) • **I am surrounded by friends** (what I know about my classmates and friends, what my

	behaviour when eating, praying at meals) **I take care of plants and animals** (plants and animals are God's creation, I respect the work of those around me, the importance of protecting nature)	talk to Him, where I talk to Him) • **I talk to people about God** (what I can talk to people, when I talk, where I talk, when Iam quiet, what I say about God)	classmates do for me, mutual aid, biblical examples of friends) **Love and forgiveness** (love and beauty, whom I love, who loves me, I forgive and I am forgiven ;)

4. THE CASE STUDY IN EDUCATIONAL AND INVESTIGATIVE BACKGROUND

The use of qualitative methods often encounters much criticism, starting from the fact that they cannot prove the same rigour and objectivity involved in the quantitative approach. In this context, the role of the case study is to highlight not only the qualities it undeniably has as an educational method, but also to reconfirm the ability to formulate hypotheses for quantitative research and contribute significantly to the development and testing of educational theories. Natural sciences researchers have criticised the use of case study in the social sciences research, emphasising that it is difficult to support the representativeness of observation for a particular social phenomenon and also showing that the lack of rigour in data collection hardly supports a scientifically solid construction. The issue of partiality induced by the subjectivity of the researcher is backed by the research participants.

In parallel, researches carried out by practitioners and theorists of management and business schools show that strictly quantitative measures have created far too great a difference between the theory and the economic reality. The last decades have shown that quantitative research can be biased as much by the researcher as by participants, according to the critics of the qualitative research if the samples are administered incorrectly, intentionally or not, when the survey is wrong or if respondents do not participate honestly [3].

What is specific to the case study in social sciences is taking part in an inductive approach, trying to get closer to the empirical details that constitute its object of study, in contrast to the deductive methods of natural science, in the context where the question remains open whether we can talk about the uniqueness of the particular case analysed. [4].

Related to the case study, quantitative research tries to bring into the foreground the issue of explanation and that of control in order to identify the relationship of cause and effect between a limited number of variables.

Qualitative research aims at understanding the complex interdependencies that occur between the elements of the analysed case. In parallel, qualitative studies aim at drawing a certain conclusion which they try to generalise and the quantitative paradigm analyses a set of cases from which to draw relevant conclusions [5].

Beyond these differences in approach, the case study is the preferred strategy in situations where variables control is extremely difficult, when the phenomenon is a contemporary one and it requires contextualisation and reporting to the real life.

Yin suggests four main applications that require the use of the case study [6]. Firstly the case study is used to seek explanations and causal links in real life interventions, a far too complex process to be subjected to theoretical study or experimental strategies. Secondly, the case study can describe the elements of context-related intervention. Thirdly, the descriptive case study can be an assessment tool. A final issue relates to the possibility of generating theories, when the results of an intervention are too large to be evaluated.

In educational research, the case study is considered more and more an empirical research method of a contemporary phenomenon, based on a real-life context of delineating partly the boundaries between phenomenon and context. The success of the case study is dependent on the dynamic mode that combines data collection methods, such as study of archive documents, interview, questionnaire-based survey or observation method. Triangulation is one of the ways to support the results of the qualitative data collected in the case study: 1) the data are analysed in different places at different times and in different contexts; 2) it is necessary to have two different teams of researchers, procedures and conclusions; 3) it is necessary to use different data sources - interviews and records - to analyse the same case.

The case study should be considered a method in a broad sense, as research data collection is achieved in a complex and always different way, the aim being to render the progress of the case in time or after the introduced intervention [7]. The limit of this method and that of the case analysis, the monosubject experiment respectively of the biographical method is very narrow. Even if the resemblance is very close, the characteristics of each are well defined [8].

5. QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE IN THE INTERVENTION TO OBTAIN BEHAVIOURAL CHANGES IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN. CASE ANALYSIS

We will present briefly, based on the work done with the kindergarten teacher L.D.G., a case study relevant to the particular way in which moral and religious values can support the personal development of children in kindergarten.

N.A. is a 6 year-old little girl and she attends a normal program kindergarten in a rural area, near a city in Alba County. She has a delay in intellectual development, manifested through representation at a modest level, lacking details, inertia in thinking. Her vocabulary is poor, she encounters major difficulties in the grammatical and logical expression and also in terms of stability and volume of attention. During the previous two years of attendance of kindergarten, N.A. has made some progress regarding the acquisition of the basic concepts about the surrounding world, reaching the level at which she can recognise animals, means of transport, clothing, objects, actions, etc. She has also developed some habits that give her a certain degree of autonomy.

The neurological problems that she has also diminish the motility of her arms, which reflects on the activities in which she attempts to achieve some graphics. Unlike previous years, N.A. tries to manage on her own, she wants to draw and paint by herself, like her classmates. She mimics every gesture, word or action made by children or teachers, but she likes to repeat poems in front of the group or to sing along with children. Although she has been in the attention of the speech therapist from the age of 5 and a half, she faces some difficulties in speech and the use of connectors.

Regarding her behaviour, N.A. has moments of aggression through which she tries to draw attention to her classmates and she intervenes in the game of her collegues and sometimes she destroys the boys' construction, takes one of their toys or a piece of a game, etc. Talking to her, we can conclude that she understands what is right, she has the ability to decode her classmates'reactions, she can distinguish between good and bad. In addition, sociograms show that N.A. does not make any choice, but she has the maximum number of rejections.

The intervention in the presented case aims to harness the forming potential that the story with a moral and religious content has for preschoolers in order to achieve behavioural changes, based on the fact that for a child, every social situation is an opportunity and a context for learning, even if it is theoretical. Also, the teacher has assumed the role of researcher mediator for preschool child behavior. The intervention took place during a school year, which is why it has become necessary to select a set of stories that present special events or facts and allow the teacher to ensure a proper emotional framework. The stories have been the support for various discussions, drawings, games or activities that harnessed their message.

A first additional element was the support that N.A. received from another girl, F.D., characterised by teachers as having a communicative and cheerful behaviour, supported by the fact that she has not made any rejection in the initial sociogram. Later, the little girl, B.P is convinced by the teacher to show to her colleague N.A. how to play with a doll. Gradually, the girls begin

to accept her in their groups, giving various advice and support in the activities they carry out.

In parallel, starting from the content of some stories, N.A. was required to perform various tasks, to perform roles in the short plays of the preschool group. Polite formulas start to be used by N.A. and she is more attentive in her collaboration with her classmates, with their drawings, and the conflicts with the boys decreased significantly.

Although the moral-religious stories chosen for N.A. were short and were accompanied by brightly coloured images, she did not involve a great deal, given the limited capacity of her attention. At the end of the intervention, she reached the stage of development of social and emotional behavior.

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The conclusions of the case presented above confirm the theoretical assumptions stated at the beginning of the present work. The careful use of the specific moral-religious content in kindergarten, in the context of objectives which include supporting of physical, moral, emotional development and contextualised in relation to the cultural environment of the community from which the children are, proves a significant formative potential, including the support for special cases of children with developmental delay.

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THE OPPORTUNITY AND EFFICIENCY OF ASSESSMENT WITHIN THE EARLY EDUCATION TIMEFRAME

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ABSTRACT

The time of the assessment process, in order to be appropriate and efficient, has become lately the main subject in redefining the Assessment Process in theory and practice. Assessment doesn't mean any longer only enforcement and controlling the results of the learning process, but it also means optimization and developing of the learning process (the science of humanistic docimology). The formative assessment has rebalanced the concept of modern assessment by being the core of the priorities when deciding the combinatory between the learning processes and the skills/competences resulting from the learning process. The essence of the Formative Assessment consists of the optimal time of its duration process, as the children need a systematic evaluative feedback to help them in organizing the learning process and the learning progress. This is an open subject in redefining the concept of assessment in early learning process from the perspective of time level. It makes significant changes of the evaluation components and in the relationship between them: the final products of the assessment, the culture of the assessment process, strategies in evaluation, instruments of evaluation, etc.

KEYWORDS: early education, assessment, assessment tools, assessment process, assessment strategies.

1. EARLY EDUCATION REFORM

Early childhood is the most important period of human life, which is marked by crucial moments to the child's development and later success in school and in life. As it was stated in "Early education and the specificity of preschool child's development", research in the last 30 years have shown significant correlations between environment and intellectual development, between early learning and learning that occurs in other stages of life. Thus, children raised in a stimulating environment have an accelerated intellectual development compared to those grown in a restrictive medium. From birth till grown-up, children are persons who develop emotionally and have special responsiveness to different types of stimuli, something that can be influenced by the information the child receives from the environment and the quality of information processing" (6, page 5).

Something else must be highlighted, namely that adult intervention on the child during this period is fundamental. We speak about that certain

efficient processing of information where the child needs a mentor, about the monitoring of learning, with the prospect of transforming it into a self-monitoring, about the challenge of becoming aware of the learning process in order to understand it, in an appropriate and effective dialogue with adults, about the cognitive and affective communication necessary in the learning and developmental space. Ultimately, it is all about the optimal functionality of the "zone of proximal development" (L. Vîgotski), which compulsory requires the adult intervention for safety. So, early education reform is less directed towards the institutions and more towards their training atmosphere and especially towards the adults' skills in relation to their interventions on children: what they need to know about children and their development; what they need to know about how and what to do in relation to the child's needs and his potential development; what they have to become as concerning their attitude, motivation and responsibility towards the child's education at this age. If early education is from 0 to 6/7 years old then we take into consideration as adults both the educators and the parents.

2. THE PLACE AND ROLE OF ASSESSMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION

In the words of J. M. Monteil (1997, p 58), whatever views we cherish, there can be no learning without assessment and self-assessment. This statement is especially true and important in the case of early education, given the features of learning at this age and the issues of preschool learning and especially the need for permanent feedback on the quality of the learning process and the learning outcomes. The assessment is intrinsic to the educational process at this age, it is an organic part of the structure of education and it is indispensable for regulating and optimizing the entire educational process, including the process and processuality of child learning. Naturally, assessment is a starting point in education, then it must constantly accompany and regulate education in its development and it also is the final point (relatively speaking) of an educational stage, as a benchmark for a new beginning.

The essential characteristic of evaluative activity in early education today represents its approach both in terms of process and procedures regarding the measurement of learning outcomes. The assessment activity involves development, processuality, regulation and self-regulation. Searching for a balance between teaching and learning as a product, between aspects that are summative, that classify, certify, and allow the identification of the causes/difficulties faced by children in their learning process, as well as between the regulating and self-regulating mechanisms have led to its extension from the assessment of only the learning outcomes and to the assessment of the learning process and processuality. We could say that, in early education,

formative evaluation is a priority, whose lines of force are (Roland Abrecht, 1999):

- it is mainly addressed to the child with its peculiarities;
- it involves the child in the learning process, making him constantly aware of his approach;
- it is an integral part of the learning process, it eases the "climb", does not interrupt it;
- it is looking for adjustment to a particular learning situation, so it needs to act with a certain flexibility, to be open to plurality, diversity;
- it deals more with the learning process than its results;
- it is not limited to observing learning, but it also helps through constant adjustment and regulation;
- it identifies the difficulties, classifies them on their degree of complexity, trying to identify their causes, to overcome them, rather than to penalize them for summative assessment;
- it equally serves the educator, allowing him, through feedback, to effectively focus on the milestones of valuable pedagogical strategies.

As defined by G. De Landsheere (1979), formative assessment is basically occurring during the learning task, having as main objective to inform the child/student and teacher on the degree of control achieved and, possibly, to discover where and why a child/student has learning difficulties in order to propose or make him discover ways/strategies to allow progress. Also, this type of assessment is intended to guide the advancement of the child, to make him recognize where and why a child is experiencing difficulty and help him overcome it. This assessment is not translated into marks/grades and even less into scores, being just a piece of information, a feedback for both the child/student and the teacher.

In the same spirit, M. Scriven (2010) said that continuous/formative assessment is characterized by two main features:

- the much faster rhythm of the assessment activity, greater frequency of checks and assessments over a period of time, the evaluation accompanying the learning activity;
- the significant shortening of the interval between "evaluation" and "correction", on one hand and between "evaluation and change" and "improvements" of the teaching activity.

In early education, the evaluation functions are specifically centred on the child's needs for adjusting and optimizing learning and on his optimal development.

3. TIMEFRAME FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF EARLY EDUCATION

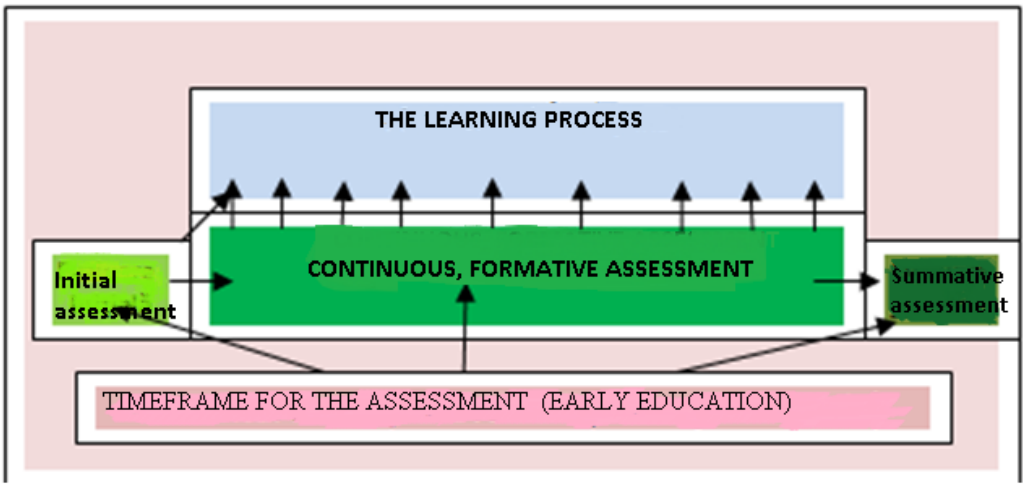

Fig. 1. Timeframe for the assessment of early education

As the figure above suggests, assessment is an ongoing activity that precedes, accompanies and follows the learning process. Placing assessment before, during and after learning marks the timeframe of the preschool assessment, which is continuous and intrinsic to the learning process. Integration into an articulate, balanced and dynamic system of initial, formative and summative assessment provides the quality warrantee for the evaluation strategies ([5], p.17). If the initial assessment, preceding the learning process, has mainly a diagnostic and predictive function, the continuous assessment, which accompanies and is constantly and operationally integrated throughout the educational process, has mostly a feedback and formative function, whereas the cumulative or final assessment has a predominantly ascertaining and partially predictive function for the next series of children. Each of these types of assessment has its own importance and role and only together they provide a comprehensive, meaningful and effective evaluation. The necessity and importance of each of them are highlighted best when dealing with them in their complementarity relationship.

4. OPTIMAL TIME FOR ASSESSMENT IN EARLY EDUCATION

The time factor is important in education and, as we know, it is one of the major variables of the curriculum. We frequently speak about time for teaching, time for learning, time for listening, time for assessing, but we speak less of time through the perspective of its opportunity, with respect to what to do and when to do it. This dimension of time, opportunity, regarding what

should be done, is essential to education in general and to assessment, in particular, and even more to the early education evaluation. Of course, assessment itself as a form of measurement and evaluation of what is assessed is important, but its real value and especially efficiency are given by the moment when it is performed, with respect to its necessity.

It is about the opportunity of assessment time/moment in relation to the required assessment and the type of evaluation. The initial evaluation or the "necessary evil", as experts call it, not accidentally takes place before the start of the educational process, because only then it is effective and fulfils significantly its diagnostic and predictive functions. In 1981, D. Ausubel stated: "if I wanted to reduce all pedagogy to a single principle, I say: what most influences learning are the skills that the student has from the start. Make sure of what he knows and train him accordingly!". Therefore, the success of teaching and learning depends on the information the assessment made before the commencement of the learning process provides.

The opportunity of assessment time is discussed more in the formative evaluation, which is centred on learning processuality and must, according to M. Scriven, shorten the maximum range between the "evaluation" and "correction" on the one hand and between "evaluation and modifications" and "improvements" of the pedagogical act, on the other hand. Even more, this appropriate time depends on the child's age and peculiarities, at young ages being done in small steps, and also depends on the child's individual characteristics, on each child's learning problems, even on the tempo of their activity, and, not least, on what is being assessed. Any delay in the evaluation, and any hurry, too, can have direct consequences on the quality and efficiency of the assessment and indirect consequences on the decisions that are to be taken.

Also when it comes to the time of evaluation, its opportunity, we must take into consideration the required/optimal time for these activities, which usually, ironically, because of the lack of time, are short-circuited, and are simplified, and are abolished, with all the consequences resulting from this. The most common shortened or removed assessment moments are those related to communicating the results of evaluation and especially to discussing issues arising, to analysis causes, to making decisions and implementing them. Almost all evaluations are scheduled in insufficient time intervals, so they should be done fast, the written evaluations are preferred, but students' problems, results of these evaluations are not analysed, discussed and resolved by appropriate action. Assessment should be assigned as much time as teaching or, to be in line with modern teaching, it should be organized in such a way to allow efficient integration in a timeframe and have an appropriate assessment period in relation to its requirements and purposes. Children and teachers need not only a general feedback but a systematic one, in appropriate moments in relation to their

learning needs and problems, respectively, in order to adjust and optimize the teaching process. Formative assessment is the core priority in decisions concerning the combinatory between learning processes and skills seen as outcomes.

5. EVALUATION AT APPROPRIATE TIME AND OPTIMIZATION OF THE CHILD'S LEARNING

There is a direct relationship of determinism between the effectiveness of the assessment made in due time and the optimizing of the child's learning. We frequently speak of the fact that things not done in their time will generate hardly recoverable or irrecoverable consequences. We know that some bad habits of writing, expressing oneself, grammatical accuracy, etc. improperly and not thoroughly structured in childhood are difficult to correct at older ages. Similarly, certain habits, attitudes, behaviours, that have not been given the necessary attention, time and time opportunity will be difficult to restructure later.

Also, the optimum time of evaluation requires a reorganization of the relationships between the components of the assessment, with final effect on optimising learning and on gradually progressing towards success. So for example, the optimum assessment time requires different methods, techniques and instruments in relation to the type and timing of the evaluation and it also requires a more consistent promotion of qualitative methods of evaluation in general, but especially in the formative assessment. Thus, we may speak of rewriting the conceptual map of the assessment in early childhood education, from the perspective of the time horizon of the assessment and of the significant changes of the relations between the components of evaluation.

6. INSTEAD OF CONCLUSIONS

Assessment, exactly as teaching and learning, are the cornerstones for education and their quality determines the quality of education.

The assessment moment, for it to be opportune and effective, has become one of the landmarks that required rethinking the theory and practice of assessment.

The essence of evaluation in general and, more particularly, of the formative one lies in the optimal time to be done; children need a systematic evaluative feedback to enable them to organize their learning and progress in learning.

The optimum as concerning time in assessment directly determines the quality and efficiency of evaluation, and respectively, the quality and efficiency of children's training and development.

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USE OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IN PRESCHOOLERS EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

This article is based on a study which consisted of the analysis of the non-verbal language used by preschoolers and materialized into a didactic experiment that started off with the assumption that emotional development in preschoolers can be achieved by means of non-verbal communication, with the aim of optimizing the relationship among the group members. The experimental group and the control group, homogenous from a psycho-social and educational viewpoint, consisted of 20 children, each. The experiment unfolded over the period of a school year and focused on the preschoolers' acknowledgment of their own emotions and on the identification of their colleagues' emotions by decoding non-verbal indicators. The used methods and instruments were as follows: non-verbal language encoding/decoding tests, sociometric tests and an emotional indicators observation chart. Both the pre-testing and the post-testing assessed the non-verbal communication encoding/decoding and the emotional development degree of the two groups (EG and CG). The results confirmed the general hypothesis as well as the specific hypotheses. As a general conclusion: the acknowledgement of one's own emotions, through the analysis of non-verbal indicators, is essential to acquiring all the other(s) emotional skills, which are the source of social adaptation.

KEYWORDS: *communication, non-verbal language, emotional development*.

1. INTRODUCTION

Preschool is a period when children make use of intense receptiveness, sensitivity and physical flexibility. Hence the necessity to enhance the preschooler's creative potential, to shape and develop his/her cognitive, affective and social action self. One of the best ways to do so is permanent communication [1].

Communication is a support used for shaping the mechanisms of the child's thought memory, imagination and intellectual development. With the help of communication, the pre-schooler succeeds in detaching from the material reality, gaining experience [2]. By communication, one exchanges meanings; there must be a connection between the participants in the communication process – sender and recipient –, at least one given by a common code used for encoding and respectively, for decoding the message to be transmitted [3].

2. COMMUNICATION AND EMOTION

Man is a social being. Above all, man needs to communicate. Nevertheless, what he first communicates are his emotions.

2.1. Non-verbal Communication

In the context of communication, non-verbal language weighs the most [4]. Even though it has been present in the relationships between people since humanity began, non-verbal communication gained increasing importance in the past the past 40 years, given its use at such a large scale in relation to verbal and paraverbal communication.

Non-verbal communication is the process of communication by means of which messages are sent without the use of words. Non-verbal communication is accomplished by gestures, touch, body language or posture, facial expressions and eye contact [5].

Likewise, non-verbal communication can also be accomplished by means of certain objects, such as clothing or hair-combing or walking. Symbols are also means of communication and speech can include non-verbal elements known as paralanguage: tone, rhythm, intonation, accent, emotions and speech style. Written texts can also include non-verbal elements given by style, spatial setting of words or by the use of emoticons.

The way in which we listen to what we are told, the means of looking, the way we move and react, show our interest, our desire to connect with the others and the trust we give them, or, on the contrary, our lack of interest, mistrust or confusion. Likewise, non-verbal communication can bring forward our true thoughts, feelings or intentions [6]. That is why the correct interpretation – as well as the correct transmission – of non-verbal messages is important and identifying the true mental state of the ones we communicate with depends on the correctness of our interpretation of non-verbal messages.

Nevertheless, a second extremely important aspect in relation to non-verbal communication is given by its universality and its applicability in all fields of life. The signals transmitted through non-verbal communication play the following roles [7]: *repetition, substitution, completion, misguidance, regulation and emphasis.*

2.2. Non-verbal Indicators of Emotions

Facial expressions. The human face is extremely expressive, capable of rendering infinite emotions without saying a word. As opposed to other forms of non-verbal communication, facial expressions are universal and moreover, they are born, deeply imprinted in our brains, thus, they do not fall into the category of acquired skills. Happiness, sadness, anger, surprise, fear, disgust and contempt are expressed the same way, irrespective of gender, age, race or culture. Such affirmation were also made by Darwin [8], whose conclusion was

that "*the same physical state is expressed worldwide with a remarkable homogeneity".*

Paul Ekman has studied facial expressions closely and his conclusions are extremely important. He is the one who supported the idea of the facial expressions' and of emotions' universality starting from the premise that all people have the same number of facial muscles [9]. He concluded that, emotions – which cause the tension of different muscles – lead to the same expressions in all parts of the world. In order to decode basic emotions (happiness, surprise, fear, anger, disgust or sadness) Ekman and Friesen implemented a *Facial Action Coding System* in order to identify the so-called action units that can be anatomically distinct and visually distinguishable by interlocutors.

To mime is the expression of feelings, thoughts and emotions. It deals with the movement of facial muscles, with its aspects and mimic game. It serves both for the expression of one's own feelings, as well as of other's feelings in the case of actors. Among all the body's reactions, to mime is the one that reflects feelings directly. Facial muscles consist of 80 large and small muscles, which express a limited number of expressions by means of different combinations. Each side of the face is coordinated by a cerebral hemisphere; the right hemisphere coordinates the left side and vice-versa that is why most people find it easier to smile with the left side of the face than with the right one.

Body language of hands. Manual communication is among the most demonstrative means of expression our body offers. We make use of our hands to show what we think, to make our desires known and to show our way of being. Hands can express what words cannot or refuse to express. Likewise, hands can account for our relationship with the surrounding world, as a gauge of our social skills or an indicator by means of which we shape our external relations. The position of hands and the gestures we make using our hands betray the character and the behaviour of a person. Similar to adults, the children try to dissimulate emotions using the face and the hands and as we go down from the face towards the feet, they are less conscious of these movements which can betray them [10].

Body language of legs. The French scientist Marcel Sandrail said that the mystery of man is not what the man hides but what he shows to the others. Starting from this quote, it is interesting to decipher someone's thoughts and to pay attention especially to facial expressions, paralanguage and gestures, but how many of us are paying attention to the legs of our interlocutors. Preschoolers are often express themselves naturally and spontaneous by moving their legs [11].

A lateral movement of the legs from a sitting position can indicate joy, happiness. In exchange, the repeated front crossing of the legs during the

activity can be understood as impatience or disinterest for the unfolding activity.

Posture. The perception upon people is affected by the way in which they sit or stand and by the way they walk or hold their heads. The way in which we move or stay still transmits a lot of information to the others. Children are very expressive in this regard. In order to become the leader in their group among their group of friends, they will have a firm posture, keep their backs straight and hold their heads up, as well as holding their shoulders backwards, all of these translating self-confidence and determination. At the same time, they can express reservation and even fear through a bent body position, with their shoulders facing forward and with their head tilted downwards. The simplicity and spontaneity of gestures, manifested freely and uncontrolled gives us precious indications of the child's affective state [12].

Gestures. Gestures are the most frequent form of non-verbal communication. People wave their hands, point at things, make gestures when they speak, nod for approval or shake their heads for disapproval, raise the shoulders when they do not know something, raise one shoulder when they have something to hide or move their feet when they are impatient etc. Desmond Morris talks about six gesture categories, i.e.: expressive gestures copied gestures, schematic gestures, symbolic gestures, technical gestures and encoded gestures. Roger Axtell [13] focuses only on three important gesture categories: instinctive gestures, encoded (or technical) gestures and gestures acquired through the culture to which the persons using them belong.

Eye contact. The way in which we look at someone can communicate many things, such as: interest, affection, hostility or attraction. Among the ones that analysed the functions of eye contact are Michael Argyle and Janet Dean [14], who underline the importance of eye contact in different situations.

3. METHODS AND RESULTS

This article is based on a study of the analysis of non-verbal language used by pre-schoolers and then materialized into a didactic experiment.

Scope of study – the analysis of methods by means of which preschoolers should be able to develop and to optimize their emotional and communication skills.

Among the *objectives,* we mention: identifying and analysing preschoolers' non-verbal behaviours; and identifying and analysing preschoolers' emotional language elements.

Hypothesis: pre-schoolers' emotional development can be improved by means of non-verbal communication, aiming at the optimization of relationships among the group members.

The experimental group (EG) and the control group (CG), homogenous from a psycho-social and educational viewpoint, consisted of 20 children aged

between 5 and 6 years old. The criteria based on which the research groups were analysed, were as follows:

- children's age;
- gender;
- the environment (rural/urban) where they grew up;
- the conditions in which they lived;
- their family members.

The experiment unfolded throughout a school year (2011-2012), with focus on the preschoolers' acquaintance with their own emotions and on identifying their colleagues' emotions by decoding non-verbal indicators.

The used *methods and instruments* were the following:

- non-verbal language encoding/decoding tests;
- sociometric test;
- emotional indicators observation chart.

Both the pre-testing and the post-testing assessed the non-verbal communication encoding/decoding and the emotional development degree of the two groups (EG and CG). This article will only indicate the results of the sociometric test.

In the *pre-testing* phase, the research starting point consisted in the sociometric study. Preferences by pairs were observed in both groups, the number of rejections being rather high. Based on the results, we planned for the EG in the experimental group activities that aimed at positively orienting the relationships among the group members.

Nevertheless, by comparing the data obtained for the preference indicators (PI) we may observe that the PIs obtained by the CG have closer values and the differences are not high (the maximum value is 0.84 and the minimum value is -1.42, while for the EG, the maximum value is 1.10, and the minimum value is -1.90) denoting a better homogeneity of relationships in the CG.

During the same pre-testing phase, *three encoding tests* were applied to evaluate the degree in which children are able to encode verbal messages and *three decoding tests* aimed at analysing the extent in which preschoolers are able to decode non-verbal messages (unable, to some extent, to a high extent, to a very high extent, fully capable).

Table 1. Encoding / decoding tests

Test type	**Content**
Encoding test no. 1	Recognizing and rendering some facial and body expressions
Encoding test no. 2	Verbal and non-verbal contacts between the children
Encoding test no. 3	Correctly recognizing and labelling emotions
Decoding test no. 4	Recognizing and rendering some facial and body expressions

Decoding test no. 5	Verbal and non-verbal contact(s) between the children
Decoding test no. 6	Correctly recognizing and labelling emotions

Description of the experiment unfolded with the experimental group:

In order to enhance the positive emotional and behavioural development of preschoolers aged 5 to 7 years old, and to develop their skills understanding non-verbal messages and others' emotions, an *experimental activities module* was applied. The experiment focused on preschoolers' being aware of their own emotions and on identifying their colleagues' emotions by decoding non-verbal indicators.

Number of encounters: 34 out of which the first two targeted the application of the initial evaluation tests, the following 30 encounters (once a week) involved the development of the experimental programme during which the activities were planned within the optional course *"I feel, I create, I express". (Belonging to the annual study theme "With what and how do we express what we feel*?"), followed by the last two encounters aimed at applying the final evaluation tests.

Table 3.14. Structuring encounters by thematic contents

Thematic content	No. of encounters
Knowing myself and the others	4
Recognizing and rendering of facial and body expressions	4
Verbal and non-verbal contact(s) between children	4
Development of emotional skills	5
Development of social skills	5
Development of empathic skills	4
Mini-relaxation techniques through tactile-kinesthetic action	4

Applied techniques: spontaneous emotional expression exercises, games for overcoming inhibitions and emotional blockages, empathy exercises, laughter exercises, helping others and camaraderie games, role-play, sensory and emotional expression techniques and games, fantasy techniques and movement and dance techniques.

Form of accomplishment: activities at the level of several curricula: activities by experiential fields, personal development activities, freely-chosen activities.

Form of organization: frontal activities, activities by small groups, individual activities.

The intervention through the experimental programme consisted of 30 activities done only with the EG, aimed at developing and optimizing their emotional and social skills, at training the preschoolers' skills of decoding and

encoding non-verbal messages and of understanding the others' emotions. We followed the individual progress in relation to the prior stages rather than labelling, ranking or classifying the children. The observation of their behaviour was made at any point of the day, during the activities. The written or oral examinations and the applied test unfolded under normal conditions. The observation was carried out in an on-going basis, throughout the entire period spent by each preschooler in the kindergarten and followed the objectives of the planned contents. The unfolded activities targeted the development of some emotional and social skills, starting from the premise that this would significantly contribute to the development of other skills, which would facilitate the child's accommodation to the environment's requirements. Thus, we observed and analysed the way in which the preschoolers live and express their emotions, their capacity to understand and to recognize emotions and their emotional regulation capacity, and subsequently, we aimed at developing and optimizing such skills.

During the *post-testing phase*, the same tests were applied as during the pre-testing phase. In order to appreciate the child's performance, his developmental rhythm and his progress (or regression), we needed to repeat some assessment situations related to the main objectives of educational intervention. Thus, the sociometric test was repeated first for the EG and the obtained results were compared to or with the initial ones. During this phase, we can say that a homogenization of the EG can be noted, meaning that the subgroups did not remain the same and the children named many other game partners. It was surprising that they did not hurry to name the rejected children, they weighed the motives of their choices very carefully and made more choices then rejections. The 5 marginalized children were not nominated as frequently any more, indicating that the preschoolers acquired certain emotional skills and that they were capable of empathy. The group bonded, but this required a sustained activity and time. Preschoolers are capable of transmitting through their behaviours (that they can show) understanding and support to a person who is struggling emotionally.

Comparing the initial sociomatrix with the one that resulted after the final testing showed that one may note a data unification, meaning that the leaders of the group are nominated relatively "the same number of times", two of the most popular children registering an equal number of elections. This time, the number of the group leaders grew by one, while the ones with the "accepted" status were nominated more, by one. Comparing the initial results with the ones obtained after repeating the sociometric test for the CG it can be said that, even though initially the group was more cohesive as compared to the EG, the evolution of the preschoolers in the CG is not significant at the level of relationships within the group. The nominations made by the children remained relatively the same and their preferences in relation to their play partners did not

vary by much. Once again they nominated relatively the same number of rejections as during the initial phase, while the children that formed the EG did not hurry to name the rejections, they weigh much more carefully their choices, explaining their answers and indicating more choices then rejections.

The children that were initially marginalized within the CG received the same number of nominations in the final phase, this being a sign that preschoolers did not acquire certain emotional skills and that they are not as empathic as the preschoolers that formed the EG – the group that bonded. The initially formed subgroups within the CG failed to "open" towards other members, remaining with the choices they made initially, still preferring the children they knew, former colleagues or neighbours. There were few cases in which they nominated others and, from the comparative analysis of the initial sociomatrix with the one drafted after the final testing, for the EG, we note a data unification in relation to the number of choices which is not the case for the sociomatrices drafted for the CG.

Analysing by comparison the results obtained by the two groups in the final phase, it may be stated that the EG registered PI values significantly improved both in relation to its own evolution in the initial phase, as well as in relation to the CG in the initial and in the final phase, while the CG regressed, their PI values dropping significantly

4. CONCLUSIONS

The results confirmed the general hypothesis as well as the specific hypotheses. It is obvious that the activities the EG group participated in led to the improvement of these values, to significantly improving relationships within the group and to much better attitudes and behaviours. Consequently, the progress registered by children following the experimental intervention demonstrated that preschoolers are capable of developing emotional and behavioural skills at the preschool age. They developed their capacity to understand non-verbal messages and the others' emotions, which helped them, settle their conflicts. Thus, we succeeded in guiding the children into the direction of an open, authentic and spontaneous emotional expression. The improvement contributed to the discovery of the children's empathic skills through the development of spontaneity, by freeing the imagination and by discovering their creative potential. They developed the capacity to identify the cause of an emotion and to understand the consequences of emotions. Their behaviour improved, as they now use both empathic as well as non-verbal communication. They work well organized in teams and they learned how to cooperate with their colleagues.

On the other side, analysing cumulatively the data obtained by means of all the instruments of the research for the CG, we may conclude that the obtained results did not reach the level of the results obtained in the EG's

case. The reason for which the children within the CG continue to behave inappropriately is that they did not learn how to adequately manage certain feelings (anger, aggressiveness, rejection); they did not easily identify alternate emotional reactions and they acquired few emotional regulation strategies. They establish and maintain friendships with greater difficulty than the ones in the EG and they scarcely recognize their own and others' feelings, they poorly identify emotions, they express their emotions by means of non-verbal language with difficulty and their vocabulary is poor when they are asked to find the verbal labels that correspond to certain emotions. Moreover, preschoolers in the CG showed their capacity to identify the consequences of certain behaviours but they could barely associate certain contexts with the manifestation of specific emotions.

For the age level of the studied children, the best results were obtained during the activities which identified the feelings they had, giving examples of such feeling and expressing them in various contexts and by different means, others than by verbal expression. Positive social relationships are formed when children understand the meaning of different behaviours, when they are capable of adapting to different social contexts and when they are involved in group activities. Interaction with their close peers plays a central role in the child's socio-emotional "health", offering the feeling of stability, security, affiliation and thus feeding the child's desire to learn. The relationships established by the child with others involve safety, receptiveness, availability and emotional comfort. Little by little, the children develop cooperation, negotiation skills, the capacity to lead and to be led, to make friendships and to express feelings in a socially-acceptable manner. Decoding or the correct „reading" of emotional messages represents a source of information that guides the way in which we will behave. Children that benefit from repeated exposure to emotional reactions and to discussions of such reactions in their family and later on, in kindergarten, succeed more easily to correctly interpreting the messages sent by others.

Preschoolers' difficulties in recognizing others' emotions creates problems in correctly interpreting messages with emotional content, as well as in transmitting an adequate message in answer to their emotions. Thus, problems in making friendships may occur as well as conflict situations which are characterized by aggressiveness. Negative behaviour may generate conflicts that could be prevented if the interpretation of the other's emotional reaction would have been adequate. By teaching the children to communicate their emotions, (verbally and non-verbally) they can express themselves adequately, which will help them to accept more easily the point of view of others and to negotiate solutions in conflict situations. When working with preschoolers, the adequate transmission of messages is of utmost importance. A hug, a caress, a smile or a joke can be important sources of strength in the educator-child

relationship. The discussions about their favourite activities or about a funny story show the children our interest in them.

As a general conclusion: the acknowledgement of one's own emotions, through the analysis of non-verbal indicators, is essential to acquiring all the others emotional skills, which are a source of social adaptation.

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THE CURRICULUM IN KINDERGARTEN

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ABSTRACT

The first objective of the course was formulated by Montaigne : a head well done is better than a head full well. What does " a head full well " is clear: it is a head in which knowledge is accumulated, crowded and does not have a principle of selection and organization that gives meaning . A head well done means that instead of accumulating knowledge is much more important to have at the same time a general ability to ask and deal with any problems , organizers of principles that allow you to connect the knowledge and give them meaning .

Knowledge is the ability to see something new every day. This is possible in a school that allows you to live experiences , the school as a place of life and suffering in which we learn from the occasions and meetings , in which you can explore and where life filters on all sides.

1. INTRODUCTION

About the idea of the curriculum in kindergarten, there are still differences of opinion, contradictions, and uncertainties: it is possible to speak of curriculum for children in kindergarten, which are fundamental knowledge of the smallest in the school?

How to reconcile the need for creativity, exploration and discovery, acceptance of the unexpected and the children lived, with the knowledge strictly formalized of the ‘disciplines’?

And it's possible to build curricula that take into account the needs of the game, listening, relationship with the need to organize knowledge in a structured path?

In some situations, though of course things are changing, the kindergarten is still experienced as a school- play and pastime.

For many families, professional, executives, kindergarten institution remains and is an institution of little importance and cultural significance, transition area waiting to get to the real school, the school of reading and writing.

Sometimes learning is still confused by asking children to acquire knowledge in a process of imitation of primary school (in particular for the last year of primary school) in a logic of scholastic exercises, compilation cards, to the detriment of relationships and communications that become (as opposed to what is said and written) distracted, hurried, without interest and warmth.

So in these situations, the curriculum is misunderstood by the learning's "formal" and structured, and build routes predetermined, reproducing shapes and patterns, the curriculum of the elementary school, looking for targets, meaning results to be achieved.

A curriculum for kindergarten should be incorporated in a project, taking into account the characteristics and uniqueness of children in front of him, the social environment of reference, the resources available, such as through state and explicit proposal, activities, experiences, educational strategies, aimed at ensuring that all children can strengthen the skills that appear to be essential aspects of development.

In kindergarten the paths do not have to follow a cognitive criterion, borrowed from other types of schools, but take account of the plot between emotional bonds and cognitive development in learning, among the small acts of everyday life and formal knowledge between the already and the unexpected.

The curriculum has to be reconstructed, uncovering a wealth of experience, knowledge, languages with which the children are at school, from their experiences, reception at their entrance to school, through the preparation of itineraries that gradually start towards the formation of thought itself.

2. THE CHILDREN KNOWLEDGE

What are the knowledge and the basic knowledge that children of kindergarten can acquire and how to integrate them?

Children today have the opportunity to access a lot of knowledge, of information, of knowledge, but often disconnected from each other and do not always have the opportunity to reflect, filter, re-interpret the information received, thus integrating them in their world and in their own reality knowledge .

The places of education have increased and each of them offers opportunities, opportunities, incentives, learning models, often contradictory to each other. In this overcrowded world of stress, children appear to us uncertain, disoriented, they risk losing the natural ability to contextualize their knowledge and integrate them into their sets and their multiplicity.

The school with its overly didactic planned and constructed, is likely to train boys and girls for whom the learning and memories are fragmented, shredded, reduced non- narrative backgrounds, but details of incidents or knowledge.

"There is an inadequacy increasingly broad, deep and serious disjoint between our knowledge, split, divided into disciplines on the one hand and reality or problems, more and more polidisciplinari, transversal, multi-dimensional, global, on the other. The intelligence who knows only separate breaks the complexity of the world in disjointed fragments, division problems, atrophies the possibility of understanding "(E. MORIN)

Our education system teaches us, starting from the primary school, to separate the disciplines rather than to acknowledge their solidarity, to isolate objects from their environment, to decouple the problems, rather than to connect and integrate.

The first objective of the course was formulated by MONTAIGNE: a head well done is better than a head full well.

What does "a head full well" is clear: it is a head in which knowledge is accumulated, crowded and does not have a principle of selection and organization that gives meaning.

A head well done means that instead of accumulating knowledge is much more important to have at the same time a general ability to ask and deal with any problems, organizers of principles that allow you to connect the knowledge and give them meaning.

"We have to think about the problem of teaching from the consideration of the effects of increasingly severe compartmentalization of knowledge and inability to articulate to each other, across from the consideration that the ability to integrate and contextualize is a fundamental quality of the human mind." (E.MORIN)

The knowledge should not be separated from each other, but integrated with each other, through routes and motivating projects, built on the basis of affection, from experiences, from tales, from the observations of the children, in a continuous dialogue with the knowledge of adults and teachers.

Knowledge is the ability to see something new every day. This is possible in a school that allows you to live experiences, the school as a place of life and suffering in which we learn from the occasions and meetings, in which you can explore and where life filters on all sides...On the other hand already in many primary schools for several years through work projects: overcoming the logic of linear programming, scanned for each objective, teaching units, with pre-determined paths in progressive sequences, we created a design -type lattice of open situations, attentive to context, committed to programming backgrounds supplements, able to read the great variety and complexity of learning.

The teacher prepares situations, suggests and proposes narrative backgrounds (a fantastic background or social) which help the construction of shared meanings, motivation to learn, research and curiosity.

This approach assigns great importance to the motivation, curiosity, the processes of research and discovery, the organization of the school environment as a facilitator of the learning process on the part of children, in an interdisciplinary course that crosses multiple fields of expertise.

The basic principles of teaching that is necessary to keep in mind when organizing educational activities in kindergarten are given by:

a) THE LIFE OF REPORT
b) LEARNING FOR DISCOVERY
c) THE GAME

a) THE LIFE OF REPORT

Still weighs on kindergarten, reductive interpretation of Piaget's theory, with its emphasis on self-centered dimension of the child's thinking that would be capable of playing, working, talking, just next to the other and not together with others.

However, one must not neglect the most current research on the social construction of knowledge that recognizes a prominent role to the interaction of the child with peers and with adults.

For Vigotsky, what the child will be able to do tomorrow alone, can already do in cooperation today. Most functions that apply to mature, the teacher should stimulate the functions in the process of maturation, operating in the zone of proximal development (or potential) where it is possible for the child to be guided by an adult or a more experienced partner in tasks slightly higher than its current capacity.

The relationship with the adult work (according to research conducted by J.Bruner and other authors) as a social scaffolding of know, cognitive and affective, destined to be dismantled as soon as the child will acquired the skill you want.

So human mental activity is not solitary, nor is without help, the mental life is lived with others, is made to be communicated and developed with the help of cultural codes and traditions.

Communication is the experience mental well founded and most significant of the person. To communicate means to be sharing with others their thoughts - organized, made transparent and transferable - and knowing how to listen and interpret those who send us messages...

The life of the school is continually interwoven by relationships. It is within these relationships that we learn the rules of life are learned behaviours, comparing ways of seeing and understanding reality. Do not learn by yourself, our minds are not isolated; learning is an interactive process in which people learn from each other, the result of a reciprocal exchange.

In kindergarten social interaction in the peer group is an essential dimension for the development and education of children.

The characteristic of learning is given by the opportunity of a collective and cooperative learning that should be placed in a community of discursive and social practices.

Trough interaction with peers, sharing skills, interests and curiosity, kids reinforce the sense of his own identity; learn to recognize emotions, behaviours

and needs of others, to control impulses depending on the reactions of others and to develop strategies appropriate to the relational life with others.

The sharing of interests and curiosity about the environment and the others, favours the transmission of knowledge between children and the development of shared strategies and exploratory learning.

b) LEARNING FOR DISCOVERY

Dewey had already argued in the first article of "My pedagogic creed" the importance of starting from the experiences and social activities of the child to set the methodology on a close connection between action and thought, between life and school.

Direct action, the real experience, the elements of the present difficulties in problem situations of life is "the initial state of that form of experience which is called thinking."

And the life of every day is full of problems, that every person is called to solve, often with strategies approximate and unaware.

From Dewey, through the achievements of active schools, develops a ' general theory of experience' that is enriched by the contributions of Piaget's cognitive (experience stimulates thought to assimilate new data, transforming mindsets already owned) structuralism of Bruner (action to the direct things is the starting point for most forms of symbolic representation).

The child, while achieving an exploratory behaviour (for example, in the game) gets to find out just features, meanings and relationships of the situations and make their own cognitive procedures that are then reapplied almost spontaneously in other situations that possess some similar character .

Only the ability to learn from experience is the foundation of true learning. The learning experience is significant not only because it involves the solution of a problem, but also because it allows you to learn what were the methods that are used to solve it.

The essential feature of learning through personal discovery, be it conceptualization or solution to a problem, is that the content to be learned is not given but is discovered by the child, before he does so precisely and checks its significant place in his cognitive structure The specific and primary task, in other words, you discover something, which path leads to the goal of the maze.

The first phase of this type of learning involves a completely different process from that of the receipt pure and simple. The child must rearrange the information, integrate it with existing cognitive baggage and reorganize or transform this set, so as to give the desired end result or to discover the missing link between the means and the end.

To transform the school into a place of research and discovery, space where you can "look up" and see the world, you must:

- Always ask the children rather than giving answers:

What does it mean? - or - what do you think?

• Leave space to imagine, fantasize, and think about events that occurred inside and outside the school... The responses of adults hamper the ability to think, if you do not answer, was born more thought,

• Allow your child to observe phenomena and events inside and outside:

The weather today? Who is and who is not? That has happened to our plans?

• Build places and opportunities for discovery: dens, shelters, angles, materials laboratories with structured and unstructured, making it possible to look up, look, look ...

• To promote the formulation of hypotheses, solutions, forecasts and their verification, always through the formulation of questions:

What do you think, what will happen?

• Facilitate the transition from exploration to the sense - perceptual symbolic representation of the facts and circumstances: we can draw or represent what we saw, felt, imagined

3) THE GAME

In the historical tradition of pedagogy and theories of the great educators of developmental psychology, the game is a necessary evolutionary stage, oriented to explore the environment, to experiment with the novelty and complexity, to test emotions and feelings through substitute objects and simulated behaviour, to anticipate the future commitment, to face reality with confidence and mastery, to carry out well-defined tasks, aimed and socially shared.

"The game is in this age, a prime resource for learning and relationships."

In fact, it promotes active and creative relationships both on the cognitive level, both in terms of relational, allows the child to transform reality according to his inner needs, to achieve its potential and to prove to himself and to others in a variety of aspects of desires and functions.

In kindergarten all activities should therefore be playful and all the experiences, cognitive and social, should be closely intertwined with gambling activities.

Game function

As ethological and observational studies have shown higher animals and small children, the game has a crucial evolutionary function and in a sense is the most important activity in which children are involved, especially prior to entry into primary school.

The game is constitutive activity, reason and experience background in the process of child development: in the first stage of life - notes Mauro Laeng - every child cross a preparatory period, evolutionary, in which the body tends to completeness, taking behaviours adaptive to external situations and learning schemes operating in unforeseen situations.

The educational function of play is almost at birth: the child immediately responds to environmental stimuli, building itself, in an active and original, developing the mental and physical balance, taking possession of the outside world, assuming the ability to create and decide.

Great pedagogues such as Owen, the Froebel, Dewey, Decroly, Montessori, had sensed in the "seriousness" with which the child plays, the psychological foundation of self-education.

The child engages in the activity play, his whole being, intelligence to the physical component, the affective dimension to relational skills, expressive and communicative.

Immersed in the game globally, the child perceives and moves, feels and reacts, fantastic, imagines, manipulates and builds, thinks and speaks, living the playful dimension with intense emotional reactions.

He senses solutions, try and try again, with the intention coordinates physical movement, organizes the relationship eye -mind- hand, represents and reproduces situations that come up from memory, creates desires. Through imagination and fantastic not only performs real actions, the game allows him to transform into other objects you want: a chair becomes, then, a train, a cloth turns into a doll with which you speak or download symbols.

The situation playful constitutes a protected space in which to experiment with expectations of results, skills, rules, in which face difficulties, risks and frustrations.

In a family and social context that neglects the child, in which the size of the movement rewarding, exploration and discovery is overwhelmed by the compulsion to immobility, even entertained by stereotyped toys and sophisticated deniers of creativity, you can tell that the baby needs, but also anxieties cannot be resolved, so that the childhood game becomes a method of re-appropriation of the human dimension must.

The game takes on value so liberating, therapeutic conflicts, fears, anxieties: mimicking the world of adults, children playing down the real comparison with adults.

But whatever the motivation to play, it is indisputable that it is a way to know, is playing you create premises to discriminate, to associate, to arrive at general ideas of things and behaviours of individuals, because the child is, among other things, an observer of the surrounding reality , transferring and editing as needed.

This activity is thus presented as a powerful tool for development, which makes possible the acceptance of the limits to the needs and desires, the acquisition of the first rules of social and moral values, the expression of positive and negative feeling, adjusting emotions through verbal exchange and the relationship.

The symbolic play

In everyday life, the child has to adapt to the behaviour of adults, who sometimes do not understand and do not always have a way to meet their own needs.

Is therefore necessary to have a space to measure one's own identity: that framework "container" is made from the game.

In play you mimic the adults, take on multiple roles, you will discover what behaviours are more congenial to themselves, they mediate emotions, you acquire self-control, it checks the feasibility of what you have planned, you manage rules and roles especially one experiences the interpersonal dynamics (the game is for the child, in fact, a good opportunity to socialize) .

In pretend play, children imitate the behaviour of adults, the representation offers the possibility to verify the social success of his action; at the same time the child knows he can hide behind a screen in character as reassuring and even out of it, if he is not gratified, since only a game.

The games are presented symbolic since the age of two years and introduce the child into the world of imagination play "as if ", which is typically human and originates from the action.

The game, at this time, should be interpreted as the imaginary realization of desires, the objects in it are considered not only for what they are, but as symbols of other objects do not exist, which allows the evocation of past situations and the imagination of events in which you express the wishes of the child.

This stage of the game requires an activity of thought, full of self-centered and subjective elements, which allows small to satisfy their fantasies through asset replacement which is, for example, an object, a pillow to make the bed, where one usual pattern, such as sleep, it adapts to a new situation.

Later in the age of kindergarten, symbolic play acquires a great importance in the various games of " pretend", relating to situations of family life or the environment, the children not only develop the capacity to symbolize, which is the basis of each path of conceptualization, but, with the mediation of the teacher, even beginning to approach, with a critical sense, structures and problems of the community.

Being the game of make believe transformation "magic" in the world, encompassing activities in which mixes the real with the fantastic, it can become a teaching tool of great importance.

In symbolic games Piaget distinguishes those in which the child is an actor, pretending that is sleeping, eating, fall, those in which he is a director that does sleep, fall, eat others, and those in which the child turns in another person viewing the other self, this thing that prepares the transition from individual to group play.

A next phase is one in which the child accepts some rules of play together, as the alternation in turn and of 'imitate who knows how to play. It comes, therefore, collective game with clear rules and mutual recognition of diverse and complementary roles. In this advanced stage, the child discovers that the control of their behaviour is suitable to the satisfaction of his desire to play.

The game in kindergarten

When he gets to kindergarten in three years, the child is oriented to assert one's self, to acquire certain autonomy.

Initially then play alone, or is interested in what educationalists call parallel play (a game of solitaire phase) characterized by a certain ambivalent conflict: the child feels they want the toy companion, but in reality it aspires to relate himself to his companion.

Subsequently overcoming the egocentric stage, the child opens the game together with peers, gradually taking awareness of the need to respect the rules of the relationship.

The recreational activity develops social consciousness and the affective balance: when everyone talks about his game with each other, they form pairs, which become open groups in which even a "difficult " child can find a place operational and affective.

In the years of primary school the child learns to share the game socially, to plan a plot, to manage roles and rules of a certain complexity, to address and resolve conflicts, to give more of a symbolic meaning to the same object, to represent and integrate emotions, anxieties and fears.

The game as a transversal activity

As we've seen the game is one of the essential dimensions of childhood experience and should be taken, therefore, among the defining elements of the didactic taking into account the developmental needs of children.

The playful activity should be considered as one of the components inside the pedagogical design: in fact, it is a real business “cross " that is interwoven in all aspects of a child's life.

For example, the development of the body can be achieved through individual and group play: games from functional to symbolic and imitative or rules, free games, imitation, outdoor games.

The game is a tool for the development of language, especially in the form of symbolic play and fiction (the game of the house, mom and daughter)

in which children engage in two, three or in a small group. It is also a tool of exploration, improvisation, combining, processing rules, you can play a complete story, edit it...

The manipulation of objects and situations, construction activities, life skills, observation of the environment, of simple phenomena, the cause-effect relationship can be experienced as moments of play and discovery, so reaching real learning outcomes.

The dramatization activity and figurative - expressive, which are intended to lead the child to order fancy and imagination, to use materials and tools, to learn techniques to use, can be made in a playful dimension.

In the game - play the child can express themselves freely and find forms of expression and communication personal and effective.

And it's possible to start the child gradually to problematization, reasoning through games: do think and talk, ask riddles graduated, discuss how to resolve a situation of joint work, to classify, structure sets...

The use of structured and non- structured material, equipment for the directed movement outdoor, game-gardening work, construction of a toy, the design of a labyrinth, games are engaging activities that develop the mental, motor, perceptual -representational and symbolic of the child, and brought him to observe, reflect and express themselves ...

The game therefore, is essentially:

- collecting information on the characteristics of the objects and the "behaviour" of materials;
- knowledge and discovery of things and phenomena that surround the child, their characteristics, their organization;

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STIMULATING LEARNING MOTIVATION OF EARLY EDUCATION AND PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS THROUGH ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

Student's learning motivation is a topic that has been addressed by many experts in the field. Also, efficient methods to increase and stimulate learning motivation among students are still a very actual topic. Through the studies on this subject we have identified some research articles that approach the relationship between assessment in higher education and increased motivation for learning among students. Some researches investigate the relationship between alternative methods of assessment and the way the active involvement of students stimulate both teaching and evaluation, and more, are leading to an increased motivation for learning. Prior to an experimental research on this subject- stimulating Early Education and Primary School student's learning motivation through alternative assessment methods in higher education, we chose to use qualitative meta-analysis method to identify efficient alternative methods of assessment. We focused on the most often methods used in universities that have a positive impact on increasing student motivation for learning. We also reviewed articles that study: new ways to stimulate students 'motivation for learning, the relationship between alternative methods of assessment and students' academic achievement, the relationship between students' learning motivation and the feedback offered in evaluation, the role of formative / continue assessments and final assessments on increasing motivation for learning. The results of the qualitative meta-analysis method shows that students have a positive perceptions on alternative assessment methods, but the most significant impact of alternative assessment methods is the increase in paperwork and demands on their time. We found that a portfolio used like an alternative assessment methods for students can facilitate the development of self-assessment, has an impact on the approach learning, academic achievement, delivers high quality information to students about their learning, encourages motivation learning.

KEYWORDS: alternative assessment methods, stimulating learning motivation, assessment portfolio, constant and continuous feedback, continuous/ formative assessment, students.

1. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Prior to an experimental research on this subject - stimulating early education and primary school students' learning motivation through alternative assessment methods in higher education, we chose to use the qualitative meta-

analysis method to identify efficient alternative methods of assessment. We focused on the methods most often used in universities, methods which had a positive impact on increasing student motivation for learning.

We also reviewed articles that study new ways to stimulate students' motivation for learning, the relationship between alternative methods of assessment and students' academic achievement, the relationship between students' learning motivation and the feedback offered in evaluation, the role of formative/continuous assessments and final assessments on increasing motivation for learning.

The identification of the articles which provide information about our topic were looking for just in the title, abstract and keywords to reduce the huge number of articles about students' learning motivation through alternative assessment methods in higher education.

There were accessed 5 online databases (Science Direct, SpringerLink, ProQuest, Oxford Journals and Cambridge Journals) to identify specialized articles aimed at students' learning motivation through alternative assessment methods in higher education and those who study new ways to stimulate students' motivation for learning.

The articles studied showed that students have a positive perception on alternative assessment methods. We also found that the portfolio used as an alternative assessment method for students can facilitate the development of self-assessment; it has a great impact on the learning approach, on the academic achievement. It also delivers high quality information to students about their learning and raises their learning motivation.We searched texts that were published in the last five years (2009-2013) in English or in French.

2. ELIGIBILITY OF ARTICLES

2.1. The objective of the research

All the studies were selected aiming at the main elements related to motivation for learning and alternative assessment methods that stimulate the learning for students'.

2.2. Sample

We have read all the articles that aimed at student's learning motivation, even adult students'. Age subjects of research and studies reviewed were not important for present research. We have studied both young and adult students' learning motivation to reveal how alternative assessment methods work in higher education and how they can stimulate student s' motivation for learning. We searched for articles related to the topic of stimulating learning motivation thrue alternative assessment methods in higher education.

2.3. Design of analized research

We selected experimental studies and theoretical articles.
The results are presented in the table number 1.

Table 1. Number of articles identified

Database	Students' learning motivation	Alternative assessment methods	Continuous/ formative assessment	Constant and continuous feedback
Science Direct	104	156	130	105
Springerlink	123	73	92	83
ProQuest	56	85	111	16
Oxford Journals	22	17	9	5
Cambridge Journals	35	24	10	8

3. THE RELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' LEARNING MOTIVATION AND ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

3.1. The concept of motivation

The concept of motivation can be explained as a series of "factors that trigger, maintain or stop certain behaviour" [1]. There have been major changes in people due to changes in society. These changes have led to changes in people's behaviour or their development in terms of psychological motivation levels.

Motivation can be defined as “a desire or motive that someone has to behave in a particular way and the encouragement to increase the efforts to do such behaviour” [2]. Motivation is always related to the goal to be achieved. Motivation is the factor that encourages students to make every effort to achieve the greatest success and avoid failure. Motivation is a form of encouragement that makes consistent behaviour clear in order to achieve a goal.

According to observations made by Ticu Constantin [3] "the first motivational component (state of engagement or motivational involvement) is only the first part of the motivation, the second part - the ability to maintain motivation and involvement, to persevere in achieving the goals being equally important". The same author talks about motivational persistence which refers to the ability to be persistent and consistent when adopting a motivational behaviour. We can differentiate the qualitative aspect of motivation from the quantitatively aspect of motivation. The qualitative aspect of motivation refers to the orientation or direction of the "motivational commitment" and the quantitative aspect of motivation refers to "the force or power of motivation of a person" [3]. Motivation is a form of encouragement for the aspiration to improve oneself in attaining a goal or success.

3.2. Students' learning motivation

Motivation is essential in all aspects of education, especially for carrying out the learning process. Motivation is the main factor that plays an important role in determining student achievement and the main factor that could influence students to self-encourage themselves and to aspire to perform learning activities. The learning process could be done with difficulty without motivation, because it requires effort and diligence to ensure that students can achieve their goals. Learning motivation is essential for maintaining students' academic performance in realizing the desired success based on good strategy and diligence in learning [2].

Motivation in learning has to be of the greatest concern for every student. Motivation is what makes students strive hard to pursue their academic excellence. There are also very active the interest for the knowledge, the intellectual satisfaction, the cognitive style, and asserting their opinions. Through the term "motivation for learning" in school we aim at the effect of a student seeking the successful participation in the proposed activities in the educational process. Learning driven by intrinsic motivation is very effective because it gives students very high satisfaction, although it requires more mental effort.

The students' aspiration level refers to the outcomes they would like to achieve. The educational motivation theories are focused on learning goals and performance goals. Having a certain level of aspiration, the student tries to reach the performance goals which he has set. Learning goals will be achieved by the student's expectation level, through the level of results he feels able to obtain or hopes to obtain.

School motivation for learning is influenced by several factors, including the support given by the teacher. Teacher's role is recognized and identified by students as one of the most relevant factors for their school involvement. Therefore, the importance of teachers in fostering students' motivation and engagement in higher education is a topic of great interest in education research. A good relationship between the student and the teacher is a predictor of students' motivation with quite durable results. "The perceived support from the teacher is a strong predictor of academic motivation, self-efficacy expectations, and the intrinsic value assigned by the student to school tasks" [4].

Another important issue is that the motivation for learning is facilitated by the teacher in the way the student is guided in activities aimed at changing behaviours. Teachers' effort to motivate students is successful if the teacher-student relationship is one of collaboration, being able to share the same feelings, goals, expectations. So, motivational interventions which comply with students' goals, emotions and beliefs can produce long-term positive effects.

Learning motivation can be driven by several factors: starting from the student's native curiosity; emphasis on understanding the own processing of information on personal affirmation; emphasis on the formative aspects of the teaching (skills); authentic learning situations in the real world or simulated; promoting scientific spirit in individual and collaborative knowledge; promoting quality assessment in learning, training, progress; appeal to a variety of support materials for information; promoting democratic management in the classroom.

3.3. Alternative methods of assessment

Alternative assessment refers to assessment methods that provide an alternative to the traditional paper-and-pencil tests and allow students to demonstrate their understanding and personal meaning of what they have learnt in class [5]. Alternative assessment methods encourage higher-order creativity and critical thinking, where students have more control of their learning.

We found some rationales to use alternative assessment methods in higher education. Students do not learn in the same way, therefore they cannot be assessed only in a uniform manner. Traditional assessment only examines students' knowledge, but alternative assessment methods can emphasize "real-life" skills such as problem-solving skills and decision making skills to prepare students as a work force in the real world [5]. Alternative assessment allows teachers to monitor the effectiveness of their lessons on student understanding and to modify the mode of instruction whenever necessary.

We also identified some of the alternative assessment methods with a great impact on stimulating student's learning motivation: fieldwork, lab work, posters, presentations, article review, concept mapping, role-playing, projects, portfolios.

The fieldwork or lab work is a type of "authentic assessment where teachers should decide to sample to avoid overwhelming the volume to be checked" [5]. The posters are an efficient way of seeing how students understand complex content and relationships between components. This task is best done in groups because students can learn by perusing each other's posters. The presentation is an activity that encourages students to become better at oral communication. They can be authentic and it can also invite to peer assessment, which is a way of giving teachers supplementary evidence for grading. Article reviews encourage critical, analytical and evaluative thinking. Concept maps ask the students to identify the main points in an argument, view, claim, concept or system; it is an efficient way of "portraying how students understand conceptual relationship" [5]. The role-play makes students take on the part of certain characters in a specific situation. This task can be a good way of identifying students' understanding of different perspectives. The projects are aimed at authentic and complex tasks. Students may have to use several

concepts and skills to complete the task. Portfolios allow students to establish their own claims to achievement, using what they see as the best evidence to hand in.

Because the teacher is an important agent of change in education, if he accepts or has positive perceptions on alternative assessment, he will surely support the assessment and make sure the alternative assessment methods succeeded in reality [5].

In higher education, teachers generally apply traditional assessment and evaluation tools; in the assessment and measurement processes for the lessons, they especially make frequent use of the multiple choice test, open ended, short answer, and gap-filling tests. Teachers generally prefer project and performance assignments among alternative assessment and evaluation tools. Teachers sometimes use portfolios, concept maps, self-evaluation forms, interviews and observation grids. Teachers do not adequately use some of the alternative assessment and evaluation tools (structured grid, word association, group and peer evaluation) [6].

The comparison of traditional and alternative tools reveals that the teachers use both traditional and alternative tools; however, they generally prefer traditional tools.

4. THE ROLE OF CONSTANT AND CONTINUOUS FEEDBACK USED IN ASSESSMENT

Among other motivational driving forces for student's learning we could emphasize teacher's constant and continuous feedback. With the help of this feedback offered in evaluation students can develop self-assessment and academic achievement. They also receive high quality information from their teacher about their learning and they are encouraged towards motivation learning [7].

Teacher's providing a constant and continuous feedback in student's evaluation through verbal and written assessments leads to an increase in quantitatively and qualitatively motivation, to mobilize the student that will have a positive effect on learning effort, on oriented learning attention and on attitudes towards learning.

If the teacher gives an immediate feedback on the assessment or provides constant and continuous feedback then motivation to learn will rise considerably. The fact that the teacher consistently and continuously provides his students information about their level of performance will influence self-perception and motivation for learning. But both learning motivation and self-perception depend on how students interpret that offered feedback, on how they will use it in carrying out subsequent school tasks and how the teacher can give students feedback with a high motivational value.

Students may find that learning experience are positive and useful, contributing not only to better understanding of the subject knowledge, but they also can bring improvement in generic skills such as critical and analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, team work and language and communication skills [8].

5. STIMULATE MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING AND ALTERNATIVE METHODS OF ASSESSMENT

Constructivist evaluation approaches aim at the learning progress of each individual student and it's realized in action, through observation, analysis, own interpretations, projects, portfolios, problem-solving, case studies, experimentation, discussion and cooperation. Assessment strategies emphasize the qualitative aspect, meaning assessing student attitudes over the process by which it came to the results, acquired skills by students during the educational process. Therefore one can use methods of reflection, essays, themed portfolio construction, independent study with multimedia applications. The constructivist manner of evaluation intends "performance assessment in mental processing in understanding the evidence of progress and performance with qualitative assessment criteria for each of the capabilities, competences" [9]. The teacher assesses "views, arguments, interpretations, personal designs, formative progress, stimulation, guidance, differentiation" [9] of student learning activity so that it can provide constructive feedback. Students should be able to ask questions, assumptions, alternatives, to make comparisons, to argue the ideas presented, to practice communication, to critically analyse, to propose, formulate scales of evaluation / self-evaluation.

Alternative assessment methods in higher education can stimulate the active involvement of students both in teaching and in the evaluation. Using alternative methods both in the final assessment and the formative/continuous assessment give the student the opportunity to regulate his learning activity, and therefore motivate him once again in this activity. By being offered constant and continuous feedback in assessments, students are stimulated on the creative potential, innovation, originality, so their level of motivation for learning increases.

Teachers use traditional and alternative tools for assessment, but they generally prefer traditional tools. Teachers have positive perceptions on alternative assessment methods because alternative assessment methods can help them cultivate their students' critical and creative thinking skills [5].

Students have a positive perception on alternative assessment methods, but the most significant impact of alternative assessment methods is the increase in demands on their time. We found that the portfolio used as an alternative assessment methods for students can facilitate the development of

self-assessment, it allows students to establish their own goals in achievement, has an impact on the approach of learning, academic achievement, delivers high quality information to students about their learning, helps them use the information that they consider the best evidence for their performance, encourages motivation for learning.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The results obtained through the qualitative meta-analysis method show that alternative assessment methods are the best methods to enhance students' potential. Alternative assessment also provides information on achievement of particular levels of skills, understanding and knowledge as oppose to achievement of certain marks or scores provided by traditional paper-and-pencil test.

Alternative assessment methods have a positive impact on increasing student motivation for learning thrue positive experience that contributed to better understanding of subject knowledge, improvement in generic skills as critical and analytical thinking, problem-solving skills, team work and language and communication skills.

The results of our research show that students exposed to an assessment with alternative methods have a significantly higher motivation for learning than those who were evaluated through traditional methods. Motivation in learning has to be the greatest concern for every student. Learning motivation is important in the life of undergraduates for furthering their studies at university and for academic excellence.

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A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF SOME RELEVANT CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Contemporaneous society, through its challenges, exercises a powerful pressure on the members. Today, more than ever, the individual is responsible for his evolution, for the adaptation to a rapidly changing environment. Underachievement in school or employment emerges from a lack of self-regulation of behavior in these areas. This article aims to be a comparative analysis of the main relevant models of self-regulated learning. We focus our research on Zimmerman's, Pintrich's and Boekaerts's models of self-regulated learning to highlight the main components of this concept. We used as criteria: the nature of self-regulated learning, the assumptions, the design, the relations between components, the innovative aspect of each model. The paper represents a qualitative research that try to find how we can foster the accountability for the development of self-regulated learning in our students.

KEYWORDS: self-regulation, learning, conceptual models.

1. INTRODUCTION

Contemporaneous society, through her challenges, execits a powerful pressure on the members. Today, more than ever, the individual is responsible for his evolution, for the adaptation to a rapidly changing environment. From the perspective of Schmeichel, J. B. and Baumeister, R. F., "almost every major issue, personal and social, that affect a large number of modern citizens, involves in a certain extent, a failure in self-regulation, situated in the context of broader social influences" [1]. Alcoholism, smoking, substance abuse, obesity and other addictions reflects an inability to control behavior. Emotional problems require, in general, failure to prevent or recover from some unwanted feelings. Underachievement in school or employment emerges from a lack of self-regulation of behavior in these areas.

Theorists, who study the phenomenon of self-regulation, grant it an essential role in the theory of self. Self's studies, from recent decades, reflect the need to understand and explain how it can maintain control over the person and make the necessary adjustments for the human beings to be in harmony with the physical and social environment. Specialists such as Pardel, T.K., consider that there are two types of regulations [2]:

1. Regulating unconscious behavior that occurs in biological programming of the individual, is the effect of maturation and learning (reflexes, deficits, customs);

2. Regulating conscious behavior, coordinated by learning experiences offered by the life contexts and the mechanisms formed / practiced through learning. Adjusting conscious human behavior aroused the interest of researchers and practitioners in the educational field and beyond it, seeking optimal ways of its formation, knowing that the social environment mediates the formation, development, reducing this type of adjustment.

In the recent years, psychologists attempt to place theoretically the phenomenon of self-regulation in the context of evolutionary biology and cultural influences. Baumeister believes that the development of self-regulation will prove to be one of the defining characteristics of human evolution, fitting it in the range of features that give specificity to human beings [3].

We cannot speak of a central component of human personality, the conscious - intentional aspect, without defining the terms with whom we move forward. Thus, the term "person" referring to "concrete human individual" and "personality" means "a theoretical psychological construction built with the intention to explain the psycho-physiological functioning of the organism, and so of the person" [4].

We consider personality as "a set of psychological characteristics with a high degree of stability and generality, organized hierarchically in a unique and unrepeatable configuration, traits that manifest in a particular mode of being and reacting of each person" [5]. This unique pattern of features makes each person to be considered an individual.

Dynamic personality is reflected in “the mental function designed to regulate the relationship between individual and environment, subject- object, namely, consciousness" [6]. The field of consciousness coincides with Ego when Ego conducts its experience to the maximum level. The Ego, appeared by his own power, codified by reason, develops according to the world in which it occurs" [7]. Regarding the sphere of the Ego, experts in the field have different perspectives. Jung believes that the Ego is the subject of consciousness and the Self is the subject to all psychic. If psychoanalysts (eg. Freud, S., Jung, G) define the areas of Ego, Id and Superego, presently the specialty literature does not clearly keep these delimitations.

In the Anglo-Saxon literature, it is usually used the term Self, in French literature we encounter the Concept of Self, and the Romanian literature uses the term Self, as equivalent to the psychoanalyst Id [8]. The term Self-concept is "a personal construct in which the subject faces cognitively with itself and with the dynamics (reasons) and his abilities as he perceives them" [9].

Phenomenological and humanistic personality theories differ from psychoanalytic theory and most majority of the theory of traits through the fact

that emphasizes individual subjective experience, including self-awareness. Self is investigated as an agent that builds energetically the mental life of a person, exploring the distinction between self as an object and self as the author of the action. Recent socio-cognitive models describe the Self concepts as "prototypes" the fundamental concepts are represented as network nodes of specific concepts. Often, in this view, the self is seen as an "organized scheme, as an organized cognitive structure that represents key elements of beliefs about the self" [10].

2. THE CONCEPT OF LEARNING

From a large perspective, learning is defined as "a modifying ability of an individual to perform an activity under the effect of interactions with the environment" [11]. But the concept on which we leaned upon in this section has various meanings, being approached over time, from different perspectives and paradigms. Legendre, R. believes that "learning is constituted by acquisition or by changing processes, dynamic and internal of a person who stimulated the desire and will to develop, builds new representations, coherent and sustainable explaitions of the world based on material perception, based on the environment stimuli, from the interaction between internal and external data and the connection of personal conscience" [12].

Nowadays, learning is considered to be "an active and constructive process that always occurs in a context, so it is situational, multidimensional and systemic" [13]. From the pedagogical perspective, learning represents an activity designed by the teacher aimed to determine behavioral changes in the personality of learners by capitalizing on their ability to acquire knowledge, skills, strategies and attitudes [14]. In the school context, this takes the form of a process conducted in a variable extent, systematic, led by the teacher - the person with epistemic authority.

The learning process analysis depending on the level of complexity that takes place reveals a continuum whose extremes are the elementary level, represented by the response to external factors, conditioning, and complex, by interposing a filter between the stimulus and the individual response, which includes declarative acquirements and procedural knowledge. The acquired knowledge are dynamic, they transform throughout a long and complex process. But the process is not limited to obtaining these products, knowledge, which represent the cognitive aspect. Equally, this process also covers developmental milestones by building skills and abilities as well as the socio-affective, forming social skills, attitudes, norms and values through learning. Them properly assimilated and well structured, fully operational and facilitate skills training.

The approach of the neoconstructivist model on the cognitive development brings into question the child’s executive control structures that

contribute "to the development of general conceptual models that transcend particular tasks, becoming an indicator to the level of organization of conceptual networks at different stages of its development" [15]. This model combines with the cognitive and the constructivist concepts as well as the latest results of neuro –behavioral sciences to emphasize high activism of a child thinking, it, being under the coordination of his own personality.

I. Neacşu believes that the neoconstructivist model has certain advantages for the educational plan. The most important of them raise a new perspective on understanding "the conceptualization of a child, the essentialization of education, being more likely for the original structures to be used by the teacher on a scientific basis, dominated by constructivism, the emergence of knowledge" [16].

The education specialists speak today of enhancing educability, not only as a result of expansion of education, but as an instrumental objective expressly pursued by it. If, psychologically speaking, educability would result in the structure and function of four major skills (learning to learn, learning to share knowledge with others, learning to assess and evaluate oneself and learning to change and improve) increasing their educability means their development and efficiency. In the educational act we operated with two goals: one external - the purpose (forming the student in relation to a specified value, given by the purpose of education) and one internal - transforming the object of education in to the subject of education. The student is the subject of their own training, according to its coefficient of engagement and activism.

T. Husen "reinforces the idea of society necessity based on learning, citing informational explosion which, at that time, did not know the dimensions of today, if we look from a retrospective perspective. Analyzing Husen's contribution, S. Ranson emphasizes the idea of a lifelong education as required processuality, emphasizing the need for formal education but also the necessity for reconsider it, in conjunction with non-formal and informal education, which should form a unit and be in complementary relations" [17]. Husen's predictions have become mostly reality, so in the last 30 years there have been profound changes in educational practice as a result of these goals. Therefore, self-regulated learning has become one of the principal axes of educational practice [18].

According to Zimmerman, B.J., the student is not only actively involved in his own development, but through his level of involvement, becomes leader of the self-training process [19]. The term self-regulated learning became known in the educational field in 1980, because it highlights the students' autonomy and responsibility in learning. Today we witness to an explosion of specialized studies on self-regulated learning, which proves the growing interest of researchers and practitioners of this phenomenon, representing a real direction for research and educational practice.

It is appreciated as a valuable term, because it highlights how "self" is an agent in setting goals and learning strategies and how each ones perception of self and task influence the quality of learning [20]. In the last twenty years, much of the research on self-regulated learning focused on a cognitive perspective [21], on the social origins of self-regulated learning [22],[23], on the learning strategies that promote self-regulated learning [24]. As a general term, self-regulated learning fits research on cognitive strategies, metacognition and motivation in a coherent construct that highlights the interactions between them.

3. SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

The field of self-regulated learning research consists of many camps and perspectives that sometimes focus on different constructs [25],[26]. In recent decades, researchers have developed numerous models that attempt to identify the processes involved in self-regulated learning, to establish relationships between them and school success.

However, these perspectives share common assumptions that provide the foundations for all self-regulated learning models [27]. First, an underlying construct of most self-regulated learning models is that students are proactive in a constructive process of learning. Students are assumed to actively construct their own strategies, goals, and meaning from information available in their own minds as well as from the external world. Second, most self-regulated learning models assume that students can potentially regulate and monitor certain aspects of their cognition, behavior, and motivation. Due to individual differences and developmental constraints, individuals do not constantly monitor and control their cognition, behavior, and adoption of goals in all contexts.

Third, most models assume that all human cognitive behavior is goal-directed and that self-regulated students modify their behavior to achieve a desired goal. Individuals set goals for their learning, monitor their progress towards these goals, and then adapt and regulate their behavior, cognition, and motivation to reach those goals. Fourth, most models assume that self-regulatory behavior is a mediator between (a) an individual's performance, (b) contextual factors, and (c) personal characteristics.

Students acquire many skills by imitating those of others, such as parents, teachers, and peers. From a social cognitive theoretical perspective, self-forms of regulation are derived in part from social forms. Contexts also play a role in the adaptation, such as whether a self-regulatory process is applied before, during, or after a task is performed. Imitative forms of social learning can occur formally, such as when a teacher purposely describes subtle aspects or his/her strategic performance, or forms can occur informally, such as when a student imitates the clothing choices of a popular classmate.

3.1. Zimmerman's model

One of the most popular models, which generated an impressive number of studies, is the one built by Zimmerman, B. J., pioneer in researching the phenomenon of self-regulation. According to Zimmerman, self-regulation refers to "thoughts, feelings and self-generated actions, which are systematically oriented toward goals" [28]. Author exemplifies through investigated studies the existence of a connection between self-regulated learning and academic success. It identifies as indicators of self-regulation, students' personal characteristics, such as: time management dedicated to learning, practice, mastery of learning methods, monitoring the progress and attaining a sense of self-efficacy.

This model was designed to describe the nature of self-regulated learning in terms of three sequential phases and three levels: self-regulated learning phases (e.g. forethought), groups of processes and beliefs (e.g., task analysis and self-motivational beliefs) and specific processes and beliefs (e.g., goal setting and self-efficacy) (Figure 1. Zimmerman's perspective of the self-regulation model, 1998).

To reinforce the value of learning self-regulation, Zimmerman brings for argument the studies that certify that one of the causes of academic underachievement is the inability of students to effectively control behavior. The author makes use of the research findings of Borkowski and Thorpe on a large number of studies on the subject, indicating that a substantial number of studies show that the unachieved students are more impulsive, have unclear or poorly defined goals, fail to properly self-evaluate, are too self-critical and less efficient in their activity and have a tendency to give up more easily than the comparison group, those in academic achievement situations. Self-regulating effects of these limitations are considerable, generating a high degree of anxiety for individuals in question, a low self-esteem, and an accentuated need for approval and rather become influenced by extrinsic factors.

Zimmerman creates a model that conceptualizes self-regulation in educational contexts as being carried out on four dimensions or areas in which students self-regulate their own activities, namely:

- Reasons for learning and achieving performance;
- The methods used;
- Results of performance or target behavior that is aimed to be achieved;
- Use of external resources, from the environment.

Zimmerman states that, to be self-regulated, it is not necessary for the student to exercise control over all dimensions, considering that a complete control over all dimensions is rather rare in the educational context. The author develops a model (Figure no. 1, Zimmerman's model of self-regulation from the perspective of 1998) expressing his view on the phenomenon of self-regulation, assimilating it continuous series of cycles of feed - back consisting of three

phases: planning, control and reflection. Zimmerman states that, for being self-regulated, it is not necessary for the student to exercise control over all dimensions, considering that a complete control over all dimensions is rather rare in the educational context. The author develops a model (Figure no. 1, Zimmerman's perspective for the of self-regulation model, 1998) expressing his view on the phenomenon of self-regulation, assimilating it to a continuous series of cycles of feed - back consisting of three phases: planning, control and reflection.

The most important element of any approach to self-awareness learning is the existence and existence of a well-defined purpose. Thereby, the first part of the planning stage on which stops Zimmerman, is establishing the goal. The author believes that a moment of setting expectations on learning outcomes, aims towards answering the question "Why do I want to do this?"

The second step of this phase is called by the author "strategic planning", representing the sequence in which the person builds and selects strategies and learning methods, of which application makes possible the achievement of the intended purpose. These two sequences from the self-regulating process of behavior in learning depend strongly on "personal beliefs" regarding personal interpretation of reality and the power of self-image (the value given to the learning process, the orientation of the goals, self-efficacy). We wish to emphasize that this influences the quality and level of engagement in an activity, with significant effects on the final outcome of learning.

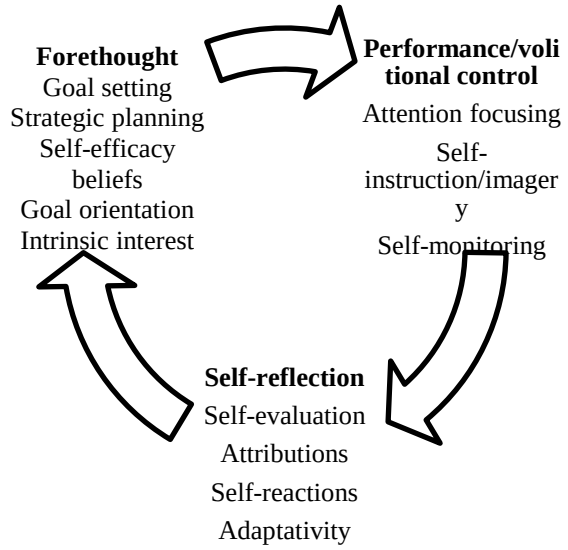

Figure 1. Zimmerman's perspective of the self-regulation model, 1998

In the second stage of self-regulation model proposed by Zimmerman, "Performance/ volitional control", are found those will and motivational

processes, which focuses the efforts of the trainee on the task ahead and it "optimizes performance". By focusing attention, student stands out from the distractors and also prioritizes competing goals, eliminating or minimizing unimportant tasks, focusing on the important and/or urgent objectives needed to reach his goals.

An important role in this stage has metacognition, operationalized by Zimmerman through "self-instruction", including training techniques of forming conceptual maps, mental images, verbalizing for himself the steps necessary to solve the problems, all aiming to consciously realize the process of learning. Metacognition, at this stage, is present in the self-monitoring process, the student self-evaluating their progress, assigning internal or external causes to the obtained result.

The manner in which are made the attributions, their direction towards inside or outside the person himself strongly influence responses of self, in a positive or negative manner. Zimmerman highlights studies which certifies that "the attribution of success or failure to strategies used are directly related to positive self-reactions, and putting result on behalf of skills relate to a negative reaction to itself" [29]. The attributive strategies used may be more or less adaptive. An optimum adjustment is achieved when a person discovers those strategies of attribution that work best for themselves. A more realistic evaluation enables the student for an effective adjustment. Launching into an understanding effort of the matters and the major psychological dimensions of learning, such as motivation and learning methods, the author creates a conceptual framework for the analysis of these aspects that can be seen in the Table 1. Conceptual analysis of self-regulation academic dimensions [30]. A second purpose covered by the author in constructing this framework of analysis is represented by the interest in defining the necessary conditions to achieve the tasks, to observe how each component self-regulates. Also, the researcher is interested in discovering interrelationships between components and the integration of the findings obtained from the analysis of different theoretical perspectives.

Table 1. Conceptual analysis of self-regulation academic dimensions (Schunk, D.H., Zimmerman, B.J., 2009, p. 25)

Scientific questions	**Psychological dimensions**	**Task requirements**	**Self-regulating characteristics**	**Self-regulating processes**
Why?	Reasons	Choosing participation	Intrinsically motivated or self-motivated	Self-setted goals, self-efficacy, values, attributions. and so on
How?	Methods	Choice of method	Scheduled or automated	Strategies used, relaxation.
What?	Performance outcomes	Choosing performance results	Awareness performance results	Performance monitoring, self-judgment, control actions, will.
Where?	Environment (social)	Social control and physical arrangement	Social sensitivity / environmental and resource fullness	Environmental structuring, searching assistance.

Zimmerman and Schunk consider that "self-regulation may be acquired in stages. Self –regulatory processes are not acquired overnight but rather become refined through repeated instruction and practice" [31]. The student should be initiated in becoming a self-regulated learner. The teacher has an important role in stimulating the students in this direction.

3.2. Pintrich's model

Another reference model is that of Pintrich, P.R., considered by some authors to be one of the most complete models [32]. He registers his model in a socio-cognitive perspective, classifying and analyzing important processes as self-regulated learning. In Pintrich's model, the processes of regulation are organized in four stages / phases: planning, self-monitoring, control, evaluation. In these four stages, activities are divided into four areas: cognitive, motivational / affective, behavioral and contextual.

As shown in Table 2. Pintrich's self-regulated learning model (2004), self-regulating processes trigger in the *planning phase*, where the main tasks are: to establish desired goals or objectives that are next to be achieved in the realization of the task, activating prior knowledge about the matter and metacognitive knowledge (acknowledgment of the difficulties involved in different tasks, identifying prior knowledge and skills necessary to solve them,

knowledge about resources and strategies that can be helpful); activation of motivational beliefs (self-efficiency, purposes, value of task, personal interests) and emotions, time and effort in planning that will be used for that task (the behavioral area) and the activation of perceptions regarding school context (class) and task.

In the *monitoring phase*, there are included activities that mediate the increased state of awareness (level) of cognition, motivation, emotion, use of time and effort, such as the conditions and context of task. There are included self-observational understanding activities that occur when students are aware that they did not understand a perceived aspect, when they are aware that they are reading too fast for the type of text involved or for the purpose that was set (e.g. understanding the main ideas).

At this phase there are found processes which students activate to be aware of the motivational pattern (or that is that they deemed competent, or that they value themselves positively). They become aware of their own behavior (eg, “I must try harder”, "I should seek help") as well as of the contextual characteristics of the task and classroom (the rules that exist in the classroom, how performance will be measured, the system of rewards and punishments, teacher behavior).

Control activities perform a selection and use of thought control strategies (use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies), motivational strategies and those to control emotions, as well as those related to regulation of time and effort and control of the various school tasks and not finally, control of environment and class structure.

Table 2. Pintrich's self-regulated learning model (2004)

Stage / phase	The regulation areas			
	Cognitive	**Motivational**	**Behavioral**	**Contextual**
Planning / Enabling	* Setting goals *Activating prior knowledge *Enabling metacognition	* The adoption of orientation purposes * Judgment on the effectiveness * Perception of task difficulty * Enable task value * Enable interests	* Planning effort and time * Planning self-observation behavior	* Task perception * Context perception
Monitoring	*Metacognitive awareness *Monitoring	* Awareness and monitoring of motivation and emotion / affective	* Awareness and monitoring effort, time	* Monitoring, changing task and

	cognitions		use, need of help *Self-observation behavior	contextual conditions
Control	*Selecting and adapting cognitive strategies for learning, thinking	* Selection and adaptation strategies for managing motivation and emotions / affects	* Increasing/ decreasing the effort * Perseverance/ Renouncement * Searching aid behavior	* Changing or renegotiation of task * Changing or maintaining context
Reaction and reflection	* Cognitive judgment * Attribution	* Emotional Reaction * Attributions	* Choice of behavior	* Task evaluation * Context evaluation

Evaluation phase (reflection) includes judgments and assessments that the student makes on their own task execution, compared with predetermined criteria (of his teacher or his own), makes causal attributions of success/failure related, experiences emotional reactions due to result, chooses the behavior that he will use in the future, as well as the overall assessment regarding of task context.

In this model, self-regulated learning is seen as a mediator between personal and contextual characteristics, on one hand and the level of student performance, on the other hand [33]. We consider Pintrich's model as a comprehensive one, providing a theoretical-methodological reference for analysis and explanation of cognitive, motivational / affective, behavioral and contextual process which mediate self-regulated learning.

The innovative aspect of this model is represented by the inclusion of contextual factors as an area of self-regulation. Noticed that, in this model, students can intervene to change/modify context, these proactive aspects are points of interest in the self-regulation of learning, encouraging student autonomy and responsibility towards their training.

Pintrich's model draws attention on some key aspects, less discussed by other authors, in regulation of learning process as learning task value (willingness and desire to learn some specific content) learning context and emotion control. Regulating the learning context refers to environmental structuring to be suitable for learning (reducing the noise, adjusting the light,

the temperature, etc.). The emotion control through relaxation exercises, self-encouragement and seeking social support has the role to maintain an optimal level, limiting the influence of negative emotion.

3.3. Self-regulated learning model proposed by Boekaerts

Boekaerts (1999) proposes a concentric model of self-regulated learning, based on the following assumptions:

A. Self-regulated learning is a complex construct, born at the intersection of several research areas, each with its own history and conceptual devices;

B. Researches that contributed to the conceptualization of self-regulated learning were those that investigated learning styles, metacognition and regulation styles, along with theories and research on self-concept;

C. Self-regulated learning refers to a set of cognitive and affective-motivational processes, interrelated that operate simultaneously on different components of the information processing system.

The concentric model of the author, presented below in Figure 2. The Self-regulated learning model of Boekaerts, 1999, proposes a three-stage vision of the concept discussed [34]. The model is interpreted taking into account the concepts used from the center of the image to its extremity.

A first phase is represented, in the center of model, by the awareness of choosing between alternative processing models. The author argues that the perception of choice is an important aspect in self-regulated learning. It illustrates how individual learning style adapts to suit a specific task or a solving problem. Boekaerts emphasizes the crucial role of student awareness in the existence of alternative routes of action to achieve the objective. These involve the use of different cognitive strategies and the use of various information processing models to program the behavior for effective learning. Among the cognitive strategies used in this context we mention a few, without claiming to be exhaustive: selective attention, understanding informations, updating knowledge, elaboration, structuring, generating questions, implementing rules, reorganization, automation of abilities. Also, adjusting processing models imply mental representation of purpose and mental development of the goals pursued.

The second key aspect of Boekaerts explanation for the functioning of self-regulated learning is the student's ability to direct their own learning. The author argues the existence of this level by entering into service of metacognitive strategies while learning. The researcher defines metacognition as referring to two directions. The first regards the level of awareness of the learner, the knowledge base in which information is stored, awareness of procedural knowledge about how, where, when various cognitive strategies can be used. Monitoring progress allows changing behavior patterns during the activity.

The second relates to access to direct learning. The author insists on the different vision that she has on metacognition, its role in ontogenesis and the internal and external regulation of child behavior. She argues that treating learning and regulation styles as traits or provisions we move away from the essence of self-regulated learning, namely: perception of choice, accessibility and adaptability. Boekaerts believes that the choice of the learning and regulation styles is strongly influenced by personal or cultural characteristics valued, more than the specific adaptability that it expresses. Beliefs about strategies, personal skills, and evaluation and ranking tasks based on the value system come into operation during the course of learning.

The third level, at the extremity of the image, highlights three key aspects: emotional involvement of the student, the allocation of effort and resources and commitment to goals chosen on their own will. Motivational strategies that influence the activity are: creating intention to learn, activation of mechanisms that act on stressors that can block learning, managing efforts made and identifying social factors that can support the efficient running of the learning activity.

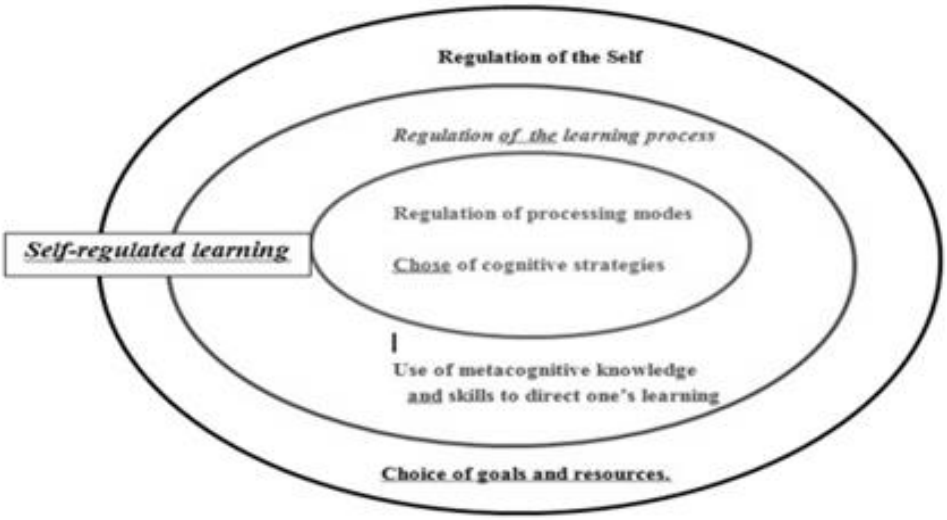

Figure 2. The Self-regulated learning model of Boekaerts, 1999

All these aspects reflect the student's ability to define activities consistent with his needs, expectations and desires. Boekaerts believes that the goals that students perceive as important are strongly energizing for behavior that can be seen as indicators of how the individual adjusts its Self. The author

draws attention to the fact that students pursue multiple goals simultaneously. The ability to decide weighs more in the efficiency of elections.

Boekaerts introduces in the concept of self-regulated learning extension a high caliber component namely volitional strategies well (re)defined. They manifest as efficient work habits. The author brings new explanations, arguing that those who have studied the phenomenon of self-regulation discussed how to form and maintain learning, not about how it works when people are not fully engaged in learning, not on the effort necessary for adjustment. Thus the dual process model of self-regulated learning describes how the learning goals interact with those related to the wellbeing [35]. In this model, the components discussed are co-dependent and interact with each other to achieve the learning goals.

4. DISCUSSION ON MODELS OF SELF-REGULATED LEARNING

The phenomenon of self-regulation was and still is studied in various branches of psychology (developmental, personality, clinical, social, consumer psychology), as well as in other fields such as biology, medicine, anthropology, in recent decades, the research focusing on an interdisciplinary perspective. In an attempt to discover the origin of self-control, some specialists provide as possible explanation the need to survive through mutual exchanges, altruism, cooperation, economic benefits. Therefore, the ultimate goal of self-control and executive functioning is a social one, position to which we subscribe.

This study expresses the concern for the quality and effectiveness of learning and re-highlights the concept of learning in the context of current features of Romanian school population. In the background, the discovery of the actual characteristics of the "new" learning framework can become support for teachers in assisting and advising students in the art of "learning to learn".

Self-regulation is not a measure of fluid intelligence, which is unchangeable after a certain period in life and neither personal characteristic genetically determined or formed in early period. Students learn self-regulation through experience and self-reflection [36], therefore it is ability. Professors can teach in ways that help students to become self-regulated learners. Whereby self-regulation is not a personality trait, students can control their behavior and emotions to improve learning and performance [37].

Besides goal setting, in self-regulated learning some key processes are highly important as self-efficacy, achievement values and self-schemas. This is why the authors consider that self-regulated learners “set goals and control their thoughts and behaviors to accomplish them” [38]. Accordingly, Sitzmann, T., & Ely, K. (2011) showed in their self-regulation meta-analysis that moderated to strong predictors of successful self-regulated learners are goal setting and self-efficacy and those weak to moderate predictors are attributions, effort,

motivation, environmental structuring, time management, metacognitive strategies [39].

All analyzed models (Zimmerman's, Pintrich's and Boekaerts's models of self-regulated learning) have adopted Bandura's social cognitive theory as the basis for their formulations. Zimmerman (1998) proposed three sequential phases (i.e., before, during, and after performance) whereas Pintrich (2004) divided the "during" phase into two sequential phases, monitoring followed by control, rather than treating them as two interacting processes as one performs. There is evidence in the goal setting literature that self-monitoring of controlling processes is more effective in enhancing learning than self-monitoring task outcomes. Since monitoring and control processes can co-occur during performance, do they warrant a separate phase designation?

Questions that we can ask ourselves as teachers are: How can we foster the accountability for their own development? What is the optimal level of stimulation, what self-regulated learning strategies stimulus are/can be used for children with learning difficulties?

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SELF-KNOWLEDGE, PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A UNIT AND IN LOGICAL CONTINUITY

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ABSTRACT

While browsing through recent papers and studies I noticed an increase in the number of articles emphasizing the convergence of personal and professional development. The present paper is focused on a specific facet of this issue, the above mentioned relationship for education specialists. Personal and professional development are two complex and interconnected processes that support and augment each other and that merge in a dynamic, fluid way throughout the career path, into a third process—the professional individuation.

On a different level, one does not need psychology studies to see that many children enter youth already perturbed, unhappy, with irrational fears and unresolved problems with themselves. Later in life, as adults, they grow into hostile, defensive victims, much of these issues stemming from conflicts with their deep inner self, conflicts that emerged in childhood. As such, it is not bold or hazardous to state that self-understanding as a product of self-knowledge should be one of the focus points of the education programs children are subjected to, from kindergarten on.

The place of self-knowledge in psychological life is much too overlooked in manuals and treaties. Self-knowledge means, on the one hand, being aware of, expressing and accepting one's thoughts, feelings, attitudes and values and, on the other hand, accessing the inner freedom of deciding what kind of person one wants to become. The present paper supports that, should we be able to nurture the feeling of personal value, self-competency and social competency in our children, the professional competencies will have a much more solid foundation to develop on.

KEYWORDS: *personal development, professional development, professional individuation*

1. PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

The development of the human personality is a continuous, dialectical process starting with self-knowledge, open towards efficient relationships with the world at large. In J. Nuttin's vision, personality is a "*bipolar structure: SELF – WORLD*", an ensemble structured around inter-relational potentials with oneself and the world (Zlate, 2000, p. 304). The typical scheme of these potentials remains relatively identical to itself, facilitating self-knowledge. The content, in exchange, is really malleable and is at the base of personality's

profound changes, which is a good argument, this time for personal development. From this point of view, self-knowledge would mean reaching a superior level of awareness (reflexive awareness of the personal significance of the inner and outer world). Personal development would mean the ability to actively build up that significance, in agreement with the deep inner Self, the self-education towards optimal functioning and self-actualization. In education, this translates into acknowledging the human being as an active, self-affirming entity, with vast latent potential which must be materialized. Of course, that should happen not only in the propaganda but also in the down-to-earth realms of the finalities, curricula, philosophy and methodology used in education. As for the practice in education, there seem to be an excessive preoccupation, if not an exclusive idea, about teaching a multitude of information more or less usable in everyday life. The human behavior, the human motives and the inner life are mostly ignored. Surprisingly, research shows that children are interested in finding more about themselves and the others even if such interest is not cultivated. The need to understand oneself, to accept oneself and be understood by others is there. The immediate conclusion is that consistent, coherent educational programs are needed to fulfill the psychological needs of children and teenagers.

On the other hand, one needs not be a psychologist to see that many children enter the teenage period disturbed, unhappy, with irrational fears and unresolved issues with themselves. Later, as adults, they suffer through their own hostility, defensiveness, self-victimization, mainly from conflicts with their profound self, conflicts from childhood. Seeing all this, it sounds less and less risky to say that self-understanding, as a product of self-knowledge, should be part of the educational program from kindergarten onward (Jersild, apud Hamachek, 1965, p. 530).

Coming back to the essence of the human being, one's unique and individual self, as well the attempt to decipher it, remind of the greeting on the entrance of the Delphi temple, holy "center of the world" at one time: *Know thyself!* The greeting would later be taken by "*the wisest of men*", Socrates, who would turn it into a behavior model and educational method. That method would grow to become the inspiration for a whole era of education and pedagogy. The Latin word "*educare*" means "to distill" (Wenger, 2001, p.168). The ancient people thought wisdom comes from inside, and the educator's task is to distill the student's perceptions and subtle visions of the world. The technique used is investigative, making the student self-examine, defend and describe perceptions and ideas held. Modern pedagogy acknowledges that this procedure has strong, long-lasting impact on the students, but failed so far to come up with concrete ways to implement it in a 25 – 30 students classroom.

We appreciate that the moment we gave up the Socratic Method, his philosophy and funding principles, we stopped educating and started teaching. The classic-by-now teaching methods that replaced Socrates' fail to reveal the

"*natural wisdom inherent*" of every child, because their focus is the teacher – magister – and the subjects to be taught. The consequences might not have been immediately visible, but today, with the children sincerely and fully hating school and departing it post-haste for lack of belonging or use, the things come to light. School no longer fulfills a basic need – self-expression. It should reconsider its own scopes and methods and maybe it should one again greet children with the old "Know thyself!".

Thus, starting with Socrates, self-knowledge tends to be a science about man, but also a didactic of personality, a paidea (W. Jaeger, apud. Enăchescu, 1997, p.18). For Plato, self-knowledge is an act of reflection, of self-reflecting itself. Answering the question "*Who am I*?" means exploring one's own identity, discovering one's personal "Me". Socrates shows that interrogation appears as a privilege reserved to mankind only, even a debt of the human being. Since self-knowledge is about the self that acts as personal identification and characterization, it follows with necessity that the object of self-knowledge is the Self. Zapan's studies, the method of objective appreciation (1937), proved the educability of self-knowledge and objective self-appreciation. Self-knowledge condenses thus in three dimensions: "*self-perception / self-concept; self-image and self-assessment / self-esteem and – linked to it – self-efficiency*". (Șchiopu, 1997, p. 641).

The place of self-knowledge in the psychological life is a subject way too overlooked in the psychology treaties and manuals. It is stated that psychological life is not an inborn characteristic, but a potential that actualizes in different ways in different environments. Less stated is the fact that among the first products and manifestations is the self-image and the world-attributed self-image. And the self-image is the result of self-knowledge, of the insight that allows a distinction to be made between self and non-self or others' selves, it is a mitigating factor of external and internal forces.

Self-knowledge, for short, means: getting awareness, expressing, accepting one's thoughts, feelings, attitudes, values on the one hand and on the other hand conquering the freedom to decide the type of human being one wants to be. It also means taking responsibility for what one is and for materializing the potential for personal development. All in all, self-knowledge and self-development make up an unit in logical continuity. The efficiency of self-knowledge receives substance in the process of development, in making the fund of potentials come true, in the decision of improving the life and work style, in improving relationships and, last but not least by any means, in de-centering from oneself and opening to others. Realistic self-definition and objective self-assessment are the foundation of personal psychological balance, of the psychological homeostasis and self-regulation in self-development.

P. H. Winne states that self-regulation implies, beyond meta-cognitive knowledge and habits, also personal efficiency and motivational processes

(apud. Zlate, 2001, p. 135). Starting with Bandura's studies (1986) and his own research, D. H. Schunk describes self-regulation as involving self-observation and self-reactance. The first means voluntarily focused attention on one's behavior, on its determinants and effects. Self-involvement includes comparing the actual level of performance with a single goal, to assess progress. Self-reactance means assessing one's own performance as acceptable" or unsatisfactory". Per the quoted author, all these are involved in the perception of one's own efficiency. They are effective self-management skills of the development process. For the teacher, this means locating the emergence surface of the scholar success with the ZPD, allowing for self-actualization and self-improvement.

Self-knowledge has many uses: in learning, in self-education but also in social relationships, friendships, work, even if it is a subjective process, oblivious even to the subject. Once brought to light, it allows for restructurings and conceptualizations, thus having more profound significance for the human being. The changes come from living the experience of self-knowledge, through which the implicit meaning of events come into conscience, are felt strongly and modified accordingly, many times without the subject knowing or wanting that. Self-knowledge can turn to behavioral patterns, expressing itself in the attitude of self-control and self-direction. Supported adequately by the self-realization motivation, it turns to instrument of orientation and action in life, foundation of self-modeling.

Personal development as a conscientious goal supposes a reflective conscience of what one is, wants to be and can be. It supposes the creative visualization of "*future self*", premeditating behavior and adequate self-programming and self-leading. This is possible because reflective conscience expands from present to future potential. The light of conscience supports the shift from the plan of action to the verbal-logic plan, allowing for the verbalization of ideas, projects, feelings and makes them available in the latter plan. The formation of self-conscience ends at about 14 or 15 years of age, specialists contend. In conclusion, the development of the personality means self-knowledge, the feeling of self-efficiency, intrinsic motivation for results and aspirations in line with the skills of the Self. "*We therefore have to explore incessantly, and at the end of the exploration we will reach the point of start and will know that place for the first time*" (T.S. Elliot, apud. Covey, 1998, p.32).

2. CONVERGENCE OF PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In the latest papers I remarked an increase in the number of those stressing the convergence of personal and professional development. The present paper focuses on a certain field of this issue, the relationship between professional and personal development in the psychology professionals. Elton-

Wilson (1994, p.72) states that the personal development of the practicing psychologist is focused on what he calls action needs": techniques and competencies, theories and explicative models, research skills, qualifications and trainings. On the other hand, personal development is focused on "being needs", such as authenticity, interpersonal engagement, intimacy, self-assessment.

Wilkins (1997) gives a simple and inclusive definition of the bond between the two, with reference to a counselor: while professional development is about acquiring "competencies and knowledge", personal development includes all the rest of being a practicing person". McLeod (1996, p.47) proposes a two-part taxonomy of a counselor's competencies: technical and generic. The former is about specific competencies, the latter is about "personal qualities and attributes". And the list of such authors can go on. What is clear in all these conceptual distinctions is that the two associated concepts and processes are not mutually exclusive, but rather interdependent. Sporadically, the literature of the last years reveals that the quality of the relationship with the client is dependent upon the relationship between the two types of development and that their cumulative effects reflect upon the efficiency of the counseling or therapy process (Bayne et al., 1994; Horton & Varma, 1997; Sharrock, 2000, apud Donati, p. 476).

In a 1996 research by Skovholt and Ronnestad 100 American counselors and therapists were interviewed, from beginners to persons with 20+ years of experience. The researchers appreciate that, based on extensive interviewing, they identified evidence for a fundamental development process they called "professional individuation"(apud. Donati, p.477). The concept is proposed in order to explain the complex interdependence between professional and personal development along the whole career. That relationship can be illustrated as a "development spectrum".

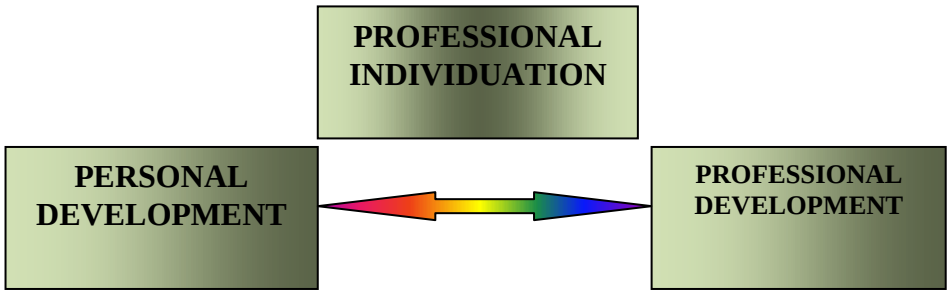

Fig. 1. Spectrum of elements involved in a psychologist's development Adapted after P. Wilkins (1997, p.5)

Researchers suggest that the way these two processes are interconnected and coherently integrated in a scope depends on the level the specialist's career is at. For example, a person at the beginning, the processes are so linked as to be virtually undistinguishable from each other. At the beginning of the career, the interventions are based mainly on the psychologist's common sense and life experience and less on theories and competencies. In this period it is difficult to see the impact of "Self as referential" in the relationship with the client. As one accumulates experience and engages in self-reflective activities, for example personal therapy, one becomes more and more aware of the impact of one's own personality and unresolved issues on the client. Now, the interface between personal and professional becomes more obvious and, according to Skovholt and Ronnestad, many such specialists experience mistrust in what they do. But by accumulating experience and continuous formation they come up to a fluid and harmonious synthesis of "personal and professional Selves", reflecting in a more personalized, flexible and creative practice. That explains that, in the later stages of the career, this distinction becomes less clear, the seasoned professional integrating the two intuitively and channeling them towards well-formed goals of the therapy or counseling processes.

In the process of professional individuation we can speak of a roadmap from unconscious incompetence to conscious incompetence to conscious competence and finally to unconscious competence. The last item is, in our opinion, the expression of professional mastery, where science and art, vocation and experience merge to the benefit of both the specialist and the client. As a consequence, personal and professional development are two complex, interconnected processes that augment each other and, along a whole career, fluidly merge into a third one called professional individuation.

What we certainly know is that a teacher communicates not only by what they say or do, but also by what they are. The quality of the personal and professional identity, thus, the consistency and balance leave a print on the children. More, a child's self-image depends greatly on the way the child thinks us, specialists, really feel about him. And as children need assistance in forming an encouraging image of self and life, it is necessary for us, in the first place, to have such an image. Should we be able to grow the feeling of personal worth in children, of self-competency, the accumulation of professional competencies will have a solid foundation. For this to happen, the activities facilitating self-expression, understanding, self-acceptance and development of life skills must find their place in our meeting with children, starting at their first years.

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INFORMAL LEARNING – AN OPPORTUNITY IN TRAINING EDUCATORS

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ABSTRACT:

It is known that the most effective learning is informal and accidental. Coaching provides an ideal opportunity to learn in school, in a non-conventional, in that time when the need to develop a new skill or knowledge becomes necessary. Compared to academic activities coaching is non-aggressive, because it is focused on behavior rather than on results. Coach leads the process so that students live experience to develop valuable skills for themselves, rather than to do something that was imposed by the curriculum.

In this paper we bring to the attention of teachers and students this form of active learning, coaching, for the purposes of acquisition of own experiences in competition with itself in the involvement in getting performance. The coach / coordinator "helps skills training" through a dynamic interaction with the client / student. He relies on the natural ability of self-actualization / customers personal development. The way the coach is mentoring involves exploring an opportunity or a problem with the learner, then he becomes able to develop new knowledge and skills through individual work on opportunities or problems.

Coaching is accompanying the client into finding his own solutions to the difficulties they have. Benefits capitalize that informal learning should come from at least two directions: on the one hand, lead to improved performance and personal development of future specialists in education, on the other hand, would be an indirect and long-term investment in children that these specialists will educate.

KEYWORDS*:* informal learning, personal development, performance improvement

1. COACHING AS A METHOD OF INFORMAL LEARNING IN SCHOOL

A new trend makes its presence felt today more than ever, awareness and personal development. "The new type of consciousness necessary to solve personal, professional, international and organizational problems is, I believe, self-awareness or self-knowledge, which is indirectly related to self-respect." (W. Schultz, apud. A. Hardingham, 2007, p 166). We consider that, in this context, an important role has the specialist in education on all training levels, role to support the development of people's capacity, to help them progress as you train for performance and real competition, competition with itself. Human development today is more and more like a marathon. This marathon requires

intensive training, and to sustained performance coach able to assess you and bring to light your resources.

The concept of coaching was born and made a career in sports. The mission of the coach is to optimally capitalize the potential of the athlete and to prepare him for competitions, so the athlete to give evidence of his skills and his mastery. But only in sports does a strong competition and the need for performance exists? But only athletes need a coach to assess in performance achievement? Managers, teachers and human resources specialists have the training they need to get the best mindset and develop the relevant skills necessary for performance and success? The questions are of course rhetorical, as long as coaching today is applicable in almost every sphere of life. "Today it retains those characteristics of his beginnings in the sport, namely the emphasis on action, achievement and mastery, measurable results and desire to be the best," says the masters of this personal development school, J. O. Connor, A. Lages (apud. A. Hardingham, 2007, p 43).

It speaks more often of a coaching culture, a culture in which people provide systematic coaching each other, they learn in real time at the job. Performant organizations are increasingly concerned about the potential development of employees, so the desire to make a profit and be competitive, and the desire to retain internal customers - employees, facilitating the ultimate coaching motivation, self-actualization. Since the 90's, coaching has become an increasingly important form of learning in the workplace as a way of developing the skills of employees. So, the coaching profession is based on the ability to accompany the client in training skills and relationships in order to maintain or optimize workplace performance.

In this paper we bring to the attention of teachers and students this form of active learning, coaching, for the purposes of acquisition of own experiences in competition with itself in the involvement in getting performance. The coach / coordinator "helps skills training" through a dynamic interaction with the client / student. He relies on the natural ability of self-actualization / customers personal development. The way the coach is mentoring involves exploring an opportunity or a problem with the learner, then he becomes able to develop new knowledge and skills through individual work on opportunities or problems.

It is known that the most effective learning is informal and accidental (Covey,1998). Coaching provides an ideal opportunity to learn in school, in a non-conventional, in that time when the need to develop a new skill or knowledge becomes necessary. Compared to academic activities coaching is non-aggressive, because it is focused on behavior rather than on results. Coach leads the process so that students live experience to develop valuable skills for themselves, rather than to do something that was imposed by the curriculum.

Whenever the teacher gives students positive feedback reinforcing desirable behavior, listen to their concerns, clears the working environment by

addressing issues of interest, says a student to solve a new task to develop skills, solve a problem or to gain confidence in it, it acts as a coach. Unfortunately, this role is rare in the teacher repertoire of roles. One reason could be that, often the teachers themselves would need empowering philosophy and coaching tools. Empower might be done during the initial training and during the training. The benefits would come from at least two directions: on the one hand, lead to improved performance and personal development of teachers, and on the other hand, would be an indirect investment and long-term prospective students that these teachers had will form.

The intention of this paper is to create an experiment built on a coaching program. The program is offered to master students. Here are the principles that are the foundation of the coaching program:

1. The purpose of education is to enable man to be himself, to become, to continually shape, in agreement with the principle of human dignity.
2. The student carries its own development of machine building and strengthening the ego, in agreement with the principle of potentiality.
3. Paradigm ego is the fundamental paradigm of efficiency (Covey, 1998). The power itself is the basis of competence and social competence specialist. This is the principle of paradigmatic change, generative.
4. Quality of life is determined by how you appreciate life. Your feelings are determined by how you appreciate and comment on what is happening inside around your inner dialogue quality principle.
5. Success means being in harmony with oneself and with the environment to achieve your goals, ecological principle.

We believe that this requires training to develop the following skills:

∗ Self-awareness: observe yourself and recognize personal thoughts and emotions; understand the relationship between thoughts, emotions and behavior

∗ Self-disclosure: cherish openness and confidence to show the group members on the basis that ensures confidentiality agreements discussed in group

∗ Self-Acceptance: deciphering self-image - the strengths and weaknesses; see you in a positive light and to cultivate self-esteem, a positive self-image is beneficial

∗ Personal liability: taking personal consequences of decisions and actions, accepting feelings and personal provisions, their suitability to the circumstances and for what purpose; enforced and full involvement in the undertaken tasks

∗ Self-actualization: exploring new ways of adequacy and self-expression; setting realistic and environmental goals; identifying alternative actions, anticipate consequences, hiring full self-realization; Integrated Work itself, supple and adaptable / synergistic scheme itself, flexible and adaptable.

Coaching aims to increase the level of performance and learning ability of other people. Involves providing feedback, and using techniques such as motivation, effective use of questions and adapting management style conscious relative to the task he has to perform. "At the elementary level, coaching is a technique through practice becomes a skill and the devotion can become an art form, always an opportunity to learn." (J. Whitmore, apud. A. Hardingham, 2007, p XVII) . For A. Cardon "coaching is essentially an open-loop feed-forward, an exploratory indication to activate synapses necessary for desired activities, human interaction that enables unused resources, sustain motivation, inspiration, expand the frame of reference" (apud A. Hardingham, 227, p XVII).

As simply as this, coaching is accompanying the client into finding his own solutions to the difficulties he has. We can ask if a coach could be regarded as a duplicate of postmodern master, Socrates. Coach believes, as master, that he can assist a person in deciphering his own perceptions and ideas for discovering the truth / training skills that, can deliver ideas / skills, but he can not perform for the client. He strongly believes that the answers are inside of every human being, for which encourages the client to search inside him and to find their own answers (Landsberg, 2005).

2. PARADIGM TRAINING AND BENEFITS OF COACHING

Most of the difficulties faced by people are not professional, but personal. Skills that are important in relationships and in the exercise of a profession or in other areas of life are called in coaching "key qualifications". Often these skills are reflected in the key qualifications "high class", involving aspects of personality development such as: the ability to work in teams, creativity, theoretical thinking, independence, responsibility, joy of living / work. Key qualifications can be regarded as necessary to obtain performances. They can be categorized as follows: self-competence, social competence and professional competence.

Another important aspect of the paradigm of training, coaching refers to the process, not the content. When we find a way to decipher the process of what we do, identify motivational strategies and decision-making, often successfully, we can model whenever we need. When we plug conscience with them, how they work for us, we can optimize and thus influence all cases in the same way.

They say, "we teach the things we most need." As for coaching, it is based on customer support through a dynamic interaction to find his own solution. With customers that we assist in coaching, we involve those parts of us that we need to solve or the ones we've done and we can now give as an example. In the context of coaching is often more appropriate to find ways to increase his self-esteem and trust someone than to find the solution "correct". The most important benefits of coaching are:

• Support to discover what's best in you
• Access to your potential and your own creativity
• Successfully overcoming crisis situations
• Overcoming the obstacles that prevent you achieve your goals
• Increased self-competence
• Create the necessary inner state for optimum performance

All these benefits added to the portfolio of skills that each of us have, as an immediate consequence may increase personal and professional quality of life (Lowe, 1995). In conclusion, coaching means personal development even for experts in education. For some of us, this may even be a way to become ever better. Through this study we hope to awaken the interest in coaching both teachers and students, future professionals in human resources. Activity / coaching workshop can be regarded as an original replica for the formal academic system, frequently criticized either by the beneficiary or by the teachers themselves. Coaching can provide an opportunity to develop very important skills for success in life, and a genuine source of joy for both the coach and for its customers.

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THE MANAGEMENT OF POSITIVE INTERACTIONS IN LEARNING SITUATIONS

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ABSTRACT

An important role in the management of learning situations is played by the structuring of learning tasks and by the interactions between the learning groups involved in task solving. The study focuses on a theoretical approach of some explanatory models regarding knowledge development through interactions within the learning group, through cooperation and its effect on learning motivation.

KEYWORDS: cooperation, didactic competences, learning situations, positive interdependence, social interactions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The notion of "interaction" has been sanctioned by the representatives of the School from Chicago (R.E. Park, E. W. Barges, G. H. Mead, W. I. Thomas) and involves in this vision an ego – alter relation, where the "actor" interprets (assigns significance) the other ones behaviour but also his own behaviour and based on this interpretation s/he responds to the partner's behaviour. According to G. H. Mead [1] the conscience originates in the individuals` interaction, which, through cooperation and communication creates social objects that develop an identity between individual and social consciousness. Due to this fact, communication appears as a social acknowledgement of symbols, of socially significant gestures and even of communication intentions. The effect consists of developing thinking, the human intelligence as unique form of psychosocial experience. Initial premises have been continued and theoretically and practically revaluated from different perspectives:

The Model of Social Interdependence has as representatives K. Kofka, K. Lewin, M. Deutsch, Jhonson&Jhonson, Cohen Sh. Sharan, E, Aronson and others and develops the idea that the type of structural interdependence from a situation determines the way individuals interact among themselves. Social interdependence exists when individuals share mutual goals and the results of each individual are dependent on the others` actions. M. Deutsch identifies three types of interdependence and the ways of interaction that generate them [2]:

- Positive interdependence reflects cooperation actions when individual actions promote the success of the others,

- Negative interdependence which indicates the reverse situation when one's actions block the success of the others,
- No made interdependence by whose means one's activity does not produce effects on the others neither regarding stress nor regarding failure.

The theory of social interdependence generated methodological experiences that tried to promote positive interdependence within the learning group.

Models of behaviouristic type have as representatives Skinner, Bandura, Slavin and others and are focused on the effect of encouragements/ rewards upon the functioning of the group and on promoting positive interdependence by choosing objectives of cooperative type. The focus on these objectives creates situations where the only way the group members can achieve their personal objectives is group success. The members of the group have to help their co-workers, have to encourage them and have to involve themselves with the maximum of effort so that the group becomes successful, determining the motivation of learning

Cognitive and Constructivist Models focus on mental construction and mental processing of learning. It is considered that interactions between pupils, group interactions, are valuable for the individual because s/he has to assess points of view different from their own and it protects him against forming rigid and stereotypical intellectual patterns. „ There are fulfilled the intellectual conditions of group cooperation when each member is capable of understanding the others` points of view and adjusting his own action or verbal contribution to theirs" [3].

The importance of interaction with colleagues in constructing knowledge is developed by Vâgotski through the concept *proximal area of development*, the difference between the present level of child's development and the potential level of development can be solved through problem solving, with adult guidance or in collaboration with other colleagues. The analysis of variables that influence the development of prosocial behaviour, highlights the importance of affection, emotion awareness and control in one`s adjustment to social and educational environment. The following assertions are arguments in favour of the usage of affection in school learning and in the development of prosocial behaviour:

- Emotions activate and direct the behaviour and support motivated behaviour. Affection can regulate the behaviour because it has the role of "action acceptor".
- The intensity and quality of emotional experience depends on the cognitive assessment of the situation. It is made according to a series of socio-cultural or personality factors and allows judging the experience in terms of pleasant or unpleasant, stimulating or coercive.

- Our feelings and emotions are a valuable source of information, being involved in making decisions with a universally human character.
- The defining role played by emotional encoding in learning is acknowledged by more and more researchers after the 1990s. H. Gardner (2004) „The formative role of emotions is more and more often acknowledged in learning" [4] D. Goleman (2008) „The pupils` emotional development is decisive for their success in life and not only for good school results" [5].

The complex role of affection in an individual`s adjustment to the world can be grasped by relating it to other elements or psychical processes. Thus, cognitive judgement as part of different emotional states becomes significant in the development of "Emotional Intelligence". In this respect, the evolution of theories that regard intelligence as formative structure and affection as prosocial function brought about numerous debates lately. **Emotional Intelligence can be defined as the ability** to recognise, understand and direct emotions inside ourselves and in the others. According to Goleman, it determines „our potential of acquiring practical skills based on his five elements: self-awareness and self-control, motivation, empathy and social skills. Our emotional competence proves how much of that potential have we managed to turn into real skills ready to be put into practice"[5] (2008). To compare in contrast the differences between ways of traditional learning, based on mediation and cooperative learning S. J. McCarthey and S. McMahon [6] make the following distinctions.

Tab. 1. Formative Involvement of cooperative learning

	Traditional learning situation	**Learning situation through cooperation**
Knowledge Development	Unidirectional / Transmission	Multidirectional / Transformation Forming consensus
Area of proximal development	The teacher helps pupils in control transfer	Fluid and Dynamic Progress
Communication	Unidirectional	Multi- and bidirectional

2. COOPERATIVE LEARNING – DIMENSIONS AND EXIGENCY

All these theories generated in the educational practice of the 20th century a ample research and scientific development of cooperative learning. These led to its application is an important way of structuring the formal and nonformal learning situations on different age levels. Cooperative learning takes place when pupils work together, either in pairs or in small groups to solve one and the same task, to explore a new subject or to create new ideas, new combinations and even authentic innovations. „Cooperative learning means using as training method of small groups of pupils/students, so as they

will be able to work together and eventually each member of the group improves his own performance and contributes to increasing the performances of the other group members" [7].

Several steps have been made from learning in groups to cooperative learning and organising the learning experience other than individually. There are some differences between learning through collaboration and cooperative learning, the most important being that in learning through collaboration the stress is laid on the learning process and in cooperative learning the process and the result are equally important. The orientation towards the product as result of the learning process brings about the development of goal oriented thinking and of the feeling of individual and collective responsibility. „Cooperative learning refers to a set of training strategies that involve cooperative pupil - pupil interaction towards the subject, as integrated part of learning process." [8] Cooperative learning develops the respect for diversity, the capacity of empathy, social abilities. The social – cognitive conflict arises given the fact that among the group members there are also cognitive differences. This conflict generates the acceleration of learning. Numerous studies prove the superiority of cooperative didactic strategies in the prejudice of competitive and individual learning. Cooperative didactic strategies develop superior cognitive processes, communication abilities, improve motivation, self esteem, develop the personality. Salvin, R. E. [9] draws on easy model of analysing the effects of cooperative structuring on learning performances. (Fig. 1.)

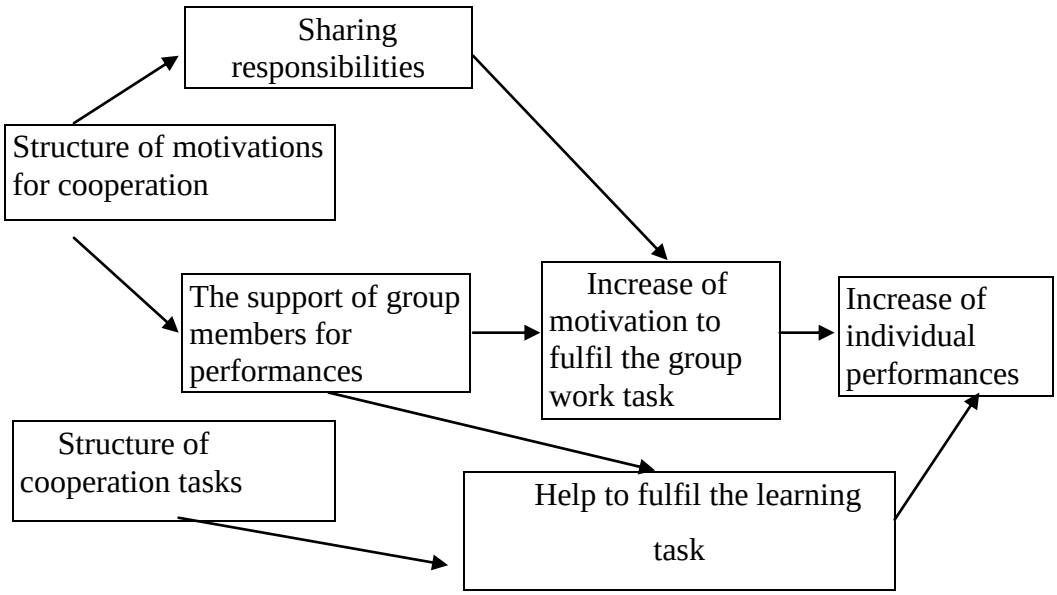

Fig. 1. The Model of the effects of cooperation on performances

Daniel Goleman allowed the expansion of the concept of Emotional Intelligence, changing the way people have regarded the role of emotions in health and welfare, in everyday life, at work and in schools. In 1995 he published a book that became a bestseller – „Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ" where he defines the concept of Emotional Intelligence. The author considers it the key to personal and professional success and also a mixture of self-control, motivation, empathy, free thinking, tact and diplomacy. These attributes make a person possess a high level of Emotional Intelligence. Thus, s/he can control emotional reactions in relationship with other persons because s/he is aware of all factors that contribute to the emergence of that particular reaction. In this definition, Goleman identified five fundamental aspects of Emotional Intelligence: *knowing one`s emotions, managing emotions, motivating oneself (self-motivation), recognition emotions in others (empathy), handling relationships between individuals and in the group.* In the field related literature, cooperative learning is characterised by the following elements: *positive interdependence, direct interaction, individual responsibility, interpersonal and small group abilities, group processing, pupils` roles and abilities necessary for group work.*

Positive interdependence

We may say that positive interdependence is done when the members of a team aspire to a certain mutual acknowledgement, being positively dependent on each other. Everything that is a gain for one member of the team is a gain for the whole team. Pupils realise that they need each other to fulfil the group task. The teachers can structure the positive interdependence establishing *aims, mutual objectives* ("learn and see that all members of the group learn"), *mutual rewards* (team acknowledgement on the basis of members` contribution), *mutual resources, cooperative tasks* (identifying those tasks that would motivate and direct the group), *distributed roles* (the one that resumes, the one that encourages the others, the one that formulates the answer).

Learning tasks

În the field related literature we can read about learning tasks that focus on the learning activity determining different types of group interaction [10]:

- *Task of disjunctive type* The group has to make a selection of each member's answers and contributions. The best solution is identified.
- *Task of conjunctive type.* Implies that the productivity of the group is linked to each member's efficiency, even to the weakest one.
- *Task of additional type.* The result of group's activity is the sum of each member's contribution.

- *Tasks of discretional type.* The members of the group can mix individual options in any way they want. The final solution is the result of all participants` contribution.

Direct Interaction

Pupils help each other in the learning process, encouraging themselves and sharing their ideas.

They explain the others what they know, discuss, teach one another. The teacher arranges the groups so as the pupils to sit one next to the other and discuss each aspect of the task they have to solve.

Individual responsibility

Each student's performance is frequently assessed and the result is presented to him and the group. The teacher can highlight individual responsibility choosing pupils at random for a test, or choosing one member of the group the give the answer.

Interpersonal and small group skills

Groups can not exist or function efficiently if students don't enhance certain absolutely necessary social skills. Students must develop these skills the way they are taught different things. They include conducting, decision making, confidence building, communication, conflict management. Pupils are taught, helped, monitored in using collaborative social capacities that increase the efficiency of group work.

Group processing

Groups need certain moments to discuss how well they have achieved their goals and to maintain efficient work relations among group members. Teachers provide necessary conditions for processing through tasks like: (a) enumerate at least 3 actions of group members that led to group success or (b) enumerate at least one action that could increase the group's success the next day. The teacher permanently monitors the learning and gives feedback them and the whole class about the way they work

Students` role

Within each group the roles pupils play can be oriented towards the task, the group maintenance or both. Because students have to get accustomed to both categories, the teacher sometimes distributes specific roles like the ones below. Pupils` attention is drawn on isolated roles to make them aware of each role's necessity. They have to change roles for each activity because the purpose of the activity is to make them able to perform them all simultaneously. At group's level the following roles can be assigned [11]: *the Assessor*: verifies whether everyone understands what is being worked at, *the Spy* searches for necessary information at other groups or, occasionally, at the teacher, *the Time keeper* pays attention that the group focuses on the task and respect the given amount of time, *the Active listener* repeats and reformulates what other have

said, *the Interrogator* extracts information from group members and the *Résumé* draws the conclusions so that they make sense, *the Encourager* congratulates, helps, encourages each member of the group;*the Responsible for Materials* distributes and collects the necessary material, *the Reader* reads the written materials, the Speaker presents the group's conclusions in from of the class

Didactic competences

The teacher becomes a facilitator of collaboration and cooperation among pupils in order to achieve efficient and long-lasting learning, co – participant in activities of learning organisation and fulfilment. It is necessary that he receives a certain feedback to be able to explain the success or failure of certain group activity. If the learning groups do not function properly, if conflicts arise within them, the teacher has to interfere to solve the situation, to re-establish the proper functioning of the group.

We observe that by using cooperative learning the teacher gets receives new competences [12]:

- *Energizing Competence* focuses on the teachers` ability to make students want the get involved in the activity and to train them for finding alternative solutions.
- *Empathic competence* implies the ability to transpose himself in the situations pupils find themselves in.
- *Organizational competence* represents the teacher's ability to organise the class in work groups, to maintain and enforce respecting the rules regarding cooperative learning.
- *Interrelationing competence* implies communication availability, development of necessary social abilities for proper group integration. Tolerance and opening to novelty as well as encouragement of originality will lead to similar availability from the students in their relations with the others.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Creating learning situations implies the option for ways of structuring the interdependence among pupils, because the chosen type of structure will determine the way in which pupils will interact with each other and the results they will achieve. Implementing cooperative learning in the classroom is a complex process that involves approaching an instructional philosophy based on the main scientific theories and also the usage of these methods and procedures, of specific learning techniques. The study confirm that the assumption of an emotional literacy should be taken into consideration not just at home, but especially at school. Our studies prove that children who are emotionally well trained set positive relations with children of similar age have

less behavioural problems and recover faster from a negative experience. A stimulating climate contributing to the improvement of school results. During this programme, children should be allowed to experiment games, exercises and techniques of emotion recognitions, control, self-control and emotional regulation.

Applying this model implies changing the role of involved actors, generating positive effects on cognitive, affection – emotional, metacognitive and social level.

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"MULTIPLE INTELLIGENCES" AND "MINDS FOR THE FUTURE" IN A CHILD'S EDUCATION

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Abstract

A modern teacher needs to be equipped with up-to-date knowledge, interesting practical solutions and educational inspirations. The role of a teacher is not only to support child development, which is undoubtedly the most important value in education, but also to create favourable conditions for children to discover the world in a multi-intelligent way.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is well-known and valued all over the world. It has significant influence on education in many different countries. MI theory enables humans to assess or evaluate their own abilities and take into account the other *person's* perspective. *Every teacher should individually discover Gardner's theory, build a store of knowledge of multiple intelligences, and finally decide how to implement it effectively in the teaching-learning process.*

Hopefully, the authors' concept of Multi-intelligent education for the child will not only inspire the teachers and provoke reflections on their everyday pedagogical activities, but also motivate them to take up innovative educational projects and activities in order to create better opportunities for all students. In some way, the teacher is able to "create" a student through discovering his/her interests and abilities. In the process of pre-school, and then school education, in everyday situations teacher-student relationships are established.

Keywords: multiple intelligences, multi-intelligent education, intelligence profile, child's education**,** modern teacher, minds for the future.

Introduction

Intelligence plays an important role in every human life. It helps an individual to adapt to the environment and facilitates taking opportunities offered by this environment. There have always been created various conceptions of intelligence; and the term "intelligence" itself has become a buzzword recently [Nęcka 2009, p. 8]. Everyone attaches great significance to intelligence. It is not easy to define „intelligence", and experts' points of view on intelligence are highly diversified.

Howard Gardner has significantly contributed to extending the term "intelligence" thanks to his theory of multiple intelligences. The conception suggested by Gardner differs from traditional approach to intelligence and

changes a line of its perception. "It is an extension of the term "intelligence" over verbal, logical and mathematical abilities which used to be almost exclusive matter of interest for previous theories" [Vasta, Haith, Miller 1995, p. 394]. The power of human mind makes everyone possible to succeed in life if they know how to use its potential to their benefit.

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences

Howard Gardner, psychologist and neurologist, perceives human capabilities in an original way. He believes that intellectual abilities are inseparably linked with the context in which we live, as well as with our human resources. "Intelligence – one of many – is an ability to solve problems or create products which are specifically important for a particular environment and cultural or social context. This capability of problem solving allows an individual to approach the situation which needs achieving a certain goal by finding the appropriate way" [Gardner 2009a, p. 18]. It challenges the assumption of classical theories on intelligence that there is only one type of intelligence.

The model for the theory of multiple intelligences was originally based on seven intelligences: musical, kinaesthetic, logical-mathematical, linguistics, visual-spatial, interpersonal and intrapersonal. Later, the eighth intelligence – naturalistic – was included in the model. Gardner, looking for scientific evidence for existential intelligence, mentions currently „eight and a half intelligences" [Gardner 2009a, p. 37]. It is worth emphasising that a lot of potential intelligences may exist that have not been identified and described so far. Their number is not even possible to determine.

The theory of multiple intelligences has aroused worldwide interest but also reserve. It has numerous supporters, but in the world of omnipresent IQ, the theory of multiple intelligences has struggled for understanding and acceptance. "Traditionally, intelligence is understood as predisposition that globally determines human cognitive activities. At school this category is frequently applied in order to explain this sort of human behaviour which involves mental processes" [Czaja-Chudyba 2005, p. 25]. Gardner extends traditional concept of intelligence believing that it is considerably more diversified and polymorphous. In classical psychometric approach intelligence is defined operationally – as an ability to perform tasks included in intelligence tests [Gardner 2009a, p. 17]. According to non-psychometric approach which apart from the theory of multiple intelligences deals also with social, emotional and practical intelligence concepts, intelligence cannot be measured. As the author claims, the theory of multiple intelligences is more conformed to reality and it better reflects findings on human intelligent behaviour [Gardner 2009a, p. 17].

Howard Gardner publishing his works on the theory of multiple intelligences referred mainly to psychologists and did not expect such wide recognition from pedagogists. Gardner has never created a programme for development of multiple intelligences, but he presented "some concepts of education in the spirit of the multiple intelligences theory" [Gardner 2002, p. 102]. This theory has become an inspiration for teachers "to develop curricula including the aspects which used to be neglected in teaching (such as creative writing, arts or music education) and to try new methods of measuring abilities in different fields of education" [Dembo 1997, p. 322].

First curricula and activities applying the theory of multiple intelligences to the process of education were based on Harvard Project Zero. According to Gardner's concept of education, it is extremely significant for a child to understand the world. Therefore Project Spectrum, carried out by a group of researchers as part of Project Zero, seems to be of special importance. It concentrates on pre-school children and is an innovative attempt to determine intelligence profile and working styles of young children [Gardner 2009a, p. 125]. The principles of multiple intelligences theory were proved by empirical research which was conducted as part of Project Spectrum. Activities aimed at implementing the idea of multiple intelligences are carried out in schools belonging to the association Smart Schools which was established within Project Zero. In these schools special programmes "focused on an individual" are developed. The basis for schools which implement this system is identification of child's strong points and balance of special and general abilities. At the same time general cognitive and individual abilities are developed [Czaja-Chudyba 2009, p. 117].

The theory of multiple intelligences revolutionized the way of thinking about human intelligence and abilities. Educational projects originating from MI theory seem to adopt fundamental assumption of the Gardner's concept according to which *every child is unique.* Nowadays Gardner's theory is applied by pedagogists all over the world. The influence of the multiple intelligences theory on education in numerous countries of the world is becoming more and more significant [Chen, Moran, Gardner 2009]. This theory has also affected the Polish education.

Multi-intelligent education

The authors' concept of ***Multi-intelligent education*** [Kopik, Zatorska 2010] is based on the assumption that every child has the potential to develop abilities in different fields. Every child is unique and has the right to full mental, physical, motor, emotional and social development. It is therefore vital that the adults (parents and teachers) not only enhance children's abilities, passions, talents and interests, but also help children develop strategies to compensate for their weaknesses and capitalize on their strengths. The above-

mentioned concept might hopefully be a source of inspiration for further thoughts and reflections, as well as creative actions taken up for children's sake. It opens new opportunities to create, discover and experience the world so that the teachers feel highly motivated to set off a fascinating educational journey together with their students. The concept of multi-intelligent education is mainly based on Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences, diagnosis and identification of child's abilities, individualization of teaching-learning process, inspiring educational environment and dialogue of all the elements responsible for the process of education.

Theory of multiple intelligences. Gardner believes that a human being in the course of evolution has developed different abilities of information processing which enable him to solve problems or produce any goods. Therefore, in Gardner's theory, the term "intelligence" is defined as "bio-psychological potential to process specific forms of information in a particular way" [Gardner 2006, p. 27]. Each person possesses a certain range of all intelligences and uses them in accordance with the preferences and tasks performed. The theory of multiple intelligences reveals how to recognise potential abilities and then apply them to support human development.

Linguistics intelligence. The world is perceived through words – spoken or written. The characteristic feature is sensitivity to rhymes, meaning of words, and sounds, as well as ability to speak clearly and to present events logically.

Kinaesthetic intelligence. The world is perceived through movement and physical contact. The characteristic feature is ability to control bodily motions and capacity to handle objects skilfully.

Logical-mathematical intelligence. The world is perceived through numbers and chain of events. The characteristic feature is interest in the world of objects, symbols of numbers and mathematical calculations.

Visual-spatial intelligence. The world is perceived through pictures and spatial forms. The characteristic feature is ability to visualize images or spatial relations with the mind's eye.

Naturalistic intelligence. The world is perceived through natural environment and surrounding. The characteristic features are high sensitivity, ability to notice patterns in the nature, as well as to recognise and categorise objects.

Musical intelligence. The world is perceived through sounds, rhythm and melody. The characteristic features are aptitude for perception and creating music, musicality, and understanding the structure of music works.

Interpersonal intelligence. The world is perceived from the angle of others. The characteristic features are: understanding other people, as well as ability to communicate effectively and interact with others.

Intrapersonal intelligence. The world is perceived through introspective and self-reflective attitude. The characteristic feature is ability to self-reflect on one's behaviour, motivation and emotions, as well as deep understanding of the self and ability to control one's behaviour [Kopik 2014, p. 119].

Everyone has natural predispositions towards certain type or types of intelligences. Particular intelligences are developed to different extent; they function in mutual connections, cooperate and form together an individual intelligence profile.

Diagnosis and identification of child's abilities. Getting to know the students is an essential part of teacher's work. Thorough observation conducted in his natural environment is a basic method of getting to know a child. Gardner believes that during an assessment of child's abilities, such measurement tools should be used in which each sentence and question defining a type of intelligence will be expressed with the language and symbols suitable for the language of the intelligence it refers to. Each intelligence enables an individual to achieve success, but establishing borders between specific types of intelligences does not seem to be an easy task. It is crucial to collect possibly accurate information on a child in order to obtain precise picture of his abilities. Improper identification of child's possibilities by a teacher may lead to decreasing school requirements. Too high or too low requirements concerning children school achievements can affect the standard and quality of educational activities.

An extremely significant element of the conception appears to be reliable diagnosis which allows identifying and determining individual intelligence profile for each child, as well as support his educational development. The knowledge on strong and weak points is the basis for building high self-esteem. Identification of student's intelligence profile should be based on the results of teacher's thorough observation of a child and the information obtained from parents by means of survey. Support tool in the diagnosis process intelligence profile of the student is a "*Child Observation Questionnaire for Parents and Teachers"* [Kopik, Zatorska, 2010, pp. 50-54]. It contains questions on child behavior in eight categories indicating the characteristics of the type of intelligence. Initial diagnosis of a child's intelligence profile should include the following information: "strong" points and child interests in general aspect, possibilities for making good use of "strong" points in order to support "weak" ones, directions of special abilities

development, intelligences which need support, work directions and ways of developing child's abilities.

It is necessary for teachers to identify and recognise students' cognitive abilities, their strengths and weaknesses and individual intelligences which require to be developed. Such self-diagnosis allows the teacher to adjust teaching methods to meet the needs of a variety of students. The intelligences profile scale "*Range of possibility*" [Kopik, Zatorska 2010, pp. 43-48] is the tool which pelp us to know about our Intelligences profile.

Intelligence profile – array of abilities

Individualization of teaching-learning process. Teachers should notice, develop and support their students' individual abilities, and school ought to provide all the students with opportunities for comprehensive development. Training tailored to individual student needs and capabilities is a complex, comprehensive program that requires a specific organization of activity of the child. The teacher should organize a varied and interesting teaching-learning process based on a close cooperation of all participants. The ability to mutual good cooperation should be developed in students from an early age. There is a need to reinvent the way of thinking about collaborative learning and collaborative learning individualization.

Inspiring educational environment. The child must be provided with attractive terms to multi intelligence explore the world, the creation and development of the imagination. This is achieved by properly organized, inspiring, or liberating creative enthusiasm, guiding a learning process, and also triggers curiosity and encouraging learning environment for action. Facilitated by appropriate educational environment in the form of the Fun Land: Creative Movement Lands, Land of Knowledge and Imagination Land. Each of these Lands is a new challenge; let's go on educational travel, and the child involved in creating their own learning space. **The Land of Creative Movement** enables children to meet their biological need for physical movement as well as to explore and experience the space around them. Activities in the Land of Creative Movement help children develop independence, confidence, emotions

control and accuracy. They also influence emotional and mental development, encourage logical thinking, improve children's powers of observations, memory and imagination [Kopik, Zatorska 2010, p. 85]. **The Land of Knowledge** allows children to develop the need for multisensory experience and perception of the world. It involves acquiring knowledge through games and personal activities, as well as taking up educational challenges. The Land of Knowledge contributes to cognitive independence, exploring, experimenting and experiencing. It enables children to create reality through games, inspires to ask questions and look for the answers independently, as well as improves teacher – student cooperation [Kopik 2013, p. 42]. **The Land of Imagination** encourages creative activities, developing imagination and interests in foreign languages as well as enables children to create different types of artwork. "Games in The Land of Imagination reinforce self-esteem, self-belief in success, trigger self-motivation and encourage even the most tentative children to try new methods through explorations" [Kopik, Zatorska 2010, p. 92].

Dialogue of all the elements responsible for the process of education. Dialogue is the most mature form of contacts, which helps to create optimal conditions for growth. Seeking ways of understanding, proper relationship climate, trust and participation of all stakeholders, voluntary and systematic contacts and sense of purpose, which is the welfare of the child, is proposed model of cooperation.

Theory of multiple intelligences is very popular in Poland. Many kindergartens and schools have worked using this theory. It proves correct for working with children in preschool [Kopik, Zatorska 2011b] and early school age [Kopik, Zatorska 2011a].

Five minds for the future

Over the years, Gardner has been exploring the secrets of human mind, and as a result of his research and observations, he has identified and described five kinds of minds which have to be cultivated for future success. The concept of the five minds for the future is another inspiration to take on new challenges in education. "Minds for the Future", implemented by the European Agency for Development, helped to create an innovative curriculum (http://umysly.edukacyjni.pl/pl/program_nauczania) for classes I-III, and interesting didactic materials (http://umysly.edukacyjni.pl/pl/materialy_dydaktyczne).

The programme "Minds for the Future" has been pilot introduced in 20 schools in Poland.

However, it is hardly possible to say which of the five minds: disciplined, synthesizing, creating, respectful or ethical will be most needed and desirable in a challenging future world. Each kind of mind seems to be rather a way of thinking and acting which makes use of several intelligences, than an

ability. According to Gardner, modern education should focus on nurturing all the five future minds since the best chances to succeed have those who will develop this quintet of minds [Gardner 2009b, p. 159].**The disciplined mind** refers to the ability to think in ways associated with major scholarly and professional disciplines as well as the ability to apply oneself diligently, improving steadily and continuing beyond formal education [Gardner 2009b, p. 152]. **The synthesising mind** involves the ability to collect information from disparate sources as well as to select and process that information in ways that make sense to the synthesiser and also to other persons. **The creating mind** is able to break new ground, to develop new ideas and to pose unfamiliar questions. It involves fresh ways of thinking and reaching unexpected conclusions. Building on discipline and synthesis, the creating mind goes beyond existing knowledge to offer new solutions. **The respectful (tolerant) mind** involves the awareness of and appreciation for differences among human individuals and groups. **The ethical mind** is able to observe the most important values, regardless of difficulties, adversities or threats. This mind takes into account the common good of the wider community, realising how work can serve purposes beyond self-interest.

It is important for each person to have achieved certain aspects of all five mental capacities for the balance of mind needed for the future. However, it is hardly possible to say which of the five minds will be most needed and desirable in a challenging future world.

Conclusion

Howard Gardner, who proposed the theory of multiple intelligences and the concept of future minds, believes that human cognition and human potential should be understood in a broad and complex way. Hopefully, the authors' concept of *Multi-intelligent education for the child* will not only inspire the teachers and provoke reflections on their everyday pedagogical activities, but also motivate them to take up innovative educational projects and activities in order to create better opportunities for all students.

Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is well-known and valued all over the world. It has significant influence on education in many different countries. MI theory enables humans to assess or evaluate their own abilities and take into account the other person's perspective [Kopik 2014, p. 120]. Every teacher should individually discover Gardner's theory, build a store of knowledge of multiple intelligences, and finally decide how to implement it effectively in the teaching-learning process.

The changing contemporary society determines and defines transformations in many areas of life. We are witnesses of creating new social and educational reality. Education of young people is one of the most important domains of social life [Stańkowski, Szpringer 2013].

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EFFECTIVE LEARNING AND LEARNING SATISFACTION, IN AN ACADEMIC CONTEXT-DISCUSSION CONCERNING AN INTEGRATING MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The present paper intends to open a discussion on effective learning, in an academic context, by introducing a concept that has not often enough been highlighted as a potent factor in explaining academic performance and the probability of its iteration. Effective learning means, on one hand, getting the highest performance at the lowest costs (in terms of resource- time, effort, money- consume) possible. On the other hand, learning becomes truly effective when it generates positive feelings and favorable attitudes towards it. That is because the positive allure surrounding the process of learning creates the right premises for a (repeat) performance, ensuring individual's involvement and proactive behavior in the learning situation. This paper also presents a model of academic learning, trying to encompass the relevant factors involved in the process and their complex relationships, in a circuit with a double-loop regulatory action: from learning outcomes to student's psychological variables and from learning outcomes to instructional strategies and teaching behavior

KEYWORDS: academic learning, attitude, effective learning, learning model, learning satisfaction

1. INTRODUCTION

The interest shown for the optimization of teaching techniques as to increase the efficiency of learning among students, either adults or pre-adults, is all too present and legitimate. The difficulty lies in the defining of "effective learning" and turning this key-concept into a plain operational variable. Before engaging into a discussion about an integrating learning model, I find it useful to review some ideas regarding effective learning, psychological factors relating to effectiveness in the learning process, and shedding light on the learning satisfaction concept that I have used as an explanatory part of the model. Starting from this point, I plan to create an integrated view of how learning (especially in adults) takes place, what factors can be considered as potentially influential and how are the factors linked in order to produce and regulate the process.

2. EFFECTIVE LEARNING

The process of acquiring and using knowledge has always been a central point of investigation, mainly because it is plenary involved in all of our major or minor endeavors and daily activities, serving as a condition for social and professional adaptation. Following Fry, Ketteridge și Marshall (2009), learning involves things like handling abstract principals, understanding arguments and evidence, memorising facts, acquiring methods, techniques and developing ways to approach things and people, recognizing and reasoning, debating ideas or forming behaviours best fitted for specific situations (p.8). In a more specific sense, *academic learning* is about the depth of approach (deep or surface approach-Marton and Saljo, 1997), about the way teacher's perception and concepts regarding learning link to students'perception (Trigwell, Prosser și Waterhouse, 1999), it's also about students', teachers'and teaching characteristics with aditional influences from department characterstics (Entwistle, 2000) or about learning through actively experiencing reality (Kolb, 1975, in Fry, Ketteridge și Marshall, 2009). Murphy and Alexander (2006) talk about five dimensions of academic learning, among which (p.4): development (changes in the individual that occur as result of experience over time); motivation/ affect („a state that energizes and directs behaviours"); situation/context (environmental and social factors such as „ability grouping; socioeconomic status"). On that note, learning, as the "multilayered process that proceeds from developing one's understanding of pieces of knowledge, to a growing awareness of our own personhood, and to a capacity to shape the world" (Walker, 2006, p.69), becomes *truly* effective when it answers in a positive manner to all of the following questions (in a non-random order):

- Is it interesting? Do I feel intrigued by what I am learning/about to learn?
- Is it effort- worthy? Do I feel that it's worth putting in all the effort to succeed?
- Is it time-effective? Am I getting things fast enough to feel I'm progressing?
- Is it productive? Can/Did I obtain the results (in terms of knowledge, skills and competence) I am/was expecting?
- Is it properly rewarded? Can/Did I obtain the recognition (in terms of diploma and social awareness) I am/was counting on?
- Is it cost-effective? Do I think that I'm paying the right/fair price (price= money, stress, time etc.) for it?
- Is it satisfying? Do I feel good and enthusiastic about learning in itself, do I feel accomplished just by learning *this* something?

Of course, other factors or questions besides the above can be added. But the base elements of effectiveness rest: *interest, perseverance, metacognition, self-management (time management, stress management)* and *self-directed learning,*

learning satisfaction. Motivation, in its intrinsic form, ensures interest that leads to a deep-approach to learning (Ramsden, 2003), meaning a logical approach with results in a better understanding of things, a long-term recall of details and higher capacity of using and integrating information. The deep-approach is also connected to the learning satisfaction, in a sense that "it is a much more satisfying way to study as it allows students to use academic knowledge to control and clarify the world outside academic knowledge" (Ramsden, 2003, p.60). Regarding metacognition, it implies three major aspects (Pintrich, 1999): planning, monitoring and regulation, as strategic behaviours that mediate the interaction between the individual and the knowledge to be acquired. A metacognitive conduct means being permanently aware of your learning behavior and learning peculiarities, in an effort to improve the process. This awareness brings a unique advantage: being able to correct misunderstandings as you learn, during and not after, focusing on the difficulties as they arise and dealing with problems first-handed, with the highest degree of control and management on your learning that you can possibly have. That leads to high quality, effective learning, by using time and effort in a smart way, while exercising perseverance, attention and focus (much needed when learning for the long run!). Self-directed learning draws on factors such as environmental factors, prior experience related factors, individual psychological factors (e.g. self-assurance, perseverance, learning style etc.), content related factors and factors pertaining to the learning offer (Siebert, 2001). Self-directed learning is not just a superior form of self-management, but also a premises for effective learning. I base this affirmation on Biggs (1999)'s wonderfully true statement regarding the learner's activity: "Being active while learning is better than being inactive: activity is a good in itself" (p.76), which reiterates the idea that behaving as an active participant to the learning process enhances the chances of getting a sense of control over things. This means dealing with trial, error and success in a strategic manner, therefore managing your own efficiency in learning in a particular way, becoming just right for yourself and your learning needs. As for learning satisfaction, it will be approached later on, in a more detailed manner.

Working with the concept of learning by only using its lucrative sense, the outcomes-oriented perspective, is overall narrow and unproductive. The broader perspective on effective learning requires taking into consideration the qualitative, interpretative and contextual side, the mellow-fluid factor that influences activities in mere predictable, but important, decisive ways: *the motivational and attitudinal complex* (with accent on the powerful emotional flavor of the complex) of the people involved in learning (learners and teachers, together). Firstly, I call it the fluid factor because it cannot be precisely determined and measured, given its socially-dependent nature and thus the person's need to keep it socially acceptable (when asked about what she/he

believes and feels about things and situations, a person will give the desirable answers instead of the true ones). Secondly, the complex is mellow not because it lack substance, but because it lacks the sharp, solid borders to hold its specific substance. Attitudes and motives are made of cognitive, emotional and volitive ingredients, some of them *unconsciously* determining behavior, with personal unique seasoning that comes from internalized prior experiences. The quantities, proportions and combinations are highly variable, therefore the final product is ever to be investigated and (re)defined.

3. LEARNING SATISFACTION

In order to put together a model starting from how academic learning takes place, one must identify and analyze what factors are involved and how do they coordinate. It's not quite innovative to state that cognitive factors are a major determinant when it comes to learning outcomes, and that people with a high level of intellectual development perform better than people with lower levels, in learning activities. This is a proven fact. The debate starts when we ask the questions: How much do the non-intellectual factors, such as motivation and attitudes, influences the individual's learning process and outcomes, and in what way? How important are those factors in determining learning performance? More or less important than the intellectual ones? What is their influence depending on? These are not easy-to-answer questions, and I'm not sure that there are single answers for each of them. What we do know, nevertheless, is that motivation and attitudes play a very significant part in learning and that taking them into account is not only highly recommended, but mandatory.

Learning satisfaction can be described in terms of an emotional complex, as the level of joy the individual feels when learning (Long, 1985), the degree of coherence perceived by a person, and converted into affective response, between his/her expectation and his/her experience with the situation (Martin, 1988). Also, learning satisfaction is placed first, by students, in terms of desirable and sought out results when engaging in a learning activity, second being the learning outcomes (in Chang and Chang, 2012). Satisfaction is seen as a "spontaneous experience" associated with intrinsically motivated behaviors (Deci, Ryan and Williams, 1996), that comes from learner-centered and need-oriented learning activities, while Harvey, Locke and Morey (2002) define learning satisfaction as the pleasure resulted from the student being involved in specific curricular activities designed to consider the learning needs experienced by the student (in Chang and Chang, 2012). In their research on the matter, the authors (Chien, 2007; Chang and Chang, 2012; Khiat, 2013) have concluded on the multifaceted aspect of the learning satisfaction, analyzing a number of factors that pertain to the construct. After studying the factors mentioned in the research on the subject, we have retained a number of six

relevant and reliable factors pertaining to the learning satisfaction construct (individual characteristics; material conditions and learning facilities; the teacher and the instructional activity; learning outcomes; learning environment; peer relationships) and we have designed the SLSQ (Students' Learning Satisfaction Questionnaire), an instrument we used to measure the learning satisfaction and tested under validity (EFA study) and reliability (alpha Cronbach coefficient, for each of the six dimensions, and for the whole scale (Topală and Tomozii, 2014). Learning satisfaction (measured through SLSQ) has been proven to be associated with adult students' attitudes regarding learning aspects and self-efficiency (e.g. Adult students that believe learning is best done alone obtain higher scores in learning satisfaction; Adult students that declare themselves interested in what is taught in faculty rate higher scores in learning satisfaction; Adult students that believe that actively searching new information and trying to find new learning opportunities for yourself is important in life, also score high in learning satisfaction) (Topală, 2014), showing that the non-intellectual factors taken into account in the learning process connect in various, constantly under investigation ways.

4. AN INTEGRATING LEARNING MODEL

Studying different models designed to explain academic learning (Entwistle, 1981; Marton and Saljo, 1997; Trigwell, Prosser și Waterhouse, 1999; Biggs, 1999; Entwistle, 2000; Ramsden, 2003) led me to believe that, besides frequently and widely invoked factors such as intellectual characteristics, motivation, level of anxiety and self concepts, the learner's way of perceiving the educational situation and environment, his/her prior experience with learning, his/her attitudes towards learning are very important elements in influencing his/her learning conduct or complex learning behavior which results in `hard` (grades) and `soft` (satisfaction) outcomes.

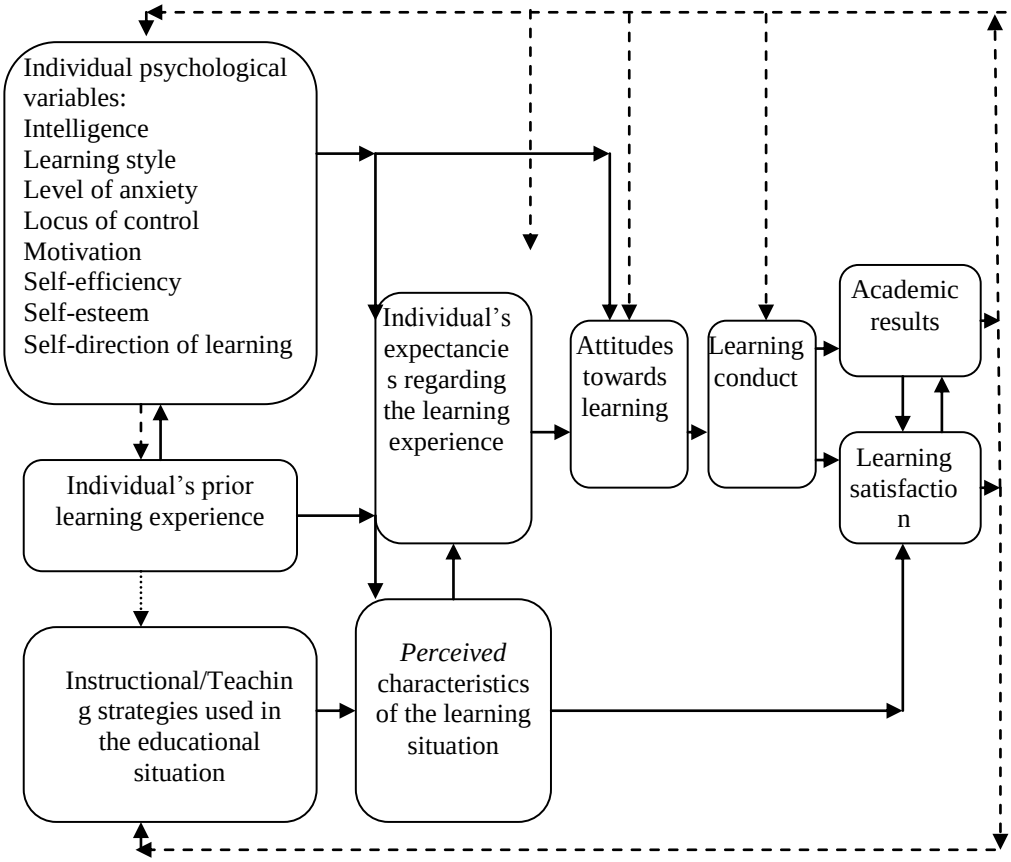

Fig 1. Academic learning model

As shown in Fig. 1, academic learning starts from the individual's psychological parameters, which are influenced by prior learning experiences that the individual sets as the foundation of his/her expectations and attitudes towards learning. Among the individual variables that influence academic learning we can identify *self-direction of learning*, which Lounsbury et al. (2009) demonstrate to be a personality trait positively associated with satisfaction with faculty and satisfaction with life in general. Self-direction of learning involves a person's initiative to control his/her own learning process, to independently decide and autonomously take action where learning is concerned. At the starting point, we also find the instructional strategies that the teacher presents and uses from the beginning of the educational sequence. The student perceives the learning situation in an individualized way, uniquely influenced by his/her psychological set and prior learning experiences. These perceived characteristics of the learning situation influence the individual's expectations regarding the learning experience, together with his/her prior learning experience and his/her psychological variables that create the big picture on what to generally expect and how things will most probably evolve.

Expectations are also influenced by individual's characteristics and his/her prior experiences, and help determine the way a person relates to a situation. In other words, expectations have a major rol in influencing attitudes, along side with the individual's personality set. Furthermore, attitudes towards learning determine the learning behaviours to be adopted, in a sense that the individual will act according to what he/she belives pertaining to learning (learning conditions, learning environment, learning context, learning opportunities etc.), the others (teacher, peer-group) and the self (self-confidence, self-esteem etc.). The learning behaviour or learning conduct a student will adopt differes according to his/her belives and knowledge regarding the most effective way to proceed. In a best case scenario, the learning conduct is self-directed, which means that the student undertakes activities through a deep-approach to learning, by actively engaging in the learning process, often using smart learning techinques (effective reading, asking questions regarding the new information in order to check the level of understanding, highlighting text, finding key-words, re-formulating ideas, etc.) and permanently displaying the right attitude for effective learning (reflecting on new ideas, arguing believes- including his/her own!, thirstly searching for answers, challenging perennial theories and truths, creating original models- no matter how bold!, ever curious, ever open to knowledge and change). At the end of the line, considering all the factors previously mentioned as potentially influential and linked together, the student learning behaviour produces results, in terms of academic outcomes and learning satisfaction. Learning satisfaction comes not only from what the student does (learning conduct or academic results), but also form what the student perceives as characterstics of the instructional situation or educational setting. The academic results and learning satisfaction are assumed to be strongly and positively correlated, meaning that a high level of satisfaction coresponde to a high level of performance in learning. From the outcomes starts the second circuit of links (marked in Fig.1 with discontinued-line arrows) indicating a regulatory action of the learning results on attitudes, expectations, personality variables, on the student's side (one loop), and on instructional strategies, on the teacher's side (another loop).

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In an attempt to bring together explanatory or `simply` influential factors pertaining to the academic learning, a somewhat eclectic model of learning came to life. It is far from complete and does not claim to have found (all) the right answers in the matter at hand. Placing importance on a rather volatile concept such as the learning satisfaction is a challenge that comes with risks and gains. The risks reside in the very complex and thus hard to define and manipulate, for research reasons, nature/structure of the construct, which impels to caution when measuring it and methodologically operating with it.

Nevertheless, the gains or benefits seem to outdo the risks, in quantity and quality. The benefits come from the fact that considering learning satisfaction as a powerful factor in explaining effective learning and trying to circumscribe its denotation (while clarifying its connotations) is a step forward in better understanding the reasons behind the individuals' decisions concerning the engagement and involvement in various learning activities or the lack of it. And it's fair to say that involvement in learning activities is one fundamental condition for the effectiveness of the learning and teaching processes.

The current paper intends to be an intermediary point in approaching effective learning and discussing the elements of academic learning in a connected manner. This means that, in the learning equation, intelligence and attitude, learning style and expectations, academic results and learning satisfaction become joint ventures, shedding a communal light on why and how academic learning takes place.

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MUSEUM – BETWEEN HISTORY AND EXPERIENCES

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ABSTRACT

"Action for children. Backing the future", a project developed in United Kingdom, identified six key service pathways to child well-being (Aked, J.; Steuer, N.; Lawlor, E.; Spratt, S., 2009). These pathways help create the conditions for improving children's psychological and social well-being, and influencing positive outcomes over the longer term. They were found to have applicability in universal and targeted service settings and they are in line with results of previous studies (Gardner, 2005; Goleman, 2004). These pathways includes building relationships based on stability and trust and link children into their wider community, promoting of positive emotions and experiences to help ensure happy childhoods and drive longer term positive outcomes, encouraging to use their strengths in a practical way. This approach combines consideration of the structural factors affecting the circumstances of children's lives, together with the psychological and social aspects of their well-being. The combined approach is important due to the dynamic nature of well-being, where positive experiences ('feeling good') and outcomes ('doing well') arise through the interplay between children's external circumstances, their inner resources, and their capabilities and interactions with the world around them.

In order to illustrate the importance of this combined approach, we developed a long-term partnership with several museums from Brașov. Students from the first grade of primary education learned about history, local traditions and cultural identity in formal or non-formal context and transferred their acquisitions in everyday life. They could also teach their parents about the history of houses or costumes and they built together memories for a lifetime.

KEYWORDS: children's well-being, community, experiences, interactions, outcomes, partnership.

1. INTRODUCTION

The school year 2012-2013 marked a shift in the structure and organization of school education in Romania. Introducing the controversial preparatory class brings together the entire curricular cycle of fundamental acquisitions into compulsory primary education. The real impact of this unified approach will be revealed by analyzing and interpreting the results of the process evaluation applied at the end of the curricular cycle, namely assessing just those purchases made in the spirit of new school programs that offer competences training. Including hours of personal development aims, in addition to training of emotional or relational skills such as self-knowledge or

empathy, to stimulate curiosity, to channel age-specific interests, accountability and cooperation, respect for individuality and to promote interaction for shaping the pleasure of learning and motivation for learning as foundations of future authentic learning. Transferring purchases, which works both ways, from formal to non-formal and informal learning, especially by mastering into patterns daily heterogeneous influences means not only reorganization of the classrooms, but also rethinking educational relations as interactions and experiences of the actors of educational communities. Promoting long-term partnerships with various institutions of the local community is therefore useful both as a model of cooperation and as efficient way to authentic educational resources: library and museum. Working in partnership with several museums from Brașov demonstrates that the interactive approach, which transformes rigid visiting space into a creative workshop and classrooms into reconstitution archaeological site produces positive results with multiple and lasting effects on everyone involved: students, parents, educators. For each of these categories, the efficiency is measured in the same terms, reporting results to the resources invested. The quality of results depends on the quality of resources.

2. MUSEUMS AS EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES IN THE POSTMODERN EDUCATION

Theory of experience is based on the continuity category or experiential continuum (Dewey, 1977, p 185), a principle that reveals valuable experiences in terms of education. According to this principle, every experience affects the quality of subsequent experiences from the perspective of internal learning resources and by extending further external conditions of learning, the quality of present experience influencing how the principle is applied. Thus, if an experience stimulates curiosity and interest, determining a purpose, it becomes a driving force whose value can be appreciated only by direction and its application point and only by the adult educator who has responsibility for organizing the educational experience conditions without imposing external control, influencing the formation of attitudes and intervening upon existing environmental, physical and social, which favors the acquisitions that lead to growth (Dewey, 1977, pp. 187-191). In agreement with the theory of experience, taking advantage of the generosity and flexibility of curricula, we have initiated and coordinated throughout the 2012-2013 school year, a partnership with the Museum of History in Brașov County through which was passed a museum education program, and two thematic partnerships: one centered on Easter traditions and conducted in collaboration with the Museum of Ethnography in Brașov and other organized in the national program "School Otherwise. To know more, to be better" in cooperation with the Museum "Casa Muresenilor". The direct beneficiaries of these projects were students registered for a preparatory class in a school from Brașov, students who could build their

own learning experiences in a friendly school and beyond its gates. Indirect beneficiaries were, on the one hand, parents who could understand that the attitude towards school must be reconsidered (Goleman, 2004, p. 280) and, on the other hand, teachers who were able to demonstrate that it is time for change.

2.1. Brașov County History Museum – "The Story of Houses"

The project *"Applications of archeology in museum education"* was part of a broader approach to accessibility of the permanent exhibition devoted to archeology. "The Story of Houses" is the name under which this project has been presented to its beneficiaries. Those were part of two age groups: young children aged 6-7 enrolled in the first grade of primary education, and students of 9-10 years, three fourth grade and one third. The complexity of activities was different for each of the two audiences. Two meetings were held with each class separately, at intervals of about two weeks, according to schedule with each teacher-coordinator. At first, students were led through the permanent exhibition and followed, in the breakfast room archeology, a presentation on how people lived in different historical eras. Secondly, practical work-shops held in the classrooms of the participants were adapted for the two age groups. Students from preparatory classes worked in teams and prepared five different puzzles to reconstruct housing and settlements viewed at the first meeting. The other recipients were challenged to reconstruct, also working in teams, one housing model under the guidance of museum educator. They imitated prehistoric wattle houses and walls plastered with clay (Savu, 2013).

2.2. Ethnographic Museum of Brașov – "The Story of Painted Eggs"

The "Custom of decorating eggs in Romanian tradition" was held from March 1 to April 30, 2013 in collaboration with the Museum of Ethnography in Brașov. The purpose of the partnership was to involve the local community by harnessing the educational potential of museums, and one of its objectives aimed cultivating respect for Romanian authentic values. Preparatory class students were introduced in the technique of wax-painting eggs, known specific symbols and meanings of colors used. They formed their positive attitude towards teamwork, practiced and developed communication skills, internalized rules of behavior generally valid. They had fun and spent toghether with their parents or grandparents beutyfull moments that sustained their future learning.

2.3. "Casa Mureşenilor" Museum from Brașov – "The Story of Costumes"

The "Brașov in Earlier Times" developed in cooperation with "Casa Mureşenilor" Museum from Brașov was the final event of the week "School Otherwise. To know more, to be better", carried out between April 1 to 7, 2013. The theme of this week was "The child and his world" and the activities were focused on promoting volunteering, on shaping socio-cultural identity, on expanding the cultural horizons of students. "The Story of Costumes" was the

name of the activity that started with the interactive presentation of the evolution of clothing objects in the nineteenth century. Based on these informations, students of preparatory class, the youngest participants in this type of activity in the recent history of the cultural settlement, together with parents and grandparents who accompanied them during travel, made clothing items using crepe paper. They were divided into four groups and each of them produced a different kind of costume: crinoline, twist, redingote or tuxedo. The names sound pretentious, but the imagination of children and adults and the unique underline of details scored a memorable activity, kept for reference.

3. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Realities crossed over by the educational system in Romania show that in the efficiency equation we know the expected results defined in terms of competences and the resources used according to our own understanding of influence of experiential continuum (Dewey, 1977). Investing in education is the most important investment a society could achieve (Văideanu, 1988) and concerning for the well-being of the students, that generate positive outcomes in their activities, including educational and professional, would benefit the entire society in short, medium and long term (Aked, J., Steuer, N., Lawlor, E., Spratt, S., 2009). Education for Democratic Citizenship, whose principles are found in defining the key competences at European level, is intrinsically linked to the institution of partnership. This institution must be rethink from the new perspective of educational relations between teacher and student, teacher, student and parents, school and community (Goleman, 2004, Gardner & Hatch, 1989). Reconfiguration of classroom's management in terms of focusing on the student's needs and expectations, on the inclusion of pupils with special educational needs and on the responsibility to provide equal opportunities for all uneven development (Brazelton, 1992, Gardner, 2005; Dewey, 1988, Hamburg , 1992) first determines the change of attitude in understanding that interaction is more than the sum of its parts and that only by interacting added value of any process or product might be obtained (Brazelton, 1992, Gardner, 2005; Dewey, 1988, Hamburg, 1992). The attitude, considered as part of the competence or separately as an independent unit, is assessed according to other rules (Bar-On, 2011; Dafinoiu, 2002). The attitude towards learning and school's activities should also be judged according to other rules, those that take into account whether the student is motivated, interested, responsible or accountable, free to argue its point of view and creative in finding solutions (Saarni, 1990; Roco, 2004 , Goleman, 2007). Such outcomes could be found when the student is considered a partner at his home, in his classroom, in his wider community.

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ASPECTS OF EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT INSIDE PARENT-CHILD RELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between parents and children is defining in order to assure the harmonious development of children's personality, the parent being the first educator who significantly draws the emotional and relational trajectory of the future adult. Our study presents a psycho-pedagogical experiment which was unfolded along a school year, upon a target population of 20 pre-school children and 20 parents. The main objective of the study was the implementation of an improvement program intended to improve parents' and children's level of emotional development. The implemented formative intervention centered around presenting some strategies of emotional education, the importance of awareness and control of emotions, identifying desirable behaviors of children and modalities to punish the inadequate behaviors. The results of our study reflect the influence the parent's emotional development has upon the child's emotional development. All these are in agreement with those belonging to the international research which proves the deep and lasting impact of the parents' emotional aptitudes upon the child's emotional life. The scores obtained by children are the result of the concomitant action of the formative intervention of parents and teachers, and that confirms once more the necessity for deliberate and convergent actions of the three main factors: family, school, community.

KEYWORDS: emotional development, parent-child relationship, strategies of emotional education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The 21st century competences transcend the usual patterns and claim for a new approach: that of the transferability of acquisitions. The attitude, understood in terms of autonomy and responsibility, tends to become a self-sustained competence. The necessity of developing socio-emotional competences in those educated is imperative. The introduction of personal development classes within the formal curriculum, at the level of the curricular cycle of fundamental acquisitions, is the expression of acknowledging the importance of emotional alphabetization in the circumstances of observing the general schedule of human development (Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Hatch, 1989; Goleman, 2001). This is an attitude that could make the difference, and the intervention upon the students' attitude depends on the parent's attitude towards

the change (Gottman, Hooven, Katz, 1994; Huessman, 1987; Thomas, Chess, 1988, Saarni, 1990; Brazelton, 1992; Elias, Tobias, Friedlander, 2007; Segal, 1997). The influence of parental styles upon the emotional development of their own children may be major, and the parents' training needs from the point of view of their emotional abilities are certain. In order to illustrate the importance of emotional education inside the parent-child relationship and to underline the necessity to implement some emotional alphabetization programs destined to parents we have decided to accomplish a psycho-pedagogical experiment.

2. OBJECTIVES AND HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY

This investigating procedure is aiming at three objectives: to identify the level of emotional development of children and their parents; to implement an improvement program destined to ameliorate the level of emotional development of parents; to evaluate the impact of formative interventions upon the emotional development of parents and children. By following those objectives, we have proposed to test the hypothesis according to which, if during the activities with parents, we implement an improvement program based on emotional development strategies, significant ameliorations will be produced both for the emotional development of parents and children.

3. METHOD

3.1. Procedure

The research was unfolded over a period of a school year and covered the phases of a psycho-pedagogical experiment: *The pretest phase* was oriented toward establishing the level of emotional development coefficients of parents and of children. *The experimental intervention phase* had in view the implementation of a formative educational program addressed to parents and aiming at ameliorating their emotional development coefficients. Inside this educational program we centered on presenting strategies of emotional education, underlying the importance of emotion awareness and control, and identifying the desirable behaviors of children and punishing methods for inadequate behaviors. *The posttest phase* was accomplished in the end of the experimental intervention and had in view to re-apply the evaluation instruments regarding the emotional development of parents and children; also, it aimed at identifying the significant differences registered between the initial level and the final level of the dependent variables (intra subject design).

3.2. Participants

There are two groups of participants involved in our investigation: a group is represented by children attending the school year 2011-2012, in the pre-school group at a kindergarten of Brașov and the other group is represented by their parents. The group of pre-school children include 20 children with ages between 4 and 7 (M=6.72, SD=0.70). With the view of setting up the target

population made of the pre-school children's parents, we took as a guide the criterion of the parent who most looks after the child, so the one who has a greater educational influence. The investigated adult subjects have ages ranging between 26 and 58 years old (M=34.45, SD=6.26).

3.3. Measures

Following our objective to identify the emotional development of parents and children we used two categories of methods and instruments of investigation. The investigation tool used to determine the parents' emotional development values consists in a test which was adapted after a similar instrument of Roco and presents ten scripts, each provided with four variants of answer (Roco, 2004), from which the subject picks one. The research method used to identify the children's emotional development values was the observation, and as a registration instrument for the results of the observation we chose to use the observation grid which was developed based on the Emotional Intelligence identification test – the version for children (Roco, 2004). The observation grid includes also ten scripts (like the test used for parents) adapted to answer the concrete realities of the group of pre-school children and, in the same time, to respect the initial versions of the scripts, in order to keep the equivalence between the scripts included in the test for children and those included in the adult version. In this way, we ensure that the data collected from parents and children are comparable.

4. RESULTS

Data analysis reveals the existence of some significant differences between the scores obtained by the adult subjects ($t = -3.36$, $p < 0.05$), but especially between the scores got by the child subjects during the pretest and posttest phases ($t = -17.28$, $p < 0.01$). As a result of the experimental intervention, the level of emotional development coefficient witnesses a significant increase, leaving from the average value of 74.5 (in pretest) and reaching the value of 95 (in posttest) for the adult subjects and from the average value 76 (in pretest) to 152.25 (in posttest) for the child subjects (Table 1). The value of the significance threshold indicates the fact that chances for the change in the emotional development coefficient level to be a consequence of hazard and not of the experimental intervention are lower than 5%. Thus, from the intra subject design perspective, we are in the position to reject the null hypothesis and to accept the hypothesis according to which, as a result of the experimental intervention, improvements appear at the level of emotional development for the subjects included in the experimental batch. We think that the methods and techniques of emotional education have some positive effects upon the level of emotional development of the subjects of investigation. On the whole, at the level of the intra subject design, the results of the posttest phase confirm the

hypothesis of our research by showing that through the implementation of the formative experimental intervention, significant improvements are produced on the level of emotional development both for adult and especially for child subjects.

Table 1. Means difference for the experimental groups in pretest and posttest

Variables	Experimental phases	N	Mean	SD	t	p
The emotional development of parents	PRETEST	20	74,5	23,72	3,36	p < 0,05
	POSTTEST	20	95	35,57		
The emotional development of children	PRETEST	20	76	27,65	17,28	p < 0,01
	POSTTEST	20	152,25	24,41		

The scores obtained by the child subjects come to confirm the necessity to introduce improvement programs beginning with very young ages, when, owing to the malleability of forming psychical structures, the results registered as a result of implementing such programs are both conclusive and pertinent. As for the adult subjects, the results, though not spectacular, generally reveals the fact that those are willing to learn modern education methods and techniques, especially those they missed in their own formation. Also, we need to mention the aspect regarding the scores obtained by child subjects, as those are the result of concomitant action of formative interventions of parents and teachers.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results of our study reflect the influence the emotional intelligence of the parent has upon the child's emotional development. These are in agreement with the findings of the international research that proves the deep and lasting impact of the parents' emotional aptitudes upon the emotional life of their children (Goleman, 2001). The parent-child relationship is defining for the harmonious development of the children's personality, as the parent is the first educator who significantly draws the emotional and relational trajectory of the future adult. The scores obtained by the child subjects come to confirm the necessity to introduce improving programs in order to observe the emotional development schedule, which, implemented at early ages, have remarkable results. As for the adult subjects, the results, though not spectacular, generally reveal the fact that the adults are willing to learn modern education methods and techniques, especially those they missed in their own formation. We also need to mention that the scores obtained by the child subjects are the result of the concomitant action of the formative intervention of parents and teachers, and

that confirms once more the necessity for deliberate and convergent actions from the three main factors: family, school, community.

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A DEMARCHE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRE-SCHOOLERS' SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES – DESIGN AND TESTING (PERFORMER)

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ABSTRACT

The socio-emotional skills development is aimed to improve emotional knowledge and social behaviours required for obtaining desirable and sustainable outcomes. Since the approach designed, developed and implemented for the development of preschool children's socio-emotional competence is based on rational-emotive and behavioural education, this paper aims at theoretical and practical aspects of the literature related to rational-emotive and behavioural therapy and education with emphasis on their applicability to kindergarten activities.

The practical dimension therefore requires the consideration of the relationship between cognition, emotion and behaviour, of the intervention techniques to restructure irrational beliefs in order to develop social and emotional skills, through identifying and then changing irrational beliefs into rational ones.

The issue of socio-emotional skills' development has a high level of applicability in terms of potentialities and trans-disciplinary approach, regarding ways of entering the area of concern, analysis and exploitation of research results.

For this demarche of socio-emotional skills' development in pre-schoolers, I used a qualitative research, on a sample of 34 preschool children, with the psycho-pedagogical observation as a tool with high degree of objectivity in measuring the analysed variables and within a high time horizon in terms of data collection, the results being recorded in an observation grid. The observation grid items were adapted from „The psychological observation and characterization of kindergarten children for school entrance" (Clinciu, 2005).

In order to identify the dysfunctional emotions felt by the children, I used the scale for dysfunctional negative emotions, an intuitive diagnostic tool containing physiological and behavioural indices of emotion manifestation. This scale is part of the „SELF KIT – Programme of socio-emotional skills' development in children" (Opre, 2010).

In addition to the psycho-pedagogical observation grid and social and emotional skills' development in preschool children, we also chose to implement a pedagogical experiment.

Keywords: socio-emotional skills, rational-emotive therapy/theory, rational-emotive and behavioural education, a demarche for the development of pre-schoolers' socio-emotional competences.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past decades, the complexity of educational environments has considerably increased. Curricular and extracurricular tasks often exceed students' and pre-schoolers' time and, especially, mental resources. This imbalance explains why maladaptive emotions and behaviours prematurely manifest in children have significantly grown.

The nowadays generation of children has got much more emotional problems than in the past. They are more lonely and depressed, more angry and intemperate, more impulsive and aggressive, thus they are clearly likely to become anxious in most competitive conditions.

The solution to all of these problems depends on how parents and teachers think preparing young people for life is appropriate and effective. In particular, the way the early childhood education and primary school education can prevent the onset of these disorders.

Unfortunately, we notice that more and more often educational curricula leave outside children' emotional development, their academic preparation becoming unilateral. Often they are deprived even of a minimal emotional literacy, the educational system leaving them disarmed when confronting reality. Therefore, it is required to have a new vision on what kindergarten and then school can do to ensure a comprehensive training of children, both on academic and socio –emotional level, enabling them to better adapt to the complexity of everyday life.

The preschool age is quite a long period that produces significant changes in the child's emotional life. Emotions and feelings accompany the pre-schooler in all his manifestations, be it games, songs, educational activities, or tasks received from adults. They occupy an important place in the child's life and strongly influence his behaviour. Emotion is a person's experience related to an important event in his life.

Regarding the socio-emotional skills, we will start from the main functions of the educational institutions that can be summarized as: transmission of knowledge, transmission of procedures and techniques, transmission of attitudes; in other words, "to know ", "to do" and "to be" (Oberst& al., 2009). The last dimension, the attitudinal one, includes inter and intrapersonal skills which, in return, include social and emotional skills.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Analysing the diversity and the extent of the problems faced by students enrolled in educational institutions, we must concur that the implementation of socio-emotional development programmes has become today more necessary than ever. Among these, the rational – emotional and behavioural education is a preventive program intended as an intervention for students and pre-schoolers (Knaus, 2004). This program relies on the theoretical principles of the Rational

Emotional Behaviour Therapy Theory (REBT). Expression of Albert Ellis's work, the rational-emotional-behavioural theory (REBT) is a classic presence among papers on psychological intervention with cognitive-behavioural commitment. It is based on the assumption according to which the emotional and behavioural problems of individuals result from a faulty thinking and a miss-understanding of events rather than the events themselves. Developed around the concept of "evaluation ", REBT is both, a psychological method and a philosophy of life, its principles representing the basis of one of the most effective methods of psychotherapeutic intervention known so far.

An EREC program consists of modular sequences of psychological education aimed at developing the students' cognitive abilities and behaviours that make them happier and, at the same time, more productive. Originally, it was designed as a program that would optimize the mental health in sessions of group counselling; however, it may be just as effective if, after a prior adaptation, it is used in the individual treatment of the child, adolescent or adult. The main assumption of the REBT theory and, hence, of any EREC program, is best demonstrated by the ABC model of emotional disorders, which we schematically render here (Dryden & Di Giuseppe, 2003).

The ABC (DE) model uses the first letters of the alphabet, which ensures simplicity by abbreviating the basic concepts:

- A (activating events) = activating events
- B (beliefs) = cognitions of the person and the result of the evaluation and interpretation of the activating event
- C (consequences) = consequences of the cognitive processing of the activating event. These consequences can be observed through the emotions and behaviours of the individual and they can be either adaptive or maladaptive. A. Ellis (1967 cited in Ellis and Dryden, 2007) believes that emotional and dysfunctional behaviours are not a consequence of the events themselves, but of the way they are assessed (i.e., B of the proposed model). In other words, D. David (2006) points out that the psychological consequences - C - (emotional, cognitive, behavioural, psychophysiological) are determined not by life events - A – but by the way we interpret life events.

  If the interpretation is irrational, then the consequences will be emotional distress and maladaptive behaviours. If the interpretation is rational then we have adaptive emotions and behaviours.
- D (disputing) = disputing in order to restructure the irrational and dysfunctional cognitions.
- E (effects) = represent the effects resulted in the process of cognitive restructuration and they are reflected in a more rational philosophy of life.

Common problems that can interfere in a child's relationships with others, according to the ABC (DE) model, in terms of irrational beliefs, are (Ellis and Bernard, 2007):

Activating events: social rejection, teasing, having no playmates, not getting invited to a party, loss of a friend.

Cognitions in the form of:

- Inferences (conclusions, predictions): "Everyone is against me ", "Everybody teases me, nobody likes me", "I will never have friends", "I cannot be happy without her/his love." - Absolutes (should be, it is imperative, it absolute necessary): "I need people to like me and to approve of me"
- Ratings: "It is awful to be criticized, to be laughed at or to be alone", "I cannot take this ", " This shows that I am a person without hope".

Consequences (emotional, behavioural): depression, crying, periods of inactivity, avoiding people and tasks, fatigue, irritability.

Another distinction that we want to point out is related to irrational beliefs by comparison with the rational ones.

Irrational beliefs are logically incorrect, incongruent with the objective reality and blocks individual goals (Maultsby, 1991 cited in Macavei, 2002). They appear as absolutes (should be, it is imperative, it is absolutely necessary). Derived from the absolute cognitions (Ellis and Bernard, 2007), they are: catastrophizing (e.g., „It's awful when you're wrong"), low frustration tolerance (e.g., "People who treat me bad are mean and deserve severe punishment") and global assessment (e.g., "I am stupid").

Instead, **rational cognitions** are based on empirical reality, they can help achieve personal goals and comply with the principles of logic (Maultsby, 1991 cited in Macavei, 2002). Rational cognitions (Ellis and Bernard, 2007) are expressed in terms of preferences, not orders, and lead to higher levels of adaptive emotions and appropriate behaviours. Furthermore, we bring details about the way some rational-emotional educational and behavioural application can be used in schools.

The reason why we investigated this aspect is the fact that our emotions and behaviours are determined by our thoughts (Ellis, 1962). Our beliefs play a crucial role in determining how we feel or behave. If we have reasonable beliefs, the consequences will occur in the form of moderate emotions, which helps to achieve goals. On the other hand, if we have irrational beliefs, the consequences will be in the form of dysfunctional emotions such as anger, anxiety or depression, emotions that will prevent the achievement of goals. Thus, a reduction in the level of irrational beliefs on participants in the experimental group means actually replacing these beliefs with more rational ones, fact which entails a series of more adaptive emotions and represents a first step towards the development of socio -emotional skills.

Successfully combating irrationality requires both hard work and the use of the most effective strategies, among which are essentially included the story and the games.

The rational- emotional education was initially promoted in the Living School, where, in 1974, WJ Knausfirst developed educational materials and a guide for teachers (Vernon, 1990). Knaus (1974 cited in Ellis and Bernard, 2007) has developed a curriculum to educate children in the spirit of the ABC model of REBT, based on the effective strategies of thinking, emotions and behaviours that were taught in that school,

Besides the common features included in any rational-emotional and behavioural educational program (e.g., they start from the same theoretical framework and pursue the same goal: the mental health of the subjects), each contains distinct elements that customize the intervention. Already established programs found in the specific literature are:

- **The program proposed by Knaus**, W.J., Rational Emotional Education: A Manual for Elementary School Teachers (1974)
- **Programs offered by Vernon**: Thinking, Feeling, Behaving, 1989 and The Passport Program. A Journey through Emotional, Social, Cognitive and Self - Development. Grades 1-5/6-8/9-12, 1998. These were translated into Romanian and they provide a comprehensive curriculum to teachers, counsellors, school psychologists, social workers to be used to help children and adolescents learn the concepts of mental health.
- **The program proposed by Michael Bernard** (1995, 2001, 2002, 2003a, 2003b, 2004a, 2004c, 2005a): *You Can Do It*! Education(YCDI), which is a system that aims to help all students develop educational, social, emotional and behavioural wellness.

We will not get into any more details regarding these programs, we only add that A. Ellis, ME Bernard (2007) consider that integrating key concepts of rational-emotional and behavioural education can be achieved while performing ordinary activities, carried out in the classroom. This method is less direct than a structured lesson, but it is a viable way to reinforce the rational concepts integrated into the curriculum. For example, while teaching literature, the teacher can select and discuss stories and poems that show characters that solve problems rationally or express emotions in a healthy manner. It is important to use the content questions and to customize the model proposed by A. Vernon (2004a, b). In addition, the vocabulary of the students can be enriched with words and phrases that properly capture emotion and expression in their behaviours.

- **The program proposed by a group of psychologists and pedagogues, academics and practitioners with cognitive behavioural commitment (Opre et al., 2010): "SELF KIT" (SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING FACILITATOR)** from Cluj. It is a psychological and educational counselling

programme that aims to target major socio-emotional skills of children of preschool age and elementary school in the Romanian educational institutions. SELF KIT has been designed and structured in relation to a number of dysfunctional emotions with increased incidence in the Romanian educational environment: anxiety (fear), depression (deep sadness), anger, shame, guilt, jealousy, feelings of injury. For each of these unhealthy emotions and their associated behaviours, one or more modules of intervention have been developed. Such a module is composed of several elements: a story (the core of the module), one or more thematic activities, poems, songs, riddles, crosswords and games. A number of scientific sequences were added and have been developed in relation to the central theme of the story, sequences which were included in a small encyclopaedia (Selfpedia).

3. STUDY DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Study design

Studying the above mentioned programs, we have proposed the design, elaboration and testing phases of a process of socio- emotional development in preschool children, based on the theoretical principles and rational-emotional behaviours theory (Ellis, 1979).

3.2. Sample

We implemented this approach with a group of children from a kindergarten in Brașov with extended service hours, the pedagogical experiment having been conducted during a period of over ten weeks.

3.3. Data Collection and Analysis

We named this project "My-SELF", acronyms for My Social Emotional Learning Facilitator and supervised the implementation of the rational-emotional and behavioural theory in all classroom activities: free-chosen activities, experiential activities and personal development activities. Following the SELF KIT model, we have developed, in some cases adapted, four intervention modules for unhealthy emotions and their specific behaviours, as follows: anger, anxiety, jealousy, and guilt.

As a result, the stories of each module comprise in their content all the elements of a REBT type counselling sequence. To be more precise, the main characters (usually the favourite animal of the children or children of the same age as those whom we addressed the story to) accurately interpret the role of the client, respectively the counsellor. First, in the preamble of each story, the general context in which actions take place is presented and stakeholders are introduced.

In the beginning, they are described only in terms of physical and general social status, without any reference to their way of thinking and acting. During the second sequence, the negative dysfunctional emotional experiences and the associated maladaptive behaviours of the "client" are presented.

Various problems (practical and emotional) that the client is facing are then exposed. The emphasis is mainly on irrational ideation that caused these problems.

As of now, the "advisor" enters the scene and helps the clients establish the connection between the emotional and behavioural dysfunctions they are experiencing and their own thoughts behind those dysfunctions. The same counsellor educates and helps the client dispute (make vulnerable) his irrational beliefs, suggesting different strategies and techniques of disputing. The strategies are then assessed along with the client from the point of view of their effectiveness in the process of replacing the irrational (unhealthy) thoughts with rational (healthy) ones. The best way to motivate the client for using these strategies is to highlight the benefits resulting from the disputing and, thus, from the cognitive restructuring produced by this strategy. A test-sequence then follows, during which the therapist verifies if the client understood correctly and applied properly the right strategies.

At the end of each story, the SELF elf, our main character which represents the rational thinking, addresses directly to the children through a message that encourages rational thinking. He also urges them or their parents to read various stories from the oral literature, gathered in a distinct book. These stories are also saturated with rational messages and help children test the ecological validity of the strategies they were familiarized with by the reading the central story of the module.

The reading will be followed by an analysis made in collaboration with the children, regarding the problems faced by the characters in the story. The focus will have to fall first on the faulty thinking of the central character, respectively, on the consequences of this faulty way of thinking, expressed emotionally and behaviourally. After that, they evaluate and discuss the strategies which the characters used in order to replace irrational (unhealthy) thoughts with rational (healthy) ones, particularly insisting on the benefits such a change brings.

In order to maximize the effect of such interventions, the stories accompanied by poems, songs, games, crosswords and images grounded on the same principles (REBT principles) that guided the process of developing the stories. They continue the central theme and message of the story coherently and are explicitly designed to consolidate and generalize a realistic and healthy mind-set during pre-school.

In order to test the efficiency level of this approach, we chose the psycho -pedagogical observation as a tool of a high objectivity in measuring the

analysed variables and having no time constraints in terms of data collection required. The results were recorded in an observation grid. The observation items in the grid were adapted after the "Psychological observation and characterization grid of the kindergarten child preparing for school" (Clinciu, 2005).

In order to identify the dysfunctional emotions felt by children, we used the negative dysfunctional emotions scale, an intuitive diagnostic tool, containing physiological and behavioural indices of manifesting emotions. The scale is part of the "SELF KIT – Programme of socio-emotional skills development in children", programme whose coordinator is prof. Adrian Opre.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The assumption of this research was that by implementing a rational-emotional and behavioural education programme for social and emotional development in preschool children, based on scientifically validated principles specific to a psychological intervention with cognitive-behavioural commitment, the degree of integration and adaptation to the community is positively influenced.

The comparative analysis of the results obtained by the group of children at the initial and the final evaluation, we can say that the hypothesis was confirmed. Pre-schoolers are motivated to actively participate in the learning activities and they progress in terms of socio-emotional development, as highlighted by the results obtained from the observation of their behaviours. After applying the scale of dysfunctional negative emotions, the number of dysfunctional emotions felt by children decreased considerably in favour of the functional emotions.

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THE ROLE OF SOCIO-EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

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ABSTRACT

The article is focused on the role of emotional development in early childhood. The key of human development is socio-emotional development. The theoretical premises of this research are to be found in the studies and theories on the relationship between emotional development in early childhood and cognitive development - Bowlby, Ainswoth, Lewis, etc.

The factors which are involved in early childhood are families, educators and community. Educators are the most important agents of child emotional development because they can improve the learning environment. Educators usually promote in their daily activities a sense of empathy, concern for others, openness and respect of human nature.

Interactions between educators and children which are warm and friendly promote a sense of self and develop children's well-being. All this arguments underline the important role of educators in early childhood for socio-emotional development.

KEYWORDS: *education, early childhood, socioemotional development*

1. INTRODUCTION

The socio-emotional development is a key factor for children to succeed in school. The socio- emotional development is important for children's growth because there is a strong link between emotional, cognitive and social development. A lot of studies [1,2,3,4,5,9,11] show that children with socio-emotional skills are more able to: express their ideas and feelings, display empathy towards others, manage their positive or negative feelings, feel self-confident, etc.

The greatest influence on a child's social-emotional development is the quality of attachment and the family environment. Parents play an important role in children's social and emotional development but today they do not have enough time for their children. The kindergarten becomes a second family where children play, learn and grow. In this way, the preschool teacher becomes an important agent in child development.

2. SOCIO-EMOTIONAL COMPETENCES – THE ”TOOLS” OF SOCIAL SUCCESS

New competences that are necessary today, such as tolerance, critical thinking, communicational skills, empathy, emotional and social intelligence, intercultural skills, can be called tools of social success.

In a document of the Council of Europe it is specified: “In an information society, what matters is the ability to select information, to think critically, to solve problems, to work in a team, to form value judgments, to communicate and constantly to question one`s knowledge and abilities in the light of changing needs” [10, p.90].

„Social and emotional development involves the acquisition of a set of skills. Key skills among them are the ability to:

• identify and understand one’s own feelings,
• accurately read and comprehend emotional states in others,
• manage strong emotions and their expression in a constructive manner,
• regulate one’s own behaviour,
• develop empathy for others, and
• establish and sustain relationships.” [11]

Another meaning of social skills can be found in a European Union document on key competences for lifelong learning which states that these social skills refer to personal, interpersonal and intercultural skills and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in the social and professional world. They ensure the personal and social well-being.

Social skills are a prerequisite to effective social adjustment. They materialize in a social behaviour appropriate to the context the child is at a certain time: differentiated greetings, smiling, addressing some pleas or requests, thanks, etc.).

Analysing the concept of social competence we notice the following interlinked characteristics [8]:

- *complexity, as proof of the difficulty to be captured in a valid general definition.*

Some specialists have defined social competence through its structure, others through its results or by reference to other concepts, such as social intelligence.

K. Alberchts proposes a working definition of social intelligence: "the ability to get along well with others and to get them to cooperate with you" [1, p.19] and identifies five components of social intelligence: the sense of the situation, presence, authenticity clarity, empathy.

Another theorist of social intelligence is Daniel Goleman, the famous author of "Emotional Intelligence". As Albrecht, he also describes social

intelligence as consisting of two components, each with certain subcomponents [4, p.102]:

A. *Social consciousness* - what we notice about others and

B. *Social disinhibition* - that builds on social consciousness to give rise to effective and smooth interactions.

- *The dynamics of the concept of social competence, the fact that it depends very much on the age of the individual and on the social context and that it evolves along with the demands of society.*

If in the 1930s social competence came down to having a job, a family and having a good position in the community, today social competence includes, besides the aspects mentioned above, the capacity of active involvement in the community, assertive communication, management of crisis situations, etc.

Age is also an important criterion in the analysis of social competence. For example, we cannot compare a teenager's social competence (recognized as socially competent) to that of an adult's, due to the fact that in the structure of social competence, life experience, interpretation of various events, the way life experiences are valued and internalized depend much on the individual.

- *The difficulty of measuring social competence*

This difficulty results from the fact that most scholars who have studied social competence stated that sociability has an important role in the expression, affirmation and development of social competence. But sociability also resides in innate biological mechanisms. Such a theory is supported by Jerome Kagan who, through the longitudinal studies conducted, demonstrates that not all children are equally sociable.

However there are different ways and techniques for measuring/recording sociability starting with different types of observations to the socio-metric test. The results obtained by these methods offer an insight of someone's social competence.

3. HOW CAN WE DEVELOP SOCIO-EMOTIONAL SKILLS IN KINDERGARTEN?

The preschool years are a sensitive period for the socio-emotional development. H. Siebert [7] argues that these competences must be formed in a real context, through contact with experiences. In early childhood the experiences, as sources of learning, must be organized and selected by professionals. The role of the preschool teacher is to promote the participation, to encourage the exchange of knowledge, feelings and experiences. The preschool teacher serves as a model of communication and behaviour through every day experiences.

Social skills are formed at an early age through interaction with family members and then through interaction with actors from the school environment. Unlike in family, in school, starting from the kindergarten, social skills are formed systematically, consciously and in an organized way, either through activities specifically aimed at training these skills (the "Man and society" domain-specific activities) or through all interactions resulting from the space and climate of the group of children.

Teachers should aim to train these skills explicitly, so that school (kindergarten) education is in fact a preparation for life. The whole range of emotions and feelings that accompany the child in school life as well as all interactions with the (diverse and dynamic) complex world of kindergarten are an excellent workout for the later world of professions, family life, personal life.

But this workout is effective only if it satisfies the following conditions [8]:

- **It is done systematically** (empathy, cooperation, acceptance of differences, affirming own personalities, etc.) are not spontaneously or accidentally achieved in an activity from the "Man and society" domain, for example. All these competences must be trained at each opportunity, at every child - teacher interaction.
- **It is consciously sought**. (At first glance, it seems that people develop their social skills anyway, because man is a social being by definition, forced to interact with others. But smooth interrelationships, assertive communication, acceptance of differences, cooperation and so on are not learned by default, but with difficult and very rarely, with high risks, whereas conscious learning is not only much more efficient, but also rewarding and motivating and it discards the risk of failure which leads to closure and social isolation). Here, the role of the preschool teacher is very important.
- **It is diversified** (various situations for the training of social skills are exploited - not only the actual learning situations, but also the extracurricular, informal situations. Any child-child or teacher-child interaction and even teacher-teacher interaction has a formative potential for the social skills).
- **It is constantly assessed, self-assessed and inter-assessed** (if in extracurricular situations social skills are assessed implicitly through the person's success/failure in relating to peers, in kindergarten these skills are assessed directly and explicitly, much more nuanced. Moreover, peer assessment and especially self-assessment are valuable levers that contribute to the training of social skills).

Suggestions for the socio-emotional development in kindergarten.

A. Suggestions for the learning environment:

- to use interactive methods which lead to socio-emotional skills;
- to encourage children to cooperate and to express their feelings;

- to involve children in arranging their classroom according to social or personal events (a child's birthday, a religious or community fest);
- to use the nonverbal language or „love language" [2] in several social context;
- to create a safe climate for every child.

B. Suggestions for curriculum design
- to promote optional courses for socio-emotional education;
- to promote child-centred teaching and learning.

C. Suggestions for assessment:
- to use assessment as a „coach" for life (the assessment is an occasion to live positive or negative feelings, to prepare oneself for other stronger feelings);
- to use assessment methods which help children feel competent.

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COMMUNICATION WITHIN THE GROUP OF STUDENTS. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING THE STRUCTURE OF COMMUNICATION AND THE COMMUNICATIVE BALANCE

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Abstract
The study presents the findings of some observations on how communication is structured within the group of students in the initial stage of building the classroom as a social group, and how this structure evolves during the educational process. The communication behaviors of students in the first grade of primary education (pupils aged 6/7) are analysed. The most general finding is that, although the group of children is in the initial stage, there obviously is a natural tendency to set up their communication circuits fast enough, even if later on the first configuration will prove fragile and will be remodeled. Based on this finding, the study addresses some pedagogical aspects of communication within the group of students.

Keywords: communication, group of students, communicative balance

1. Introduction

The starting point of this study is the findings of some comments on how to structure communication in the group of students in the initial stage of forming the classroom as a social group, namely the class of primary school (pupils aged 6 / 7) in the first weeks of school. Our intention was to see how students in a new formed class communicate in a non-formal context in the absence of the teacher, during the break or before the start of classes, as students arrive to school. In order that our presence should not be detected by students, we used the physical configuration of the classroom, which allowed us to observe from behind a window without being seen by students. Observations were made in the internship program conducted by students at the master's degree program - *Psycho-pedagogy of early education*.

Subsequently, we have extended our observations at the initial stage, the intermediate stage during the school year, with the intention to refer to the developments in the structure of communication in the group of students under the influence of education. We have also extended the observations and groups (classes) of older students. Based on these observations, but also of practical educational experiences, the study addresses some of the valences of

pedagogical communication and communicative balance in the group of students.

2. Structuring communication within the group of students

By observing the communication behavior of students, the first impression was that of a somewhat chaotic distribution of transmitting and receiving messages, interventions and responses that one or another of the students. Each new student that came to class or left the class temporarily changed things, some students unexpectedly break into the conversation while others give up and retire to their desks.

But continuing the observation for 10-15 minutes, I found that gradually the students acquire communication acts a certain configuration, and if we plot this *configuration* we get something like a sociogram. In fact, this configuration reflects a certain visible *structure of group communication* that shows how to initiate and organize communication acts regarded as *group interactions*. By way of illustration, we present in Fig. 1 the simplified version (there were only retained typical situations) communication structure observed in Class I (urban school) in the second week of school before the start of classes (the teacher was asked to delay a few minutes at the first class). The class was chosen from among those whose students come mostly from kindergarten or different preschool groups, our intention being to reduce the effect of the transfer structure that influences the preschool group.

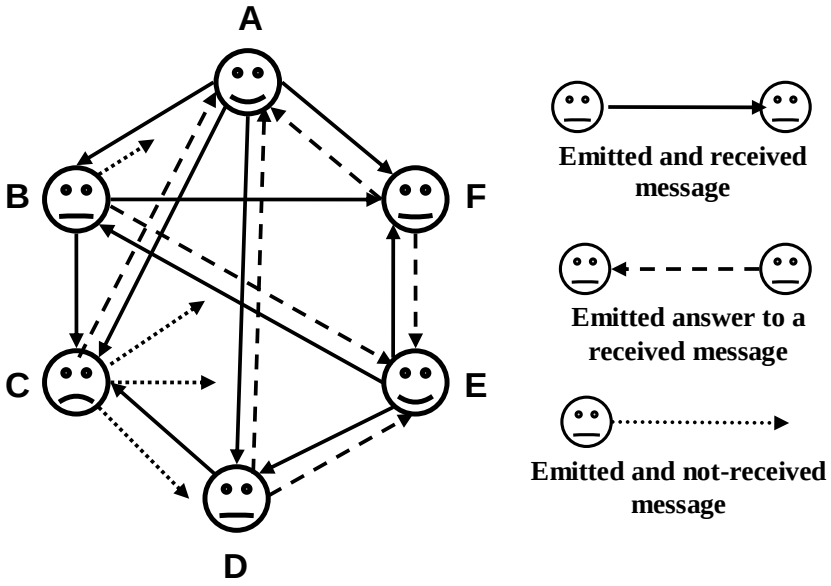

Fig. 1 - Structure of group communication

The first finding that permits inspection of the figure no. 1 is that, although the group of children is in the initial stage and most students do not know and have never interacted in the new configuration of the group (class I), it is obvious *a natural tendency to group structure communication circuits fast enough*, even after the first configuration will prove fragile and will be remodeled. This trend of structuring the communication is maintained throughout the operation of the group, with the proviso that, gradually, as the formation of the group formation of psychosocial intersect it sometimes interferes (both factor and effect) to other structures within the group (preferential relations structure, of the influence and authority) which confirms that *the communication takes place against the background of group interactions*, forming a phrase or support these interactions. For example, students who turn out good communicators tend to acquire a good position in the relations of power and authority (they are listened to and followed by others). From the other direction, students gain a better position in the structure of relations of power and authority (e.g. due to good school performance) tend to gain a privileged communication within the relationships.

A second finding that enables our observations is that *students / children spontaneously communicate in various ways from the moment of their coexistence in the group* without needing the intervention of a facilitator or moderator (as is often the case in adults). Regarding specific issues reflected by the structure shown in Fig 1, one can make the following comments:

- obviously, student A is the leader of the group communication; he emits four messages and receives three reactions from the fourth response (from student B) no longer perceived, because it is busy issuing / receiving other messages;

- student E also holds a very good position that maintains mutual relations of communication with three colleagues who probably know each other from the nursery school or from home;

- a special situation arises if student C who receives three messages but one answer, however emits three messages that do not reach the recipients or are not received by them. Typical is the case of the student who "talks but does not listen to anybody" and yet continues to talk. It is possible that it derives from a group of preschoolers who have a good communicator position, the current situation is just a step in adapting to the new group.

It is interesting that we have identified a structure almost similar to that of Fig. 1 at the beginning of 5^{th} grade class and 9^{th} grade and the first year of college, which justifies the conclusion that the structure of group communication is conducted by relatively general rules. Extending the observations regarding the relations communication content and forming messages were possible we have reached some interesting findings:

- those group members who fail to send messages of general interest acquire positions of leadership communication;

- those who know how to prepare the communication circuit prior to the characterization of the message that they will send fail to be listened to. For example, in the group of students (class IX) the one who managed to be listened to was the student, after two unsuccessful attempts, said "You do not want to listen, no problem, but you'll be sorry";

- students who know how to exploit contrasts manage to become leaders, that is those who speak loudly when others speak slowly and speak slowly when others speak loudly, or they go back there and talk to the class when they want to impose more in the class.

3. The communicational valence of the group

From the moment we aim to stimulate and capitalize group communication we must ask what and how much can be communicated through and within the group, what the possibilities and the limits of group communication are. In order to accomplish the *communicative valence* concept is very useful. Introduced by Y. Friedman [1] and R. Escarpit [2], the term valence refers to *the number of individuals with whom an individual can communicate directly over a period of time*. Translated in terms of group communication, communicative valence means:

- *while emitting*, the number of members of the group to which a member may issue messages that might produce influences (reactions).

- *while receiving*, the number of members of the group to which a group member can influence message that might produce influences (reactions).

As R. Escarpit [2] noted, this report recognizes the fundamental *information / time* and we also add (referring to the group communication) the important report of the members of a group and the number of possible communication acts for each group member. In this regard, it is important to note *that group communication possibilities are limited* and that, therefore, in a given period of time, the chances of each member to participate in communication resulting from the combination of the process of communication and the number of group members are also limited. These highlights are important because, when assessing teaching methods based on group communication (conversation, debate etc.) it is also revealed that a disadvantage of these methods that involve time-consuming a small amount of information effectively conveyed and assimilated by students. Typically, these evaluations fail, however, that the time required size interactive communication group in a given volume of information depends directly proportional to the size of the group of students. But as a communication process do not exceed certain limits, when these limits are exceeded two phenomena may occur:

- Whether the (too) big group splits into small groups each performing their own communication circuit, so that the large group of issuance processes occur simultaneously (talking once more, each trying to "conquer" its listeners), which is in fact a breakup of the group in which you made the initial communication;

- whether a part of group members waive or refuse to participate in the act of communication (both at inception and at reception), which is in fact a temporary reduction of the number of real members of the group, ie bringing the size of the group to the necessary dimension imposed during communication.

Both phenomena are negative, both in terms of communication and group cohesion plan and certainly plan to achieve educational objectives pursued by the group communication. Within educational groups, these phenomena are particularly evident, and the teacher can take action to mitigate them, in two ways:

- Determining the optimum number of members in the group and participating in group communication (communication is preferably a small group, but interactive and open to all members of a communication "table", but they leave out a significant number of students);

- Setting judiciously during group communication, based on the number of students that make up the group and the possibilities of their mental support while the act of communication.

In this regard, it is considered ideal for effective communication that the group should be formed of 5-7 members and may not exceed 14 to 16 members, the limit beyond which the phenomena mentioned above begin to manifest. Naturally, this is an ideal group size, it cannot be guaranteed in all circumstances, so that teachers have the task of establishing "centers of interest" in group communication and organize communication in small groups to allow participation of all the students. If, however, there is the possibility of organizing smaller class groups, then the solution is to limit the amount of information (knowledge) to an amount affordable by the communication group (class). *Adapting to the knowledge on classroom sizes, given the duration of the lesson is inextensible, is an essential condition to the effectiveness of teaching methods based on group communication*.

4. The communicative balance within the group

Observing the actual situation of a communication group, we find that participation in the act of communication of group members is uneven, some being more active, "aggressive", others are more passive, more secluded. In education, these situations are not only obvious, but also very common. Concrete situations depend on the individual characteristics of each student

(temperament, skills, traits of character) and how the group organizes communication. Often, the dynamics of participation reflects the very dynamic "natural" interactions within the group, preferential relations, authority, the inter-influence occurring within the group. To grasp the distinction in participation in communication we will use the concept of communicative balance of each group member. (With relatively similar meanings, Y. Friedman [1] uses the term *balance of influences* and R. Escarpit [2] *Information on the balance sheet*).

For the purposes of this study we use, *communicative balance is the algebraic sum of the influences that each individual carries (the act of issuing, ranked by +) the influences it receives (the act of perception, rated to -)*. For example, if a student receives 3 issue 4 posts and messages, its balance is positive and equal to 1 (4-3 = 1). If you deliver two messages, but receive 4 then the balance sheet is negative and equal to -2 (2-4 = -2). Of course, while the act of issuing can be easily recorded, the act of perception is less obvious and this record is uncertain. Therefore, we consider only the received message that generates a response message (verbal or nonverbal) of the subject. If the balance is equal between the communicative group members, the group is *egalitarian*, if unevenly when the group is *hierarchized*. Schematically, the two groups are shown in Fig. 2. In this figure, the arrows indicate influences and not mere issuance of messages in that message generates a certain reaction, response, an effect on communication behavior of others.

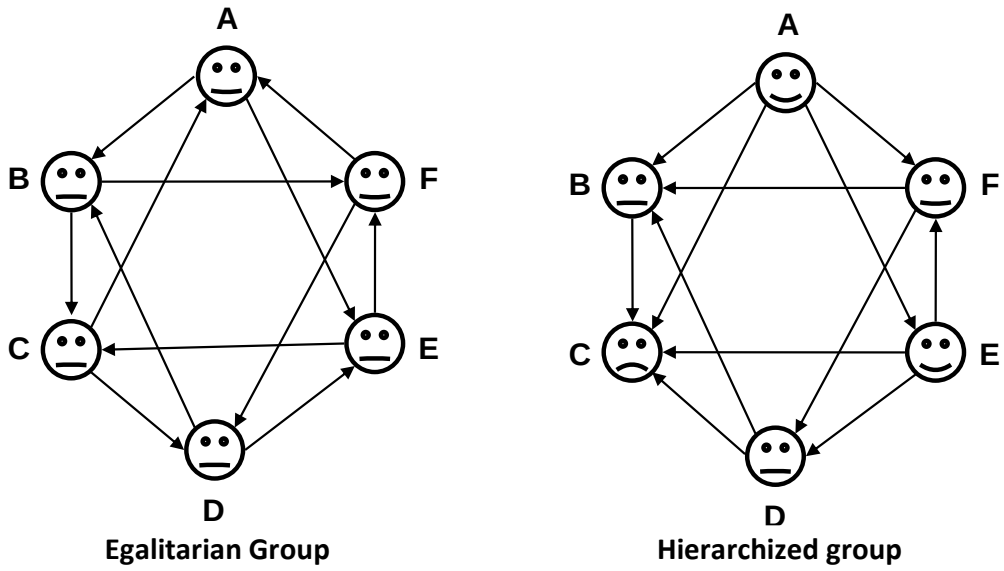

Figure. 2. The communicative balance

In the egalitarian group, the positions of the members (e.g. students of a class) are the same, communication is "democratic", each member having equal opportunities to deliver messages and thus influence the behavior of others. It should be stressed that the situation of a perfectly egalitarian group is rare because in the process of group formation, naturally occurring hierarchies, there appear leaders, some students gaining a central position, while others are "marginalized". Therefore, the establishment of an egalitarian communication relationship type involves direct or indirect in the sense directing teacher relations communication for each student to participate actively, as issuer, and not only as a receiver of information.

The group hierarchy, members are unequal positions, organized by levels of influence so that information and communication circuits tend to focus like a pyramid, with a maximum balance communicative leader or group leaders.

The actual process of education and as students know, the phenomenon of hierarchy of groups of students is very evident and necessary. It is important to know and to directly influence the convergence with the objectives of education, norms and values that generate the hierarchy. Moreover, real social life continually generates hierarchies and social structures demands habituation between students.

Each of the two configurations of communication - egalitarian and hierarchical - has both advantages and disadvantages. The teacher must coordinate group to group one type or another, depending on the objectives and of the specific teaching and learning.

But he/she should bear in mind that the option for one type or another depends on *the group size.* An egalitarian group cannot be too high. The optimal number is 4-5 members, and over 12 members there have already been recorded phenomena of loss of balance of equal communicational (students who do not have the opportunity to intervene in communication). The communication time required for full egalitarian communication overlaps the physical opportunities for communication (attention is reduced and reception does not occur).

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THE TRAINING OF COMPLEX KOWLEDGE SKILLS ABOUT THE CHILD OR THE RELATIONS IN CHILDREN GROUP

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Abstract:

To know the level of development of a child or the kind of relations that can be establish between the children in the education process, requires skills and competences which must be formed and trained during the didactic process. The children are the raw material with which the professors work every day and this work cannot be done without a complex knowledge about the child and about the relationships which reflect the dynamic of children group. The author presents her experience in the training process for aquire the mentioned skills at the future professors in the primary school or in early education. The data are based on the results obtained by the master students during a semester of training. The conclusions are relevant for the necessity of the skills and competence training.

Key words: competence, skill, evaluation, didactic process.

From the pedagogy based on objectives, through the pedagogy of "full learning", it was reached the pedagogy centered on skills. There are currently three dimensions of competence approach:

- a dimension that has its origins strictly in the scientific means of the skills;
- a dimension resulting from the key-skills offered at European level;
- a dimension of the competences described in the curriculum realization (general and specific skills (Glava & al, 2009).

In the first case, the discussion on the characteristics of competences (with multiple pro and against) often limits themselves to a theory and psychology of learning, analyzing the actual process of formation of these skills. It emphasizes the integrated nature of their training and the sequence of events leading to training and skills development itself. The school learning has, in this case, a profoundly inductive character (based on well-defined basic skills, skills with a greater generality).

In the second case, predominantly deductive it starts from the European key-competence (resulting themselves in a long process of development,

negotiation and assumption), to skills training process. The main element is the transversal character of them and their orientation toward lifelong learning (Ilica, 2009).

The third area is limited to the application of the skills school curriculum to the concrete learning situations; in this case, it's about the processing of the skills in the curricula, considering them as the main purpose of learning and the buolding of the training process around the effort of training and touchinh these skills. In this situation, it is placed a special emphasis on building certain learning situations that lead to performance.

These three ways of perceiving the skills are currently a very obvious fact. They do not exclude each others, but complement them by the defining elements from each part. Combine them in an articulated theoretical structure is a result of a "didactic skills training." (Mândruţ, Ardelean, 2012, p.12).

The key-competences - have an explicit and implicit presence in the Law of National Education, which shows that their inclusion is the maximum referential finalities of education (2011).

The article 4 of the Law of National Education specifies that: "the main goal of education is to training the skills (defined as "a set of versatile and transferable knowledge, aptitudes / and skills in different situations)".

From the European Commission point of view, the definition of the key-skills is: the key-skill is a transferable, multifunctional package of knowledge, skills (skills) and attitudes which all individuals need for personal fulfillment and development, social inclusion and professional insertion. They must be the completion of compulsory education and must act as a foundation for further learning as part of lifelong learning".

From this definition and the analysis of the specific of key skills results in the following:

- the competences are defined by a system of knowledge - skills (abilities) - attitudes;
- they have an implicit transdisciplinary character;
- the key-skills are somehow educational purpose of the compulsory education;
- they must be the basis of lifelong learning.

The eight areas suggested by the EuropeanCommission are:

- Communication in the mother tongue
- Communication in foreign languages
- Mathematical competences and basic competences in science and technology
- Digital competences (IST - Information Society Technology)
- Social competence and civic competence
- Learning to learn
- Initiative and entrepreneurship

- Cultural awareness and expression (DESECO, 2002).

In this context we chased PERFORMER program the training of complex skills kowledge about the child or the relations in children group, to the second study-year graduate students.

The landmarks of the course Complexe methods of knowledge about the child and group / class focused on three learning units encompassing core knowledge necessary for training these skills.

The first unit of learning Perspectives and guidelines in the conceptual analysis assessment and self-assessment in early childhood education and small school age have as contents: the purpose and importance of sociology of education; Definition: socialization and education (formal, non-formal, informal), two-dimensional continuum of educational sociology; History (functionalist theories and their influence in the educational field - Emil Durkheim, Talcott Parsons, symbolic interactionism - Herbert Mead, sociological phenomenology - Alfred Schutz, popular drama - Erving Goffman, ethnomethodology - Harold Garfinkel, Aaron Cicourel, Hans Sacks); Competence profile of the specialist in the early years - in the light of sociological theories of education.

It was monitored the formation of the following competences at the students who were in the course: background of specific knowledge regarding the subject of the discipline and the main sociological theories (functionalist, symbolic interactionism, sociological phenomenology, the dramaturgical model and the ethnomethodology) that influenced education; ability to summarize and critically analyze the major social theories that have influenced education; competence based obn the summaries outlining of the presentation of the main social theories that have influenced education; understing and depth profiling of professional competence of the specialist in early childhood education with emphasis on sociological components of this field.

The second unit of the course had as contents: Society and education in historical perspective; Structuralist constructivism - School success in terms of structuralist constructivism. The theory of educational transmission (sociolinguistic codes): power relations in the classroom; capital management through rituals of consensus and difference in education; school cohesion through expressive order. Crisis respect for civic rights and responsibilities: Democracy and social inequality in education, from the perspective of Passeron and Bernsterin. Education and social mobility - Pitirim Sorokin: Problem meritocracy; Causes of social mobility; Changes in the demands of society towards its members; Crisis educational policies. Measuring individual habitus and the habitus school through measurement scale individual habitus and school; Case study: Is there a crisis of the organization of education systems and administrative decentralization in education in Romania?; Proposals for a draft resolution to the crisis in Romania curriculum; Study and use pattern

analysis for social and professional paths of individuals - Traian Rotariu; Calculate the relative chances (odds ratio).

The competencies followed were: Identify, describe and analyze a series of educational issues impacting on social theories of education; identify the three types of habitus in educational space, describing the relationship between them and school success from structuralist constructivism; description of power relations in classroom (human capital management, school cohesion) using the theory of educational transmission (socio-linguistic codes); identify and analyze the level of respect for civil rights from the perspective of Passeron and Bernsterin on democracy and social inequalities; analysis of education and social mobility based on theories and data models; description and identify ways of solving the crisis of educational policies at national and European level; measuring individual habitus and the social through the correct identification Scale individual habitus and the social; a project for the resolving the crisis in Romania curriculum; use correct paths analysis model professional and social paths of Traian Rotariu; accurate calculation of the ratio of relative chances (odds ratio).

Positive attitudes towards social component of the professional competency profile of the specialist in early education and schooling children: prenatal development of adapting scientific explanation and scientific language needs a well-defined target audience; its implications for community education.

The thirs learning unit had as content: Family: functionalist perspective, interactionist perspective conflictualistă and perspective on family life; Diana Baumrind parenting styles vision. School. Diagnosis schools. Non-integration crisis school: school failure and theories concerning this: the theory of "resistance" to frustration; theory of "differential association"; theory of "social disorganization"; theory "delinquent subculture" and "street-side groups"; "Social labeling theory"; school success: theories and explanatory models of school success: dynamic type explanations and action; full learning theory; factor analysis; theories of motivation; explanations of behavior; cognitive explanations; stimulation of school success: adapting to school life; interaction effect of internal and external factors; conditions securing academic, cognitive and psychosocial success; school abandon: causes, solutions, statistics. Community

And as competences were envisaged: effective use of the conceptual framework for the analysis of different perspectives of family theories and models based on data; correct, analysis and interpretation of the questionnaire to identify parenting styles; designing a learning situation for boosting school success in terms of the sociology of education; correctly designing a Community approach in respect of the form given project phases, in order to strengthen the partnership school - family - community.

The tasks required students graduate at the end of the course to assess skills training were:

Make a characterization of a kindergarten (first cycle) child based on psycho-pedagogical sheet;

Apply the sociometric test in a group / class

Make a sociogram based on sociometric test.

Interpret the results qualitatively.

The final evaluation of the students revealed the formation of competencies for each case (see Figure 1).

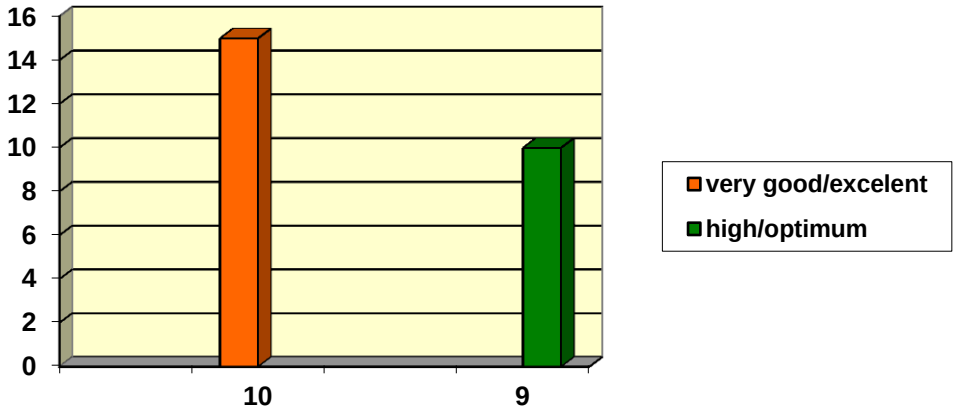

Fig.1. The level of skills training

In this way, the training process for acquire the skills mentioned at the future professors in the primary school or in early education, prove its necessity in the formation of the teaching staff for these periods of age. Our findings underscore once again the fundamental requirement for primary and pre-school to have teachers trained and competent in the field achieved as a result of adequate scientific training. The master schedule becomes a prerequisite for the professional training of teachers working at these levels and that, in essence, is the foundation for a child's future education.

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