

EDUCAȚIA-PLUS
JOURNAL PLUS EDUCATION



Volume XVI, Nr. 2/ 2016

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JOURNAL PLUS EDUCATION



Volume XVI, No. 2/ 2016

**QUARTERLY JOURNAL, PUBLISHED BY
“AUREL VLAICU” UNIVERSITY, ARAD**

VOLUME XVI, No. 2 October 2016

Journal Plus Education (JPE) is an official peer-review quarterly journal, issued by the Faculty of Educational Sciences, Psychology and Social Work, “AUREL VLAICU” UNIVERSITY, ARAD, which is also published online.

Coverage

- ***CNCSIS classification B+ category***
- ***Ulrich’s***
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EDUCAȚIA-PLUS

JOURNAL PLUS EDUCATION



Volume XVI, Nr. OCTOBER/ 2016

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Autorii își asumă răspunderea pentru conținutul și proveniența materialelor publicate în revistă.

ISSN: 1842-077X

E- ISSN (online) 2068 – 1151

Editura Universității “AUREL VLAICU”

Arad, 2016

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract. *In the formal educational environment characterized by changes and uncertainties, the lack of safety and discouragement we can signal attitudes and behaviours that are considered undesirable. We can notice an alarming growth of inadaptable behaviours that can be determined, among others, also by the fact that in school, there is not enough attention given to stimulating the psycho-social abilities or to the process of forming the prosocial behaviour. The analysis of the variables that influence the development of prosocial behaviour emphasizes the importance of affection and emotion control in the process of adaptation to the social and educational environment.*

Key words: *prosocial behaviour, attitudes, emotional intelligence*

Introduction

In a formal educational environment marked by changes and uncertainties, insecurity and discouragement, one can often notice undesirable attitudes and behaviours. The inventory made by T. Lickona (1996. pp. 11,12) registers real dangers, applicable to the Romanian educational environment, too. They occur as psycho-behavioural manifestations such as: increasing violence, increasing dishonesty (lie, cheating, theft), disrespect for educators and other persons with legal authority, increasing violence, fanatics and crime, language distortion, increasing selfishness and reduction of personal responsibilities, increasing self-destructive behaviour (premature sexual intercourse, drug abuse, suicide), increasing ethical ignorance, immoral and amoral behaviours without a prior judgement of the consequences.

By relating these to the reality we notice a concerning increase of unadjusted behaviours, which can be caused among others by the fact that school does not pay enough attention to stimulating psycho-social skills or to the development of prosocial behaviour.

Conceptual delimitations

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, p. 89) „The formative role of emotions is more and more often acknowledged in learning” D. Goleman (2001, p. 139) „The pupils` emotional development is decisive for their success in life and not only for good school results”.

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” (D. Goleman, 2000). The recognition of Emotional Intelligence based on skills can open new perspectives on the organisational level – in schools, business and in all institutions that have been hostile or indifferent to emotions. Finally, on a social level „the concept of Emotional Intelligence based on skills marks an interaction between two opposing poles: the stoic idea that emotions are a distrustful and unworthy guide of life and the romantic position that we have to listen to and follow our heart. Maybe, these two positions that are placed in a conflict can reach a high level of understanding and peaceful life through Emotional Intelligence” (J. D. Mayer, 2001). 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.*

H. Gardner (1993), in his theory on multiple intelligence assigns an important role to these forms of intelligence that allow a superior adjustment to an individual`s closer or further social environment. Thus, he introduced the notion of interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence.

Interpersonal intelligence refers to the ability of understanding the others, knowing what motivates people, how they work and how one can cooperate with them.

Intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to turn to one`s self, inside the own self and it is also the ability to develop a vertical, rigorous model of the self. The development of intrapersonal intelligence is similar to a guide of behaviours based on a deep self-knowledge.

Emotional literacy is a similar process to literacy in the classical meaning of the word. As Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson point out in their book entitled Emotional Intelligence, for the child that would grow up into an adult „*Teaching the alphabet of emotions helps children become balanced and relaxed teenagers. It helps them develop the skills of reading and understanding their emotions, as well as the emotions of the others. We learn to appreciate the complexity of emotional life and it enriches our personal and professional relationships, helping us strengthen the bonds that enrich our life.*” Goleman highlights the importance of emotional education „*The remedy lies in the manner we prepare our children for life: emotional education should not be made randomly, we should adopt innovative lectures in schools that would teach them self-control, self-awareness, empathy, listening and cooperation.*”

I would also add that Emotional Training is the tool which helps children experiment the usage of their emotions as welfare, safety and joy tools, leaving behind the idea that emotions are a scarecrow they should be ashamed of. A low EQ and a reduced emotional competence can lead to social, relational and personal disorders, with severe consequence upon their own life and the life of the community. It was proven in the USA that children who attended lectures in Emotional Literacy had benefits inside and

outside the classroom but also improved their learning abilities (D. Goleman, 1996, p. 327-328).

Assumptions and objectives of research

We assumed that learning a few techniques of emotion recognitions, control, self-control and emotional regulation could help the development of social skills.

Objectives:

- Selecting the sample for research;
- Choosing the methods to set the frequency of prosocial behaviours;
- Selecting pedagogic strategies that could be used to develop prosocial skills;
- Selecting techniques, exercises and games for emotions recognitions, control, self-control, emotional regulation that would be learnt;
- Statistical processing of data and the qualitative interpretation of results.

The Sample:

We have involved three classes with children aged 11-12 from two secondary school of Arad, each class with 23 pupils.

Out of three classes, two were experimental classes (A, B) and the third one was the key/control class (C). The experimental classes benefited differently from the experimental intervention which involved the following:

- Class A – the teaching and relationing strategies of teachers had been changed for four months (October 2013 – January 2014);
- Class B – two changes took place; the teaching and relationing strategies had been changed and pupils took part in counselling sessions where they were taught games, exercises and techniques of emotion recognitions, control, self-control and emotional regulation;
- Class C – key/control class continued its programme without any intervention.

Methodology

Two experts – a psychologist and an expert in educational sciences – had observed these three classes, registering how they talk, recognise, control and regulate their emotions, the frequency of undesirable social behaviours. After the actual experimental phase (when the experimental intervention was performed in all three classes), the experts observed the children`s behaviour for a week. They registered the frequency of undesirable social behaviours. Social skills of interpersonal type have been split into two categories: social relationing and solving social problems.

Results and discussions

Table no 1. reveals the frequency of undesirable social behaviours manifested by children during a week:

	Class A	Class B	Class C
Social relating	12	14	13
Social problem solving	8	9	8
Total	20	23	21

We can notice that in all three classrooms there is an approximately equal number of undesirable social behaviours during one week. It ranges between 20 and 23 manifestations. We also notice that inappropriate social relating is more frequent than inappropriate conflict solving. This is not surprising if we analyse the general behaviour of our current society. Inappropriate behaviour is a way for pupils to fit in a group and a way to oppose to parents or school authority.

From a pedagogic perspective, the authoritarian teaching style, centred on contents can annoy the pupil. It brings about inner tension because s/he cannot leave the programme. An increasing intra psychical tension and the feeling of not being able to leave the programme, reduce the self-control skills. Consequently, conflicts are more likely to emerge from the most insignificant reasons.

Our experiment had a psycho – pedagogical formative character. It tried to identify only the above mentioned variables, which influenced the child`s interpersonal skills. The classes A and B benefited from independent variables for a period of four months: the teaching strategies and the teacher-pupil inter-relating had been changed; they took part in games, exercises and techniques of emotion recognitions, control, self-control and emotional regulation. Traditional teaching methods were replaced by interactive methods, which favoured the critical approach, brought relevant arguments on a topic, developed teamwork. Pupils were involved in educational projects for the community, where each child had its own tasks and responsibilities. The aim was to enhance self-esteem and responsibility (class A). Pupils had learned techniques of self-control and conflict management in weekly counselling sessions through games, inter and self-awareness exercises, speaking activities and activities for recognition of emotional states. These activities were carried out by a psychology expert with children from class B. The expert selected special situations, according to the aim of the activity, during these sessions. Children learnt to control their anger, to be

self-motivated, to use different methods of postponing, reducing and cancelling negative reactions. They practiced techniques of amiable conflict solving, through negotiations – between the parties or through a colleague – mediator. In class C, key/control class, the activity continued normally, without any formative intervention.

After four months of experimental intervention, all three classes were assessed again. We considered necessary a period of four months for the subjects to be able to learn the techniques of self-control and conflict management. Pupils from group A had time to be involved in the interactive learning methods and in the educational projects.

The results of the second assessment are presented in Table no 2 compared to the first assessment.

Table no 2. The frequency of undesirable social behaviours in all four classes compared to the first assessment

	Class A		Class B		Class C	
	1st assessment	2nd assessment	1st assessment	2nd assessment	1st assessment	2nd assessment
Social relating	12	9	14	6	13	12
Social problem solving	8	3	9	2	8	7
Total	20	12	23	8	21	19

To highlight the evolution of all three classes, Charts 1 and 2 highlight these types of undesirable social behaviours compared to the first assessment. We have taken into account the interpersonal social behaviour (social relating and social problem solving).

The frequency of dysfunctions regarding social relating in all three classes for both assessments is revealed by chart 1:

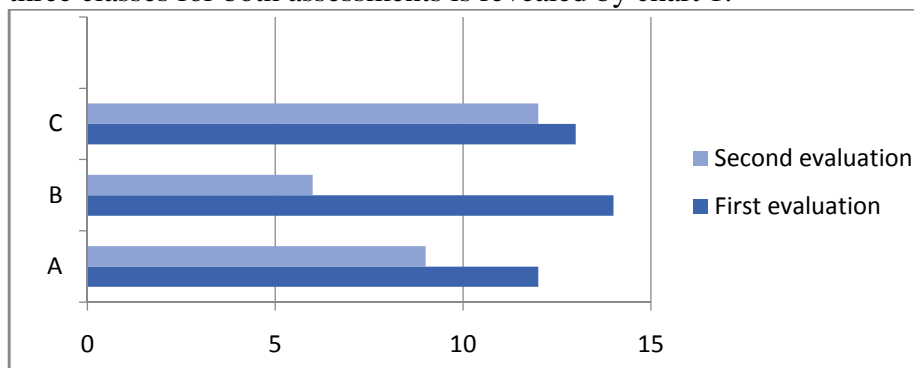


Chart 1. The evolution of dysfunctions regarding social relationing in all three classes for both assessments

The analysis of the chart and the digits show a reduction of undesirable social behaviours in classes where we have applied the independent variables as compared to the control class. The frequency of dysfunctions is significantly reduced in classes A and B with statistically significant differences between assessments of $p < .01$. It proves that the methods used throughout the experiment were effective. The pupils benefited from modern teaching methods that involved continuous and constructive interaction between pupils and between the class and the teacher. This situation brought about control of emotions and the tendency towards self-control. A team spirit was developed among the project teams and interpersonal relationships had strengthened. Pupils learnt that the team should cooperate and behave in a manner that would help them fulfil their tasks and obtain the best results. The frequency of difficulties encountered in social task solving is presented comparatively for all three classes in both assessments by Figure no 2.

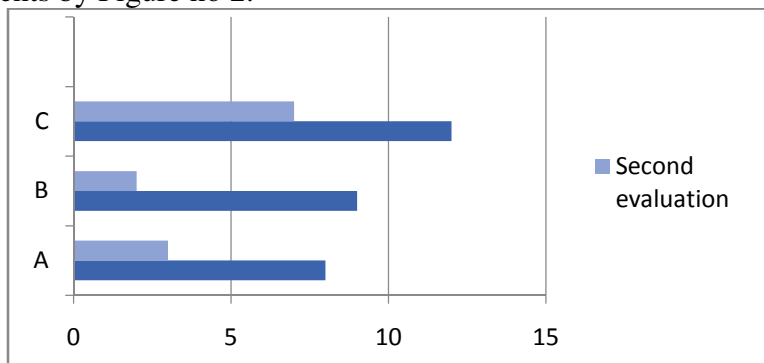


Chart no 2. The evolution of conflict situations in all three classes for both assessments

We notice considerable improvement in conflict management in the class that took up counselling sessions. During these sessions, they have learnt games, exercises and techniques of self-control and conflict management. If children practice these strategies in different experimental situations in order to control them in stressful or unpleasant moments, they will possess better self-control skills in their behaviour inside the group. The acquisition of conflict management techniques such as amiable conflict solving, contributed to a reduction of aggressive behaviour. The difference between the frequency of conflict situations in the experimental classes (calculated with chi square method) are statistically significant with a threshold of $p < .01$.

The most important changes were registered in class B when two independent variables had been introduced. It means that in practice it is more effective to use two variables together to obtain more significant results.

The fact that the progress was insignificant in control class C underlines that the methods used by us proved their effectiveness in practice.

Conclusions

The results of 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 has developed in experimental classes, contributing to the improvement of school results. After applying the experiment, we consider that the methods used for teaching should be revised; a counselling programme in emotional literacy should be introduced in schools. During this programme, children should be allowed to experiment games, exercises and techniques of emotion recognitions, control, self-control and emotional regulation

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CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND SELF-KNOWLEDGE DURING ADOLESCENCE

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Abstract. *A longitudinal qualitative research study was conducted which sought to shed some light on how adolescents think about their future career and career choices. Nine Norwegian and Icelandic adolescents born 1996 were followed from age 13-19. Career aspirations, occupational conceptualization, personal values and the career decision-making process are key words that describe some of the main issues of the investigation. Career aspirations represent individual goals and choices. The aspirations are, among other things, influenced by the individual self-concept. In this paper we will look into how the career aspirations and self-concept are expressed through the participants' narratives during the research period. How do the adolescents manage different kinds of transitions in the aspirations as their self-concept develops with broader experiences and more awareness of the world of work?*

Key words: *Career aspirations, occupational conceptualization, personal values*

Introduction

At early age, most children are asked the question, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" The answers are the children's aspiration of what they want to be as well as an expression of how they understand themselves and the world around them. Many career theoreticians are concerned with bringing out individuals' early career thoughts to shed light on career aspirations development later in life (Hartung, 2015). Therefore, this simple question we ask young children is not merely for fun.

To understand how individuals navigate to future roles and tasks in life, we need to look into their development in early childhood when the construction of self-concept begins (Gottfredson, 2002; Mead, 1934; Savickas, 2011; Super, 1957). The children's wishes for what kind of persons they want to become shows early (Guichard, 2005; Savickas, 2011), and these first wishes are often related to jobs they can see themselves in as grown-ups. With new

experiences and knowledge, the aspirations will change, develop or be confirmed through social interaction. The development of self is a lifelong process (Eriksson, 1971), but childhood and youth are important periods for our self-concept.

Career aspirations

Career aspirations are an individual's point-in-time expressions of educational and occupational goals (Johnson, 1995; Rojewski, 2005). They are an important indicator for the understanding of the individual's self-concept, career behavior and future career choices and achievement. Some researchers claim that career aspirations can predict future occupation membership equal or even better than interest inventories (Rojewski, 2005). Not all aspirations represent the same degree of commitment but they can be an important element in understanding a person's self-concept. The aspirations are influenced by the individual self-concept, academic achievement, socio-economic status, gender and ethnicity. In this article, we will have the relations between aspirations and self-concept as a focal point and try to shed light on different elements of self-concept such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and neuroticism.

The aspirations can be either ideal or realistic (Rojewski, 2005). The ideal aspirations reflect career goals given ideal conditions, while realistic career aspirations reflect the perceived likelihood for entering a particular education or occupation. During adolescence, the idealistic aspirations are adapted through more realistic expectations of what is actually reachable (Lee & Rojewski, 2012). This adjustment is partly based on deeper self-knowledge and academic achievements, but also on alternatives in the education system and the work of world.

Self-concept

The self has been an important variable in career theories ever since Parsons described three factors in the choice of a vocation where "a clear understanding of yourself" (Parsons, 1909, p.5) is one of them.

The self is dynamic and can be described as how we view and construct our self (Nygård, 2007). The self includes self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-worth and it is influenced by our social contexts. Our choices, conscious or unconscious, decide how much and in what way the context affects our self-concept, depending on the significance of situations (or people) and on the individual's resilience and self-regulation. A skilled adolescent might not take notice on negative critics on her/his results and behaviour, but it might be different when the adolescent feels that her/his skills and aptitudes are insufficient. Therefore, self-knowledge can be describing, evaluating and

emotional and at the same time a dynamic and fluid concept (Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2013).

The self has four core dimensions (Judge et al., 1998; Judge et al., 2002). Firstly, *self-esteem* that impacts learning, feeling of happiness and satisfaction. Secondly, *self-efficacy* that is the strength of one's beliefs in reaching goals and completing tasks. Self-efficacy impacts decision-making and the effort on reaching goals and resist on difficulties. Thirdly, *locus of control*, that implies to what extent we think we can control what happens and how we explain when events do not go as planned. Last, the negative dimension of self, *neuroticism*, which is characterized by anxiety, worries, dependency and helplessness. Individuals who score high on neuroticism tend to have high demands on what they consider as good enough; they are often dissatisfied with their lives in general.

Gottfredson describes how the self-concept and occupational aspirations go through a parallel development in four phases (Gottfredson, 1981) where the individuals circumscribe and compromise their aspirations to their self-concept and the realities in the world of work. She writes (Gottfredson, 2002, p. 88):

Self-concept refers to one's view of oneself – of who one is both publicly and privately. It has many elements, including appearance, abilities, personality, gender, values, and place in society. Some elements are more central to one's sense of self than others. People may not be able to articulate their self-concepts, nor may their self-perceptions always be accurate, but they act on them and protect them just the same. The self-concept is the object of cognition (the “me”), but it also reflects the person as actor (the “I”).

Language is a central tool for reflections on experience; and reflections contribute in the construction of the self. The language constructs and constitutes social realities (Savickas, 2011). To reflect, we need experiences, particularly interpersonal experiences. The self and self-knowledge is constructed through an active process in collaboration with others, and it develops as a result of reflections through language and experiences. Therefore, self is shaped by culture, constituted in a social context and expressed by language (Savickas, 2002, 2011).

Method

This longitudinal research study tries to shed a light on how adolescents think about future career and career choices. In this article, data from the investigation are being used to throw light on the how participants' career aspirations and self-knowledge are expressed and developed through the participants' narratives during the research period.

Participants

Nine Icelandic and Norwegian adolescents born in 1996 were followed through their lower and secondary education (age 13-19) to investigate their thoughts on future career. The sample was a combination of purposeful sample and snowball sample, and included five girls and four boys who had just started their 8th year in 10 years compulsory education. One of the main reasons for using purposeful sampling was to find participants with good or very good oral and written narratability.

All nine attended upper secondary school, which is not obligatory. By the end of the research period, seven of them were still in upper secondary education; one was a university student and one had dropped out of school and was employed.

Essays and semi-structured interviews

The investigation was organized through three phases. In the first phase, the participants received a list of open-ended questions and themes, all related to their thoughts on future career, and asked to write an essay about it. In the second phase, a semi-structured interview guide was developed after the essays' analysis and a literature review. The participants were then in the end of their first term in upper secondary school and were interviewed individually. In the third phase, a new semi-structured interview guide, based on data analysis and further literature review, was used. Most of the participants were then in their last term in upper secondary education, one in her first year of university studies and one had left school and was working in the fishing industry. They were all interviewed individually. A five-point Likert-scale was used to help the participants indicate a degree of agreement or disagreement in a part of the interview.

By using mixed methods in the data collection (essays, semi-structured interviews and Likert-scaling), it is possible to gather more data than by using only one method. The field investigated is complex, including causalities, variables and processes. The participants' reality varies according to contextual factors which is of great importance. By using mixed methods the research can provide informative, complete and useful results (Johnson, 2016).

Analysis

The interviews were transcribed. Together with the participants' essays, the transcriptions make the data from the investigation. The analysis was rooted in grounded theory methodology. Open coding was used to seek broadness and diversity for recognizing patterns and themes that represent the participants' narratives. Through open coding, followed by selected coding, it is possible to identify events, compare them and make categories (Hjälmhult, 2014; Brinchman, 2014).

Results

As mentioned above, this article has the relations between aspirations and self-concept as a focal point. We will try to shed light on different elements of self-concept such as self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control and neuroticism. Through that focal point, we can see how the adolescents manage different kinds of transitions in the aspirations as their self-concept develops with broader experiences and more awareness of the world of work. During transition between school levels, students got different form of feedback on their work as the demands and school culture change. Most of the adolescents received lower grades in the beginning of upper secondary education than they had earlier, and this affected their self-concept and motivation for learning in different ways. Some felt this as frustrating, others more as a challenge to overcome. A few said they had to work on how to learn to get better grades, while others focused mostly on the increasing study work as a frustration element, “you have to work all the time and I think it is really demanding.”

Through the research period, the career aspirations got more and more reflected. This is mostly because of broader experiences, especially from their study work, but also because they become more aware and reflected about their self-concept. Through their narratives, their self-concept shows directly as well as indirectly.

From time to time, the participants face resistance or difficulties related to their aspirations. During the research period, they used different approaches when facing this, but all show forms of adaptability and agency with initiatives that they feel are acceptable. Their knowledge and awareness increases on their own strength, limitations, interests, values, aptitudes and personality. According to their expression, this is mainly based on their self-evaluation. This new self-knowledge contributes to both confirming and compromises in their career aspirations.

What happens then when their aspirations were challenged, as by different forms of resistance and new experiences? The data show their responding to this in different ways. They used different types of strategies to cope with this. Three categories for their strategies were outlined; *adaptations*, *new solutions* and *withdrawal*. The participants used strategies within one or more of the categories.

Adaptation. The participants choose subjects that they feel as “right,” meaning subjects needed for further education plans at university level or subjects in which they think it will be relatively easy for them to get good grades. Another form of adaptation is changing learning styles to meet new demands. There is also a more passive form of adaptation, manifested in following the mainstream and “just doing like the others do.”

New solutions. Two participants changed school as they thought it would be easier to get good grades at the new school, which they think is not as demanding as their first. Other actively seek new learning experiences outside school to enhance their competences in school subjects or which will be valuable in their future occupation.

Withdrawal is rather uncommon among the participants. One participant made a decision of leaving school; another decided to stay with a minimum of effort in his study work. By the end of upper secondary education, two girls said they were “exhausted” and “fed up” as students, and had plans on postponing higher education with a year off after graduating from upper secondary school.

In the last interview, the participants were asked to range their interests and strengths by using a Likert-scale. Three of them scored higher than average on self-reported stress related to career choices and they also scored lower than average when evaluating their interests and strengths. They all had a question of what made them proud and one of these three answered “nothing.” Half a minute later she said: “I think it is embarrassing to think about such things. I don’t have an answer.”

For some of the participants, new and increased insight about themselves sometimes felt painful, as they realized limitations in reaching their aspirations. A few of them said that they hardly spoke to anyone about this, even though all participants reported on good or very good relations to their parents. The rest of the group talked to their parents; no one talked to the school counsellor or teachers about their career thoughts.

Discussion

Theories on constructivist career counselling based on narratives, emphasize early career thoughts to illuminate career aspirations later in life (Hartung, 2015). In the essays, the participants wrote about how they thought about future jobs when they were younger, what they wanted to be and why. The purpose was to increase their self-knowledge by thinking back in time and reflect on their aspirations from childhood. After finishing the last interview in the end of the research period, they read their essay. Many of them said they were surprised by how mature reflections they had expressed and many of them felt proud. Their narratives from earlier years can help them understanding career as a continuing life story consisting of three parts; self-knowledge, education and occupation that fit them, and planning they can build further on (Hartung, 2015). Knowing your story and narratives can help you feel career planning and career decisions as meaningful.

The three categories have one thing in common; they show how the participants cope with changes related to their self-concept and new situations. By withdrawal, one could claim that the adolescents give up, but

it is not so simple. They take action in a situation they feel as difficult, they find their own way to carry on. It might be considered as balancing between idealistic and realistic aspirations.

The participants' transitions from idealistic to more realistic aspirations are related to their idealistic and realistic self-concept; who they want to be and who they perceive they are. The school makes an important fundament for their experiences and reflections on their self-concept, aptitudes and alternatives. When facing difficulties and disappointment through the study-work, this is of great importance for them as school is an important arena in their life. As mentioned above, their self-esteem impacts their learning and feeling of satisfaction. When facing difficulties, including decreasing self-esteem, self-efficacy is important for coping. Those who strongly believe in their ability to reach their goals in spite of barriers, and resist on difficulties, have better odds than those who do not. The way the participants feel or believe in having control in the situation is important as well. By blaming others for poor results, there is little they can do; by looking for explanations within what they control, the chances are better. Good self-esteem, strong self-efficacy and realistic, internal locus of control are positive dimensions in building a solid self-concept. The opposite can lead to neuroticism. Individuals with low self-esteem have less self-knowledge and a more vague self-concept than individuals with good self-esteem (Campbell & Lavallee, 1993).

Self-efficacy, based on our self-esteem, is of great importance in career planning. Stories about how one coped in difficult situations, completed difficult tasks, etc., positive feedback from others, and stories from others in corresponding situations can contribute to self-efficacy. Through narratives awareness of the meaning of earlier experiences becomes clear (Savickas, 2011).

It is conventional wisdom that young people's career aspirations are point-in-time expressions of career goals and that they very often change. However, more knowledge is needed about what affects these changes and how the process is. This study gives some answers and leaves us with many questions. Further research is needed to get more knowledge about how young people's aspirations develop during adolescence and how career counselling can contribute to support adolescents in the process. The participants in this study are a small and homogeneous sample and the findings might indicate what is typical for their group, not others. However, it might provide some insight into how young people cope when facing the transition between idealistic and realistic aspirations.

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STUDY ON THE USE OF TEACHING RESOURCES BY STUDENTS OF OUR FACULTY FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

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Abstract. *Effective learning means to want a successful outcome (at the cognitive, the abilities / skills and attitudes levels) which is the consequence of fulfilling an objective of learning, conscious established, and pursuit of which required active involvement. In order to amplify effective learning outcomes we will resort at: critical reflection on alternatives, persistent action, quality orientation, metacognitive strategies and an appropriate learning environment. In the appropriate learning environment are summarized teaching resources. The present study was done to observe the impact of the 9 kinds of teaching resources, with reflections in 25 features, on improving learning for students of pedagogical study program of the III year.*

Keywords: *Learning, effective learning, teaching resources,*

1. Paper rational

Taking into consideration that today, contemporary context of learning has these important features:

- the knowledge base is rapidly increasing in society, and now doubles every 373 days. Teaching knowledge is an anachronism;
 - a wider range of the population process and generate knowledge. Information is not the possession of a few “experts”;
 - employment prospects relate more to the ability to enhance and transfer learning. The accumulation of qualifications is not enough;
 - the landscape of learning is much wider and richer, involving multiple contexts, modes and sources;
- therefore, learning is no longer the province of special institutions: it is a way of being.

In such a context the goals of learning need to focus less on knowledge acquisition by individuals, and more on knowledge-generation with others. And this approach would lead to the effective learning.

Effective learning will give to the learners the possibility for everyday problem solving and for their personal development. On the other hand, an effective learner is versatile and can actively utilize different strategies and

approaches for different contexts and purposes, for example gaining understanding from texts while alone, creating knowledge with others through a project, actively listening to an exposition, building dialogue with people of different stances, extending social roles with the family, and so on. As it can be seen, in all these situations intervenes, actually, learning environment. Part of the learning environment there are also the teaching resources.

This paper wants to reveal some aspects of our study concerning the impact of 9 teaching resources into the effective learning of our students from the last grade, enrolled in psychopedagogical study program.

2. Paper theoretical foundation and related literature

As confirmed by specialists, *learning is the acquisition, followed by internalization, leading to a change, observable through results.* [1] How they occur has been studied by psychologists and pedagogues, and the results of their research is focused on learning theories such as: Behaviourism, Cognitivism, Constructivism and recently, Conectivism!

But whatever theory, what are the steps that we go through when we learn?

➤ The first phase is the contact with the new information, followed by a processing system until there is understanding. We could call this phase acquisition.

➤ The next stage is the internalization of new knowledge and to integrate them into a personal system, coherent, which is built on previous experiences. We could call this phase internalization.

➤ The third phase involves action for the new acquisitions, which once they are acquired and operational, should be used. This means being aware that we act and that we know something more, and that we know what we use what we have just learned. We could call this phase change. But not any change means transformation and from Mezirow Transformative Learning Theory point of view *“learning is understood as the process of using a prior interpretation to construe a new or revised interpretation of the meaning of one’s experience in order to guide future action”*[2]

➤ The final step is to realize the changes and transformations in knowledge, skills and attitudes. We could call this phase result. To reach the results mean to act without forgetting that we have learned something.

Learning is built on previous experiences and it is influenced by the climate in which it is realized. There are internal factors – motivation, intellectual potential, psihoindividual characteristics and age etc. – and external factors of learning – context, learning experiences, learning environments, training events etc. A good comprehension of the learning process leads to the more effective modalities during a lesson/teaching activity, or decision of drafting individual learning programs, for students.

Another important aspect of learning is related to the fact that changes /

transformations must be maintained to be considered real (and effective) learning [3], because it is stable and can be transferred to new situations.

But what is effective learning?

Effective learning means to want a successful outcome (at the cognitive, the abilities / skills and attitudes levels) which is the consequence of fulfilling an objective of learning, conscious established, and pursuit of which required active involvement.

In order to amplify effective learning outcomes we will resort at: critical reflection on alternatives, persistent action, quality orientation, metacognitive strategies and an appropriate learning environment

Effective learning has three important characteristics:

✓ *is active*

Active learning requires conscious involvement and participation in the construction of knowledge. Giving personal significance to learning materials which must be learned, means to transpose them into their own systems of knowledge, to establish permanent links between experience and new, between knowledge and their application, between and within areas of knowledge.

✓ *is targeted to goal*

Orientation towards a goal requires orchestrating efforts towards achieving goals. Objectives are set based on existing weaknesses, which will be converted into training needs and self-instruction. Learning objectives may target acquisition information, skills training, behavior training or learning potential development. Objectives are set before and then are followed by choosing the contents and processes. The design of effective learning activities is performed by goals not by content.

✓ *leads to measurable results*

Measurable results are a stimulus to continue investing effort in learning. The results is materialized in immediate aspects (exams passed, mastered concepts, ideas learned), but there are results that will be demonstrated in longer (successful in the profession, intellectual performance, behavior in real life). Personal development is a continuum, not end with the gaining of an acquisition or obtaining a result. The quality is an important coordinated of the results obtained for effective learning.[1]

Effective learning has also important tools such as:

❖ *critical thinking* and

❖ *metacognitive strategies*. [1]

Critical thinking is a tool of effective learning that helps individuals to orient into the world of possible alternatives and to realize the mechanisms of their own thinking. The most important contribution of critical thinking is to cause action. Any agreement is followed by an action accordingly.

Perseverance in learning leads to the stability of purchases. Reflection capacity and critical self-reflection ability on learning experiences are materialized in the possibility of opting argued, on the basis of valid evidence on the directions of personal development.

Metacognitive strategies naming the monitoring and control aspects of learning as well as the development of learning potential. Self-monitoring the progress and the control of effort invested in learning entail need to acquire techniques of learning. To decide the resources, their quantity, and their time of investing, means to learn intelligent. Learning how to learn means amplification of individual learning ability, in other words effectively accelerate the learning process.

The efficiency appears at the intersection of three coordinates, which are always in equilibrium: *the idea, the action and the result*. The idea means to give learning a personal significance, to pursue a goal. The action means the ability to invest in reaching that goal. The result is the guarantee goal achievement. The focus on ideas and principles leads to a theoretical learning, the focus on action leads to losing sight of the purpose, the focus on results leads to technicization and loss of significance of learning. *The equilibrium of these three components is the key element of the learning efficiency*. Another important aspect of the relationship idea-action-result is *the dynamics of them*. Once an idea has been translated into results through the action, the process begins again by choosing other ideas, other objectives.

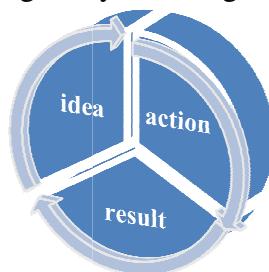


Figure 1. Dynamics of relationship idea-action-result in effective learning

Effective learning supposes its proposal by *effective professors* for *effective learners* who transpose into reality these ideas above. *Effective professor* means the educator who holds „teaching characteristics”: features of curriculum, assessment, and conceptions of teaching. Even when these external aspects are poorly designed, educational institutions can employ effective learning to address them. Curriculum which addresses big ideas and which gives learners the big picture is most engaging. Coherence for the learner and the ability to make connections in different contexts [4] is also supported. In assessment, self-assessment supersedes social comparisons, and enhances learner responsibility. *Effective learners* have gained understanding of the individual and social processes necessary to become

effective learners. This is not just acquisition of particular strategies, but the monitoring and reviewing of learning to see whether strategies are effective. This has been described as “learning how to learn” [5] and “metalearning” [6]. Effective learning includes this extra crucial ingredient “which actively involves the student in metacognitive processes of planning, monitoring and reflecting”. [7] The effective learner:

- is active and strategic,
- is skilled in cooperation, dialogue and creating knowledge with others,
- is able to develop goals and plans,
- monitors her/his own learning and is versatile across contexts.

When professor:	Instruct	→	Guide	→	Facilitate	→	Consult
Learners become:	Dependent	→	Interested	→	Involved	→	Self-directed

Figure 2. Conceptions of teaching focus on the learner – after Watkins, Carnell, Lodge, Wagner and Whalley [8]

Effective learning is promoted by:

- activity, with reflection and sense-making,
- collaboration for learning,
- learner responsibility for learning,
- learning about learning. [8]

Learning cycles for each of these four elements are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

	Active learning	Collaborative Learning	Learner responsibility	Learning about learning
Do ↓	Tasks are designed for learner activity, not teacher activity	Tasks in small groups connect to create a larger whole (by roles or by parts)	Learners exercise choice and plan their approach	Learners are encouraged to notice aspects of their learning as they engage in tasks
Review ↓	Learners stop to notice what happened, what was important, how it felt, etc.	Learners bring ideas together and review how the group has operated	Learners monitor their progress and review their plan	Learners describe what they notice and review their learning (goals, strategies, feelings, outcomes, context)
Learn ↓	New insights and understandings	Explanations of topic and of how the group	Factors influencing progress are	Richer conceptions of learning are

	are made explicit	functioned are voiced across the group	identified and new strategies devised	voiced and further reflective inquiry is encouraged
Apply	Future action is planned in light of new understanding. Transfer to other situations is examined	Future possibilities for group and community learning are considered	Plans are revised to accommodate recent learning	Learners plan to notice more and to experiment with their approach to learning

Figure 3. A framework for planning and reviewing the teaching-learning cycle for effective learning.

The objective of every professor is therefore to produce effective learning, taking, if it's possible, all above concepts and more.

More could be, for example, the contribution of the learning environment, concretely the impact of teaching resources into the learning process for become effective one.

3. Methodology

In our present study we proposed to observe the opinion of the students about the impact of teaching resources in their learning, using 9 kinds of pedagogical tools and 25 characteristics of learning process which can be reached by these means.

We can define the type and characteristics of this study as an anticipatory action for configuration of the future learning activities.

Along these lines we established:

- the sample of respondents,
- the objectives of our study,
- the hypothesis,
- the instrument for data collecting,

and we passed to

- the application of the instrument to students from the sample,
- the collection and processing of data collected,
- the interpretation and appreciation of the data.

The sample: 105 students of pedagogical study program of the III year.

The objectives of the study:

- a. Creating a questionnaire to track the impact of 9 teaching resources, with reflections in 25 features on improving learning for students of pedagogical study program of the III year.
- b. Applying the questionnaire on sample of students, data collection and processing, interpretation and the issue of value judgments on the results obtained.
- c. Using those teaching resources in learning activities that were most

frequently mentioned by students, in the completed questionnaire, for observing if they make learning effective.

The hypothesis: If these 9 teaching resources are properly used, then they will favor effective learning.

The instrument:

Questionnaire for students

SELECTION OF TEACHING RESOURCES FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

In table's columns below (under one of the 9 abbreviations), tick the teaching resource that you think that it will bring the maximum contribution for the effective / authentic learning for each feature described in the left (in the first column).

RO – *real objects* (models, layouts, replicas),

PT – *printed texts* (worksheets, books, brochures, guides)

B – *blackboard* (black, green, white)

SB – *smart board*

S – *slides* (PowerPoint or Prezi)

V – *video* (video tape, DVD, TV, YouTube)

G – *graphism* (maps, diagrams, charts)

A – *audio* (cassettes, CDs)

SW – *software* (educational, office, statistics or for design, etc)

Learning will be enhanced with the resources on the right, because:	R O	P T	B	S B	S	V	G	A	SW
Allows to see and touch real objects									
Allows taking materials from the aula / seminar room									
It can be used after the course / seminar as a reference, guide or aid in work									
It allows multiple participants to respond simultaneously									
Can be easily deleted or changed									
Require minimal costs									
Allows to write keywords during the course / seminar									
Is suitable for groups of 25 students									
Can be used in fully lighting space									
Uses visual elements easy to prepare									
Presents keywords, indices of words or a sketch of activity									
Offers portability									
Offers visual effects									
Allows easy change order of materials									
It allows the user to control stimulating participants' or to resume some part of the presentation									

They are appropriate to students who have trouble reading or understood notions										
Reproduces sound exactly										
It is easily used for professor or student										
It has a high quality image										
It can be used independent of professor										
Demonstrates movement, including sequential motion										
Allows observation of hazardous processes or real reconstructions										
Provides discovery of learning environment										
Shows the problem solving situations that induce discussions in group										
Forms personal and social attitudes										
TOTAL										

4. Results

After the application of the questionnaire on students from the sample, the collection, processing and the interpretation of data collected, there resulted the following:

A. From the sample set at the beginning of the academic year, responded only 92 (87,62%) of the students, but we believe that the data collected are enough.

B. From data processing resulted from collecting questionnaires, it was revealed that students think that the use of *slides* in the teaching-learning have the greatest impact in effective learning. Curiously enough, because *video resources*, as teaching sources that contribute to a better, easier and real learning, came out only on second place as the number of students' votes. And amazingly, during the digital era, *printed texts* as learning resources is ranking in third position of preferences of students polled. Only on the fourth place is the *software* (educational, office, statistics or for design), then follows the *real objects* (models, layouts, replicas), *audio resources*, *smart board*, *blackboard* and *graphism* (maps, diagrams, charts).

C. This hierarchy of teaching resources was shaped at the end of vertical columns of questionnaire but having correspondence with 25 argumentations/features, on horizontal lines (rows).

D. From the horizontal rows, the feature that has obtained the most votes for all 9 teaching resources was „*is suitable for groups of 25 students*”. Most votes received by this feature are, in descending order: *slides*, then *video*, *graphism*, *smart board* and *printed text*. The second feature which is apparent on horizontal lines „*it can be used after the course / seminar as a reference, guide or aid in work*”. The biggest contribution for this feature have the *printed texts* followed by *slides*, *video* and *audio*. At a tie came the feature „*offers visual effects*”, where *video*, obviously, has brought major contribution, then *slides* and finally *software*. A third feature voted by the

respondents is „*allow taking materials from the aula / seminar room*”, to which major contribution has had *printed texts* and much less *real objects, video, graphism and audio*. These features are followed by „*allow to see and touch real objects*” by the major contribution of *real objects* and then *printed texts*, and, on the same place, the feature „*there are appropriate to students who have trouble reading or understood notions*” to which contributed *audio, video, slides and real objects*. Another feature that we can mention, that emerged from respondents vote it is „*offers portability*”, to which have contributed the following teaching resources: *audio, software, graphism, video and printed text*. At the opposite pole are the features: „*require minimal costs*” – although it is strange, students do not consider efficiency as important criteria for the use of teaching resources – feature due to *printed texts and blackboard* ; „*uses visual elements easy to prepare*” as intake of *slides, video and software*; „*allow observation of hazardous processes or real reconstructions*” due to the *video, software and graphism*; „*it allows multiple participants to respond simultaneously*” with the contribution of *smart board, software and slides*.

E. The other features have received an average score after linking the votes of the students for teaching resources with them. For example: „*form personal and social attitudes*”, „*provides discovery of learning environment*”, „*shows the problem solving situations that induce discussions in group*”, „*it allows the user to control stimulating participants' or to resume some part of the presentation*”

F. After this phase, we started using, in courses and seminars, the teaching resources most often selected by students – slides, video, printed text - for observing if they really believe that those tools can help their understanding!

5. Conclusions

Although our intention was to incite students to be responsible for their own training, considering the contribution of the teaching resources they will use in future teaching profession, it seems they are not very aware of their value in effective and efficiency learning. It is quite surprising the choice of our students, from the third year of the program of pedagogical studies, as in 2016, slides, video and especially printed texts are in their first preferences and no software or smart board like pedagogical tools! We can put this on account of several factors:

- Non-use of such means in other courses or seminars, from where can be ignorance or fear of using them;
- Low interest towards training and personal development in the future profession;
- Misunderstanding and unawareness of interrelations between the

pedagogical tool and the benefits to learning they can bring;

- Superficiality in completing questionnaire column;

We still consider positive the fact that for the experimental sample an important feature of teaching resource, *is suitable for groups of 25 students* which means that they consider cooperative learning as a part of effective learning! On the other hand, the feature *it can be used after the course / seminar as a reference, guide or aid in work or allow taking materials from the aula / seminar room* could be interpreted as awareness for individual study! Given that the current generation is also a visual one, we are not surprised that the feature *offers visual effects* came on the second place probably because their learning is mainly visually.

From outlining only these ideas we conclude that our students are committed to an effective learning in terms of *active learning* and *collaborative learning* but not so much *inlearner responsibility* or *learning about learning* and we have a lot of things to do together for obtaining a real cycle of effective learning: *do – review – learn – apply!*

At the time of the study we find that our student are partially effective learner because he/she is:

- o more or less active but not strategic,
- o somewhat skilled in cooperation, dialogue and creating knowledge with others,
- o more or less able to develop goals and plans,
- o not in totality able to monitor her/his own learning and is less versatile across contexts.

After two month of learning activities in which we applied above mentioned teaching resources, selected by the students from sample, we can say that few seeds of the effective learning are observed. But there is time for us (almost two months) until the end of the semestre, to guide our students towards a more effective learning with help of an interactive methodology where are presences modern pedagogical tools!

Thus we will be able to complete the current study with the results of the students from ongoing and final evaluation of this semester for more accurate conclusion about the existance of effective learning to our students.

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CHECKLISTS AND GOAL SETTINGS. A CHALLENGING APPROACH TO QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN RESIDENTIAL CHILDCARE

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"(Checklists) not only offer the possibility of verification but also instill a kind of discipline of higher performance." Atul Gawande, MD, "The Checklist Manifesto"

Abstract: *Using checklists in the field of medicine became very popular in the last years and was intensively mediated, even if the opinions are still controversial.*

The paper presents a relatively inedited (and challenging) approach regarding the use of checklists in the field of childcare and discuss some possibilities to implement specific checklists in the residential care institutions for children and youngsters. The author spotlights the main results of a pilot study that took place between 2011 and 2016 and labels relevant aspects concerning the implementation of some specially designed checklists in the daily activity in childcare institutions. The importance and especially the possible main impacts of using this method currently in youth care centers are also analyzed.

Key words: *checklists in residential childcare, checklists methodology, validation, impact and implementation of the checklist method in childcare institutions.*

Premises

The implementation of the checklist method in the childcare units was started some years ago in order to achieve a better quality, to optimize some of the specific care processes and procedures and to avoid inaccuracies, gaps, mistakes.

In the field of childcare know-how and sophistication cumulate continuously. Despite the increasing of the objectivity and the development of more complex assessment and intervention methods most of the failures are due to certain ignorance. This has currently an emotional valence that seems to influence the way we think about them. We tend to show a certain “tolerance” and the care units are in most of the cases just simply content to have “someone” to do the work, respectively staff making its best effort. The lack of staff in the residential care became anyhow in the last decades chronic...

A second trend is to consider that the adequate professional knowledge already exists but there are many errors in applying it correctly. Mass media contributed also to emphasize the idea that the only real problem we have to face is the ineptitude or the negligence of the staff. Of those who do the work, take care of the children, respond when needed and practice the law. It seems that many of the people involved – directly or indirectly – in the childcare processes started to ignore how extremely difficult the job is. And mistakes occur because of the daily stress and the efforts to manage more and more complex situations and problems and not because of the lack of motivation, interest or professional knowledge.

The challenge is still, under these circumstances, to facilitate for the practitioners ways to access the adequate knowledge and to apply it correctly.

The checklists could be seen as a possibility to bring more professionalism (competences and skills) and to offer a way to avoid mistakes or misunderstandings. Despite the many controversial papers that have been published in the last decade in the USA as well as in Europe, considering that the effectiveness of checklists is limited, uncertain or that they have no effect on the care process, they continued to be used in many different medical care centers and hospitals.

But they were not very frequently used by the practitioners and specialists working in the field of childcare, respectively in different care centers and units or for governmental¹ and non-governmental organizations, associations or private care-providers. In this context our study represents a beginning. Most of the checklists have been developed in order to improve the assessment, like for instance the assessment of the school dropsor difficult behavior.

Implementing checklists and goal settings became for the very beginning a real challenge, mostly because of:

- Complexity and the heterogeneity of the care settings in each institution;
- Diversity of the current quality standards, different for each care-center;

- Large variety of the intervention methods;
- Long traditions and long established and recognized ways of thinking (that became for some practitioners and specialists real taboos);
- Strong synergy and syncretism of the care systems;
- Inappropriate strategies and action models (mostly “imported”);
- Empirical assessment methodology, descriptive and obsolete.

The care systems knew in the last twenty years, especially in East Europe, a strong development and specialization (professionalization). The formal authorities, institutions, non-governmental organization and some political bodies have also been more than ever before focused on improving the quality of the provided services. Most of the specialists notice in this context the subsequently prevalence of the qualitative assessments of the individual evolution of the children and also the imperious need to reconsider the way the structures and the processes that are involved in the daily care interventions (actions) are commonly assessed. The empiricism and the emotionality that characterized the pedagogical literature at the end of the 20th century – the beginning of the 21th century have to be replaced by more objective approaches and more rigorous assessments and action programs focused on the needs and expectations of the children, on their social milieus, according to existing human, financial and staff resources.

Objectives

The main goal of the study was to introduce more objectivity in a domain that is (still) dependent on subjective approaches and descriptive methods and to develop tools to ensure that essentials components of the care setting and process are not omitted.

The issues:

- To develop checklists for care planning and for replacement of the child into supported loggings (in the so called “living residential care” phase) and
- To determine whether a multifaceted quality improvement reduces the failures and increases the personal contentment of the youngsters in childcare centers.

Design, setting and participants

The study had 2 phases:

- a) Phase 1 consisted of an observational study that was designed in order to assess baseline data on care processes and pedagogical outcomes and was conducted between August 2011 and March 2014

in a childcare center for youngsters between 16 and 22 years old.

- b) Phase 2, conducted between March 2014 and September 2016 consisted in the evaluation of the quality improvement, including developing checklists for some main processes (care planning and admission in a supported logging for instance) and goal settings during multidisciplinary meetings with the specialists and practitioners in charge.

A total of 58 youngsters (mean age 18,7 years; 10% girls) were enrolled in the baseline, observational and validation phases.

The checklists have been designed taking into consideration the features proposed by A. Gavandi. He considers that a checklist is not a teaching tool or an algorithm. The lists:

- utilise natural breaks in workflow,
- use simple sentence structures and basic language,
- have titles that reflects its objectives,
- have a simple, uncluttered and logical format,
- fit on one page,
- can be read easily (were written dark on a light background for instance),
- have fewer than 10 items per pause point,
- have the “identification data” (for instance date of assessment or revision and the person who did them clearly marked)

The initial checklists have been continuously improved, re-structured, modified according to the feedbacks from youngsters and staff (front line users)

and also from the strategic and executive managers involved in the running of the institution during regular formal meetings and individual interviews and discussions. This gave us the possibility to detect errors at a time when they could still be corrected.

Interventions

We started in 2011 to implement and to validate five checklists in a care center for youngsters between 16 and 21 years in Germany in order to achieve a better quality in the care process. From that perspective the actual study can be considered a pilot research.

The checklists were focused on two main aspects (processes):

- a) Designing and implementing the care planning and

- b) Optimizing the transition from residential care to non-residential (part-time) assistance in supported (assisted) loggings.

After analyzing the structure and the specific resources involved in the so-called “transition to a non-residential form of care” (Figure 2) and identifying the “crucial points”, the “hubs” of the process and the most frequent impediments and malfunctions at the level of the institution we decided to implement five different checklists. They were designed both for handling long- and short-term processes and for issues that have to be done by different categories of staff:

1. Checklist “Care setting” – covers items regarding the steps to be followed in order to assess the individual evolution of the clients (children and youngsters), to organize the case analyzing meetings and the care planning (negotiating the future appropriate pedagogical and individual structured care settings). It assumes inter- and intra-institutional cooperation (multi-professional approach).
2. Checklist “Beneficiary” – refers to the activities that have to be done with the young people in order to prepare them for the new situation and to clear the future tasks. It is based on a participation and co-decision model. The list also includes practical tasks that have to be accomplished together with the beneficiaries.
3. Checklist “Documents” – covers all the written documents that have to be assembled and to be made available for the institution and for the persons who will take over the case.
4. Checklist “Manager” – contains the specific tasks of the care center (care institution) executive manager.
5. Checklist “Staff” – covering specific responsibilities of the pedagogical and non-pedagogical employees.

The checklists have not been intended to be comprehensive. Additions and modifications to fit local practice were encouraged.

Establishing separate lists for different categories of tasks for different categories or staff that have to be simultaneously used in the same institution should not be an impediment for an intra- and interinstitutional cooperation. To achieve the planned goals and a better quality of provided childcare services teamwork remains crucial.

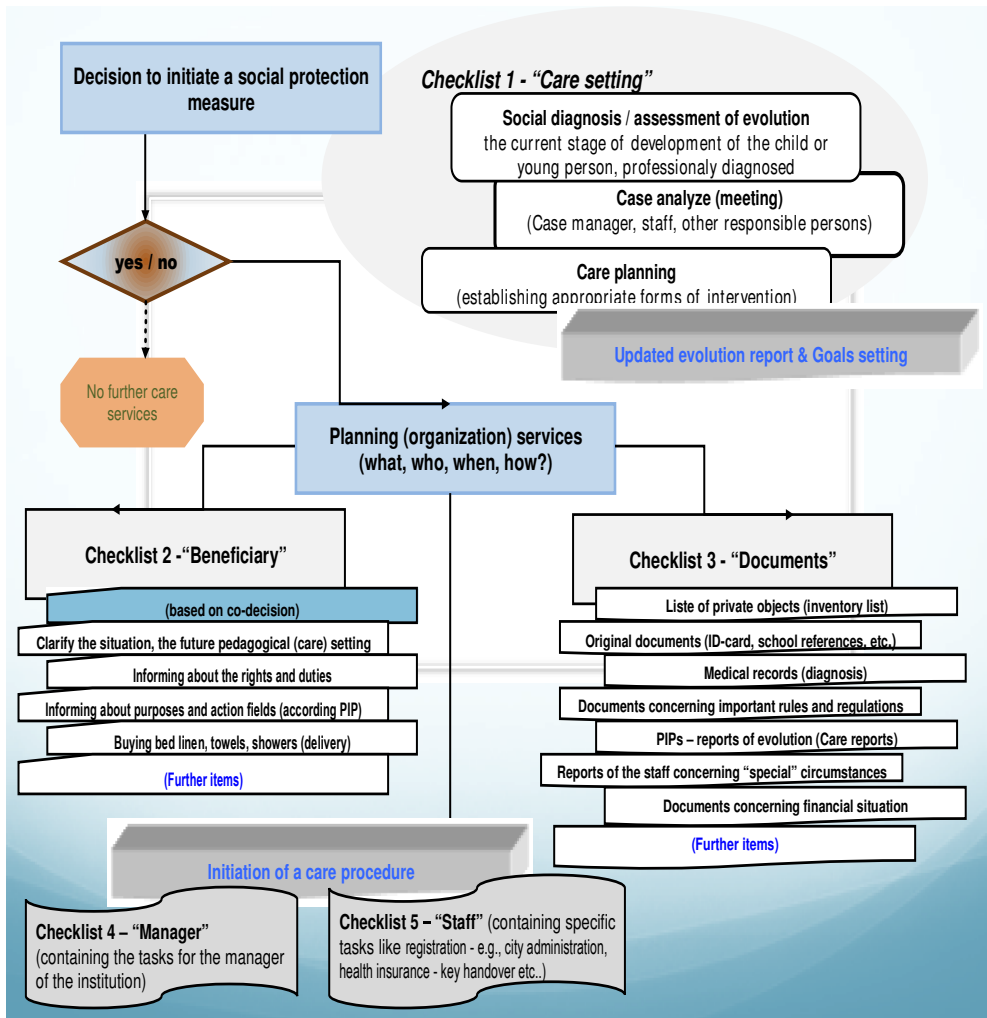
Main outcomes and measures

1. Our data confirms that the checklists may have a crucial contribution to a better structuring of the specific interventions and they might become one of the most important instruments for strategic as well as for executive management in the childcare institutions.

2. The validation and the continuous update of the checklists have been mainly based on:

- a) regular feedbacks of the staff,
- b) feedbacks from the beneficiaries (youngsters),
- c) significant results of the assessments made by the employees of the youth care county office (Jugendamt),
- d) evaluations and assessments made by specialists and executive managers in charge.

Diagram 1 - Implementation of a care setting - process and checklists diagram



The lists have been also modified in response to different trials. The items have been reviewed and revised several times.

3. The feedback of the staff working “on the front line” with children and youngsters or having leading positions was essential for the validation of the applied methodology.

- In most of the cases the caretakers and the executive managers pointed out that working with checklists empowers the feeling of working more accurate, more precise and being simply more protected against different kinds of mistakes (errors and “negligence”).

- The checklists allow designing interventions according to the real needs of the children and making it also easier to supervise complex long-time processes and to avoid staff overlaps and overstrain.

4. Most of the specialists agreed that the using of standardized and validated checklists must be done at the level of each institution, according to its specificity and individual structures, existing (and properly functioning) mechanisms and existing staff resources.

Because of the size of the sample such testimonies must be of course circumspectly analyzed and evaluated.

Conclusions

The paper doesn't intend to simply advance common solutions that could be just simply applied everywhere and at any time, general valid answers or panaceas for all organizational and structural problems of all residential care institutions.

We just considered that we need different approaches for overcoming failure, errors, “omissions” and routine, other strategies based as before on experience and professional traditions but also on multi-disciplinary ways of thinking and acting, on concepts that include recent knowledge. We need another methodology, less randomly, emotionally and quasi-exclusive empirical. In this context the checklists represent a realistic alternative.

The success of implementation of checklists largely depends on the assessment strategies currently used in institutions and on the willingness of staff to accept a standardized assessment tool. Some non-cooperation is not surprising, it is even to be expected. Some staff considered for instance the checklists having exclusively a controlling role. Certain reluctance was not to avoid.

In order to increase the positive impact of the methodology some characteristics of checklists in childcare should be predominantly taken into consideration:

- The checklists should be individually designed (depending upon the institution or care unit, the main processes and existing human resources)
- They should be strongly correlated with the “real life” of those units, with the realities the care takers and the managers have to face in their daily work. That’s the reason why we haven’t presented an exhaustive glossary but only some examples of using the method in practice.
- The checklists should be periodically actualized. The feedback of the beneficiaries and of the caretakers is extremely important.
- They have to be validated - as rigorous as possible.
- They should be the result of teamwork (multidisciplinary team). The practitioners (social workers, educators, caretakers, etc.) should not be disregarded. The lists are not the exclusive task of the specialists (psychologists, pedagogues, doctors) or managers (directors, case managers, etc.). The inter- and intra-institutional cooperation is imperious.

Despite the inevitable diversity of the ways to structure and to implement the checklists, we consider the method as a viable alternative to the classical methodology (based mainly on the qualitative analysis of the structures, processes and results), that offers numerous possibilities to achieve more coherence and more inter-active structuring of the complex process of planning, designing, putting into practice and evaluating the individually structured care settings, specific for residential child care.

Some advantages:

- The implementation of a multifaceted quality improvement intervention with checklists designed for the main specific care processes and goal setting could reduce the non-integration and the care dropping.
- It facilitates a better correlation between care planning and the needs and expectations of the institutionalized young people.
- The post-residential alternatives and the care–settings for the phase after living of the institution (non-residential care settings) can also be more realistic and efficiently organized and carried out.

Diagram 2 – Checklist „Care Setting“

- Tasks of case responsible practitioners (educators, social workers, care takers) -

Phase 1 – Assessment (evaluation)	Phase 2 - Care planning meeting	Phase 3 - Implementation
<p>Assessment of the child development (evolution)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collect all available and relevant data <input type="checkbox"/> observation data (<i>from the staff, team colleagues, etc.</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> medical diagnosis <input type="checkbox"/> pedagogical and psychological reports (relevant data) <input type="checkbox"/> other categories of assessment data (indicate source) 	<p>Fill up an items list (tops that should be discussed)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Item 1 (<i>description</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Item 2 (<i>description</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Item 3 (<i>description</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> Item 4 (<i>description</i>) 	<p>List of the anticipated goals and further pedagogical setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> 1. Goal / setting (<i>only goals and / or settings discussed and agreed in care planning meeting</i>) <input type="checkbox"/> 2. Goal / setting <input type="checkbox"/> 3. Goal / setting
<p>Assessment report and Case analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> organize a case analysis team meeting <input type="checkbox"/> ask and include in the report the opinion of beneficiary (child) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>opinions about its actual situation, future plans, personal desires and goals, personal satisfaction, etc.</i> - <input type="checkbox"/> ask and include in the report the meaning of other specialists (psychologist, therapist) <input type="checkbox"/> write an assessment report 	<p>Organize the meeting (PIP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> plan date and hour <input type="checkbox"/> find (booking) a location <input type="checkbox"/> invite (inform about date, time, place) the case manager from local authorities (county) <input type="checkbox"/> invite parents (legal representatives) <input type="checkbox"/> invite other persons – if necessary (psychologist, social worker, doctor, therapist) <input type="checkbox"/> arrange the room for the 	<p>Final report (PIP report)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> read report <input type="checkbox"/> discuss the contents with the colleagues <input type="checkbox"/> discuss the contents with the manager of the institution <input type="checkbox"/> copy it and send to all persons (authorities, bodies) involved (responsible and having the right to get it) <input type="checkbox"/> copy the report for the client (child) and give it to him / her <input type="checkbox"/> copy and send the report to family and / or to legal

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> let the manager read (supervise) the report – <input type="checkbox"/> ask for feedback <input type="checkbox"/> (eventually) modify parts of the report <input type="checkbox"/> send it to local (county) formal authorities and other persons in charge <input type="checkbox"/> copy all the needed documents 	<p>meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> provide refreshments <input type="checkbox"/> distribute the copies of all needed documents 	<p>representatives</p>
<p>Organize the contents<i>(Items that have to be discussed from the perspective of the child and the institution)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> anticipate and point out critical issues (tops to be discussed) <input type="checkbox"/> discuss the tops with the child <input type="checkbox"/> discuss the tops with the manager <input type="checkbox"/> discuss the tops to be mentioned in the meeting with the team colleagues 	<p>Attend the meeting (PIP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> present the important items (tops to be discuss from the perspective of the team of practitioners responsible for the child) according to the previously prepared list <input type="checkbox"/> present the opinion of the team <input type="checkbox"/> suggest ways of action from the perspective of the existing human and material resources 	<p>Discussion with the client – informing about the contents of the final report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> organizing the meeting (date, hour, place) <input type="checkbox"/> read and explain all the items of the final report <input type="checkbox"/> signature of the client <input type="checkbox"/> signature of the educator <input type="checkbox"/> signature of the care center manager

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EXPERIENCES FROM THE TEMPUS PROJECT: HARMONIZATION OF PRESCHOOL TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULA IN SERBIA

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Abstract.*The paper presents the outcomes of the activities carried out within the three-year-project Harmonization of Preschool Teacher Education Curricula in Serbia, implemented within the TEMPUS program including 8 partners from Serbia and EU, in the period between December 2013 and December 2016. The main aim of the project was to harmonize preschool teacher curricula in Serbia and to modernize it through exchanges with EU partners according to identification of desirable competencies which are supposed to permeate a modern preschool teacher education curriculum. Having compared the existing curricula and consulted the relevant literature, the legislative framework of the preschool teacher training in Serbia, as well as all the stakeholders, i.e. students and the world of labour, the team of experts within the project identified eleven areas in which key generic competencies were classified. These areas are as follows: professional competence for the organization of learning and teaching, including ability to develop program and activities stimulating and supporting development in each upbringing-educational field included in preschool curriculum, i.e. speech development, literacy, basic mathematical and science notions, development of motor skills, music, visual art, as well as creativity; professional competence for team work; professional competence for planning, monitoring and documentation of educational activities; organizational skills and pedagogical guidance of groups; knowledge of developmental and learning needs of children; knowledge of the system of preschool education; ability to use information and communication technologies in education; ability to plan one’s own professional development; specific competences, knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health preservation competence; social inclusion, difference and diversity and transferable/transversal, i.e. soft skills. These main areas of competence are further elaborated into more specific competencies. The mere list of the identified main areas preschool teachers should*

be competent in makes the profession complex and demanding, imposing serious challenges on higher education institutions providing their pre-service and in-service education, training and professional development.

Key words: *kindergarten teacher, curriculum, key competencies, Tempus project.*

1. Introduction

In the period between December 2013 and December 2016 a Tempus project *Harmonization of Preschool Teacher Education Curricula in Serbia* (Number 544141-TEMPUS-1-2013-1-RS-TEMPUS-JPCR, acronym TEACH) has been implemented. The ambitious and complex action was chosen for support within the last call of the Tempus IV program. The coordinator of the project is Preschool Teacher Training College “Mihailo Palov” in Vrsac, Serbia, and the consortium consists of the following higher education institutions: Preschool Teacher Training Colleges from Novi Sad, Krusevac and Sremska Mitrovica, Serbia, the association *Western Balkans Institute* from Belgrade and three partners from the EU: University in Maribor, Slovenia, Preschool Teacher Training College EÖTVÖS JÓZSEF from Baja, Hungary and The Manchester Metropolitan University, Great Britain. The motivation behind the action lies in the necessity to modernize VET colleges for Preschool Teachers Education in the Republic of Serbia through careful assessment of the needs and capacities of the partners involved. The action is based on the belief that quality education starts with quality teachers.

There are in total 10 vocational, i.e. professional colleges for Preschool Teachers Education in the Republic of Serbia. Even though teachers education in the educational systems in the Western Balkans has gained importance in the previous years and has been undergoing substantial reforms, vocational colleges for Preschool Teachers Education in Serbia were somewhat neglected in these processes. As a result, this educational sector has faced numerous challenges in aligning its study programmes to the European education area and failed to introduce the necessary novelties in teaching methodology and practical learning. The sector was characterized by the heterogeneous curricula and substantial differences in teaching methodology and training. Although in the past years students’ interest in the colleges in question has been steady, the number of qualified teaching staff has been declining, a trend in particularly apparent in natural sciences, i.e. math, IT, etc. Therefore, a need has arisen to harmonize and modernize preschool teacher education curricula in cooperation with EU partners.

This project introduced the necessary modifications in the given landscape of vocational, i.e. professional colleges as it managed to identify common and different elements in the curricula structures, harmonize the study courses and their level of difficulty (ECTS), and develop teaching methodology that will reflect the assessed needs of beneficiary schools and the European dimension of preschool teaching in close cooperation with the EU consortium partners. Also, the project fostered development of specific teacher training needed in order to implement new teaching methods and profiles of competences necessary for modern day preschool education in the European context.

The proposed action was in line with the recognized developmental aims stipulated in the Strategy for Development of Education until 2020 of the Republic of Serbia. This document describes the major issues existing in all educational levels. It stipulates that in the area of preschool education there is an issue of non-inclusive approach of teachers even though numerous analyses conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF, World bank, etc. indicate that the area of early education is of particular importance as it sets the ground for development of each individual in other educational cycles. For this reason a part of the Strategy document is related specifically to teachers' professional development through training and further education. Strategy for Development of Education until 2020 of the Republic of Serbia recognizes the sector of higher VET professional education as of great importance due to its aim to educate and prepare students directly to their participation at the labour market. In spite of many impediments acknowledged, including that of limited international and cooperation with economic entities, limited staff mobility, low participation in the research projects as well as the EU funded educational capacity building and technical assistance projects, the consortium managed to initiate the process of altering the present state and reach all of its predetermined aims.

This project primarily targeted teaching staff from partner institutions, i.e. professional colleges for preschool teacher education, and their students. In a broader sense, the project results will benefit the professional higher education as well as the preschool, early childhood education and care sectors.

The Tempus TEACH project has dealt with harmonization of preschool teacher training of 4 VET schools in Serbia. Specific project objectives were to:

- harmonize curricula through identifying the harmonization framework and developing individual harmonization plans;
- certify harmonized curricula at all participating VET colleges through re-accreditation and enrolment of the 1st generation of students;

- improve transversal skills of teachers through training of trainers (ToT sessions) and spill-over training sessions;
- improve teaching methodology and entrepreneurial competences of teachers through identifying learning outcomes and methods of achieving them;

It is worth mentioning that all the above stated aims have already been achieved through numerous activities carried out within the project.

2. Identification of desirable key competencies of preschool teachers

One of the main aims of the project was to harmonize preschool teacher curricula in Serbia and to modernize it through exchanges with EU partners according to identification of desirable competencies which are supposed to permeate a modern preschool teacher education curriculum. The process was carried out through a number of steps: analysis and comparison of the existing curricula, research on the relevant literature and the legislative framework of the preschool teacher training in Serbia. Furthermore, the process also anticipated gaining insights into the matter of desirable preschool teacher competencies from all the stakeholders, including students, world of labour and parents. Having compared the existing curricula and consulted the relevant literature, the legislative framework of the preschool teacher training in Serbia, as well as all the stakeholders, i.e. students and the world of labour, the team of experts within the project identified eleven areas in which key generic competencies were classified.

These areas are as follows:

1. professional competence for the organization of learning and teaching, including ability to develop program and activities stimulating and supporting development in each upbringing-educational field included in preschool curriculum, i.e. speech development, literacy, basic mathematical and science notions, development of motor skills, music, visual art, as well as creativity;
2. professional competence for team work;
3. professional competence for planning, monitoring and documentation of educational activities; organizational skills and pedagogical guidance of groups;
4. knowledge of developmental and learning needs of children;
5. knowledge of the system of preschool education;
6. ability to use information and communication technologies in education;
7. ability to plan one's own professional development;
8. specific competences, knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health competence;
9. social inclusion;
10. difference and diversity;

11. transferable/transversal, i.e. soft skills.

These main areas of competence are further elaborated into more specific competencies, to be achieved through learning outcomes within courses included in the curriculum. As a result, a list of generic competences was created and they are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Desirable generic competences of preschool teachers

Area	Competencies
<p>1. Professional competence for the organization of learning and teaching</p>	<p>Creating a stimulating social and physical learning environment in the classroom.</p> <p>Able to observe and then document children’s behavior, development and learning.</p> <p>Able to use co-operative and interactive methods and techniques in learning and teaching to develop children’s knowledge and skills.</p> <p>Able to develop program and activities stimulating and supporting development in each upbringing-educational field included in preschool curriculum, i.e. speech development, literacy, basic mathematical and science notions, development of motor skills, music, visual art, as well as creativity.</p> <p>Able to formulate clear rules to create and maintain appropriate and acceptable behaviour in the group.</p> <p>Able to adjust chosen teaching methods to learning aims within child-oriented teaching.</p> <p>Able to organize a safe physical setting for children and adults.</p> <p>Is familiar with legislation regarding preparatory preschool programs and can apply this in practice.</p> <p>Is aware of the importance of creating an understanding of the relationships between socio-cultural and economic background and learning.</p> <p>Understands and has knowledge of the way early learning, and education more broadly, is organized and structured in the Serbian context.</p>
<p>2. Professional competence for team work</p>	<p>Understands and has knowledge of groups and teams and the ways in which they are formed, maintained and work.</p> <p>Knowledge and experience of establishing partnerships with key stakeholders (children, families, community, school).</p> <p>Recognizes the value of professional co-operation across disciplines and professional roles.</p> <p>Able to recognise and carry out role in a pre-school educational team, working closely with other colleagues as well as with child’s family</p>
<p>3. Professional competence for</p>	<p>Applying knowledge of planning and implementation of</p>

<p>planning, monitoring and documentation of educational activities</p>	<p>educational programmes in pre-school classrooms. Monitoring and documenting the development of individual and groups of children, either alone or in teams with other colleagues. Has the knowledge and skills to stimulate curriculum that enhances children’s cognitive, emotional, social and physical learning. Integrates knowledge, skills and abilities in specialized fields and understands them in the context of comprehensive children’s development Can create educational conditions that integrate all communication activities (language, verbal and written). Knowledge of how to use pre-school documentation systems.</p>
<p>4. Organizational skills and pedagogical guidance of groups</p>	<p>Ability to use various strategies for the planning and realization of pre-school educational programs. Is able to apply knowledge of group learning to support social interaction, asymmetric and reciprocal learning. Respecting group learning while recognizing the individual needs of all children within groups. Able to manage inappropriate behaviour in children. Valuing the needs and contributions of parents/carers in their child’s learning. Recognising and valuing the unique characteristics of preschool institutions.</p>
<p>5. Knowledge of developmental and learning needs of children</p>	<p>Able to design and develop group activities that differentiate children’s learning needs. Manages group activities that differentiate children’s learning needs and respond to these. Is able to identify and understand developmental characteristics of preschool age children. Recognizes differences in all areas of development in children (emotional, intellectual, social, physical). Differentiates between children’s behavioural and development concerns. Encourages children’s socio-emotional development including co-operation, social skills and pro-social behaviour. Has knowledge of, and can apply, methods for monitoring and stimulating cognitive development. Is able to articulate and encourage ways in which pre-school children learn and develop through play. Encourages children’s personality development. Is able to use good practice to include, and integrate into class, children with special educational needs.</p>
<p>6. Knowledge of the system of preschool education</p>	<p>Has knowledge of, and ability to use, community resources to support children’s learning and teaching. Understands, and can apply in context, the laws and regulations in relation to preschool education.</p>

	<p>Recognizes and applies the code of ethics for the education profession.</p> <p>Is able to co-operate with regional institutions and other professionals relevant to pre-school learning.</p>
<p>7. Ability to use information and communication technologies in education</p>	<p>Utilizes ICT and digital media as a source of information for programme planning and implementation.</p> <p>Ability to competently presenting professional achievements using ICT.</p> <p>Has the ability to share knowledge and skills with colleagues through the use of ICT.</p> <p>Is familiar with, and understands, ethical and legal obligations, as well as personal responsibilities in communication and use of digital sources.</p> <p>Has a high level of awareness of the need to use ICT in a sustainable, innovative and efficient way, both in education and in society generally.</p> <p>Ability to use the Internet and social media appropriately for learning in pre-schools.</p>
<p>8. Ability to plan own professional development</p>	<p>Aware of and understanding of the importance of Continuous Professional Development/ lifelong learning and how to plan professional development to enhance own practice.</p> <p>Ability to self-motivate for own Continuing Professional Development.</p> <p>Supporting the roles of creators, evaluators and practitioners in their practice.</p> <p>Ability to make critical and independent judgment on oneself and the profession of a pre-school teacher.</p> <p>Is open to the application of new knowledge, permanently reflecting on, innovating and improving one's practice.</p> <p>Able to reflect upon, think critically about one's role in the pre-school classroom, and adapt practice appropriately</p>
<p>9. Specific competences, knowledge and skills – arts, music, speech, drama, physical and health competence</p>	<p>Understanding of how to use arts, music, speech, drama or texts in the classroom to meet learning needs.</p> <p>Ability to utilise skills and knowledge in their own specialist subject areas to enhance pupil learning experiences.</p> <p>Recognising the contribution of physical education to child development, health and wellbeing, and how to integrate physical activity in pre-school contexts.</p> <p>Understanding and recognising the impacts of socio-cultural factors as they relate to health, wellbeing and young children.</p> <p>Ability to use Serbian and/or other languages effectively in the classroom context.</p> <p>Qualified in preventing abuse and neglect – (should that</p>

	<p>be, knowledge of prevention and ways of responding to suspected abuse and neglect in young children).</p> <p>Knowledge of health and safety rules and regulations, as they relate to Early Years learning.</p> <p>Ability to provide first aid within classroom and learning settings.</p>
10. Social Inclusion, difference and diversity	<p>Understands and can explain the importance of equal opportunities within pre-school learning.</p> <p>Sensitive to and shows respect for differences in family structures, cultural origins, ethnicities, beliefs and ways of life.</p> <p>Ability to design, and integrate in the classroom, pedagogic and methodical procedures for groups of children from diverse backgrounds.</p> <p>Creating a supportive learning environment for children, which respects differences and diversity.</p> <p>Respects and engages with, the principles of diversity and multiculturalism in education.</p> <p>Respecting, and understanding of, the individual socio-cultural backgrounds of children, and parents/carers.</p>
11. Transferable/Transversal Skills	<p>Able to read, analyse and integrate academic literature.</p> <p>Ability to communicate in diverse settings to a high standard in relation to written work and documentation, oral presentations and online contexts.</p> <p>Able to apply critical reasoning to practice evidence and research within the field of early childhood studies.</p> <p>Ability to undertake either a final exam or extended piece of work at the end of studies.</p> <p>Possessing high-level skills in group work but also the capability to work independently on projects.</p> <p>Able to plan professional and career engagement within the field of employment.</p> <p>Ability to use ICT, the Internet and social media, in professional, for research and knowledge updating contexts.</p> <p>Understanding of the principles of equality, diversity and inclusion in broader society and professional contexts.</p> <p>Confident in presenting oneself in a professional manner, and as appropriate to circumstances.</p>

Apart from the relevant literature, the legislative framework of the preschool teacher training in Serbia and the insights gained from all the stakeholders, the elaborated list of desirable competences was used as a starting point in creating the harmonization framework leading to harmonization of the curricula of the colleges involved in the project. In other words, in order to decrease the differences between the curricula and harmonize, individual colleges analysed their own curricula and paid special attention to build into

existing syllabi the above listed key competencies. If there was a lack of a course suitable for the development of certain competencies, new courses were created and introduced into the curriculum, while some others were excluded, or two courses were conceived as one. Harmonization framework also involved other elements: name of the study program, professional profile, aim and purpose of the study program, entrance exam, the range of mandatory (total number of points ranging between 130–150 ESPB) and optional courses, (total number of points ranging between 30–50 ESPB, including the final paper) professional practice and final paper.

Each curriculum was analyzed and the syllabi of the existing courses were modified (contents, teaching methods, literature) in such a way to create the above competences of students, future preschool teachers, through learning outcomes. Furthermore, certain deficiencies were identified in the former curricula, resulting in the need to introduce new, either mandatory or optional courses in order to reach the desirable level of harmonization. The main idea was to create such a curriculum for pre-service education of preschool teachers, so that once they graduate they “involve children and stimulate interaction with children and among children; express warmth and care, encourage the development of self-respect, self-confidence and autonomy of children; show respect for children’s perspectives; use giving support, encouragement, asking questions, etc as teaching strategies; cooperate with family and local community; encourage involvement of children of diverse backgrounds, socio-economic status, level of abilities, etc; plan their work according to abilities, needs and interests of children; monitor and evaluate abilities and progress of children using formative approach; behave like leaders and reflexive practitioners...” (Vandekerckhove 2013: 41).

3. Harmonized and Modernized Curriculum at the Preschool Teacher Training College in Vrsac

In the case of the Preschool Teacher Training College in Vrsac, one of the main outcomes of the project, i.e. harmonized and modernized curriculum for preschool teacher education is characterized by more than 85% of harmonization at qualitative level (regarding competencies permeating the curriculum, i.e. mandatory courses, optional courses and pedagogic practice). All the courses within the new curriculum have been innovated in accordance with the harmonization framework and the adopted lists of generic and subject specific competencies. In order to harmonize as much as possible at qualitative level, apart from revision and innovation of all the syllabi within the curriculum, 4 new mandatory courses were introduced: *Social protection of children in family*, *Word play and dramatization*, *Application of ICT in upbringing-educational work with children* and *Interculturalism in the European context*. In spite of the fact that four new

mandatory courses were introduced in the curriculum, the total number of mandatory courses was decreased, while the number of optional courses was significantly increased. Thus, apart from those already existing, 25 new optional courses were introduced. Thus the total of 50 optional courses are organized in 4 modules:

- Preschool teacher - General module
- Preschool teacher with emphasized competencies for work with toddlers
- Preschool teacher with emphasized competencies for work with socially deprived (Roma) children
- Preschool teacher with emphasized competencies for work with children in English language

Consequently, the curriculum seems to be a modern one, offering students abundance of choices to create their schooling according to their interests, on the one hand, and the requirements of rapidly and constantly changing world. It was conceived in such a way that the students have the possibility to, through selection of appropriate optional courses, gain emphasized competences for certain specific fields of work, as stated above. Apart from mandatory courses, two optional courses are to be chosen by students each semester. If a student, apart from general optional courses, chooses mandatory optional courses designed for a module, it will be stated in the diploma supplement that they have emphasized competences for certain kind of work.

The newly introduced optional courses are given in the Table 2 below.

Table 2 The list of optional courses

General optional courses	Mandatory optional courses for module 1 TODDLER TEACHER, i.e preschool teacher with emphasized competences for work with children at toddler age	Mandatory optional courses for module 2 PEDAGOGIC ASSISTANT, i.e. preschool teacher with emphasized competences for work with socially deprived children	Mandatory optional courses for module 3 ENGLISH LANGUAGE PRESCHOOL TEACHER, i.e. preschool teacher with emphasized competences for work with children in English language
Kindergarten as an open system Psychology of children play Playful activities Psychological aspects of communication Didactic games	Psychology at toddler age Pedagogy at toddler age Music teaching methodology at toddler age Speech development	Inclusion of socially deprived children Corrective pedagogic work Cooperation of preschool institution and families of socially deprived children	English language 3 – 6 (four more English language courses) Foreign language acquisition at early age Children literature in foreign language acquisition

ICT as a didactic means Academic writing	teaching methodology at toddler age PE teaching methodology at toddler age Basic science teaching methodology at toddler age Visual art teaching methodology at toddler age	Teamwork Tolerance Ethics of the profession of preschool teacher Mental health	Integrative approach to various teaching contents in foreign language
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4. Conclusion

In parallel with harmonization and modernization of curricula, crucial activities aiming at the empowerment of the competences and skills of the involved colleges teaching staff. A number of trainings and seminars was organized in order to improve their teaching methodology and soft-skills, in accordance with the harmonized curricula. Furthermore, as significant amount of up-to-date didactic means and equipment was purchased, necessary for proper implementation of the harmonized and modernized curricula. All the actions taken within the project are oriented towards education of a preschool teacher who will be able to face the challenges and address the needs of a modern society. The mere list of the identified main areas preschool teachers should be competent in makes the profession of a preschool teacher complex and demanding, imposing serious challenges on higher education institutions providing their pre-service and in-service education, training and professional development.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MOTHER'S PERCEIVED PARENTING STYLE AND ADOLESCENT'S EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

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Abstract: *This study aims to identify the level of emotional intelligence and self-esteem in adolescents and correlations between these characteristics and perceived parenting styles mother. The sample consists of 187 adolescents in grades XI and XII , aged between 17 and 18 years old, studying in schools in Romania, the contes Timiș, Caraș - Severin, Hunedoara. The working tools used in the study are intended to identify the scale Rosenberg self-esteem, parenting eucationale inventory models Embu and emotional intelligence assessment questionnaire (adapted by Mihaela Roco Bar-On and D. Goleman). Analysis and interpretation of statistical data illustrated the existence of positive and negative correlations, statistically significant between certain parenting styles perceived by adolescents their self-esteem and their emotional intelligence.*

Key words: *parenting style, emotional intelligence, self-esteem, adolescents.*

1. Theoretic frame

Complicating social life and the challenges of the modern world imply a series of questions and answers calls on educational influences on adolescents and their importance on teenagers. All this illustrates more clearly education should be based on an educational partnership made in favor of adolescents, in order to complete their personality.

School education is extremely important, but it needs the family, the community, the whole society to support and guide the pupils properly. However, the family plays a primary role, because it is the home office of the child and its support almost entire life. The pupils completes their first experiences of family life.

The study of family relationships, affective climate and its socio-cultural model, adopted and exercised parenting style is crucial in social integration and social formation of adolescent behavior, but also for becoming his personality.

Various studies and researches have shown that adolescent personality development can not be achieved within the matrix of family, where both educational models and affective quality of family environment and tool creates preconditions for the orderly development of adolescents.

Considering that personality development is a topical issue because more and more adolescents develop a weak personality, in this study we want to discover and highlight some of the reasons for which this happens.

Through this paper we wish to emphasize the important roles of mother parental style and the way in which they are perceived by adolescents in developing self-esteem and emotional intelligence.

In literature we find writers who have made valuable contributions on the relationship between parenting styles and adolescent self-esteem. Among them we can mention: Buri, 1989; Park et al., 2002; Zakeri & Karimpour, 2011.

Numerous studies (Žukauskienė, Malinauskienė, Erentaitė, 2011; Asghari, & Beshara, 2011; Fonte, 2009; Abdollahi, Talib, Motalebi, 2013; Joshi, Dutta, 2015) highlight the correlation position, respectively negative correlation between different parenting styles and emotional intelligence at adolescents.

In the study we propose we will focus on the relationship between mother's parenting styles (tolerant, loving, overprotective, over-involved) self-esteem and emotional intelligence of teenagers involved.

2. Research design

The study focuses on adolescents with ages between 17 and 18 years, studying at schools within the Counties of Timis, Caras - Severin, Hunedoara.

2.1 Objectives of research

The proposed objectives target:

1. The evaluation of the level of adolescents' emotional intelligence and self-esteem;
2. The identification of the correlations between the mother's parental style and self-esteem, respectively adolescents' emotional intelligence.

2.2 Hypothesis of research

1. We assume the existence of a positive correlation, statistically significant between the mother's perceived parenting style (tolerant and affectionate) and adolescents' self-esteem;
2. We assume the existence of a positive correlation, statistically significant between the mother's perceived parenting style (tolerant and affectionate) and adolescents' emotional intelligence;

3. We assume the existence of a negative correlation, statistically significant between the mother's perceived parenting style (over-protective and over-involved) and adolescents' emotional intelligence;

4. We assume the existence of a negative correlation, statistically significant between the mother's perceived parenting style (over-protective and over-involved) and adolescents' self-esteem

2.3 Methodology of research

The work intends to be a study which traces the perception of certain relations between parenting styles perceived by adolescents their self-esteem and their emotional intelligence.

In order to verify the formulated hypothesis the following instruments were used:

1. The Rosenberg self-esteem evaluation scale. The scale contains 10 items with 4 answering possibilities between totally disagree(1 point) and totally agree (4 points). Items 2, 5, 6, 8, 9 are rated reversely. The scores can be included between 10 and 40; high scores indicate a low self-esteem.

2. Evaluation questionnaire for emotional intelligence adapted by Mihaela Roco after Bar-On and Goleman. Regarding the evaluation questionnaire for emotional intelligence, the applying instructions target the check off of the answer which fits best by the teenagers, for each individual item.

The quotation possibility of answers is performed according to the following data:

Item no (question)	Answer notation		Item no (question)	Answer notation	
1	a,b,c	20 points	6	b, c	5 points
				d	20 points
2	B	20 points	7	a	20 points
3	A	20 points	8	b	20 points
4	C	20 points	9	b	5 points
				d	20 points
5	C	20 points	10	b	20 points

The points of the 10 answers are summed up.

The signification of the global sense is:

- At 100: below average;
- 100 – 150: average;
- Over 150: above average;
- 200: exceptional

3.Embu Inventory was designed by Professor Carlo Perris et al. University in Umea

(Sweden) and calibrated on a novel group (152 healthy subjects) by Radu Vrsti et al. Psychiatric Hospital Jebel. The inventory contains 81 questions that are answered by scores of 1-4 (never = 1, rarely = 2, often = 3, always = 4). The interpretation of the 81 questions are grouped into 14 subscales corresponding to 14 educational practices: abuse, deprivation, punitive, humiliating, rejection, overprotection, over-involved, tolerant, affectionate, directing performance, generator of guilt.

The sample involved in this research is formed of 187 adolescents, students in schools within the county of Timiș, Caraș-Severin and Hunedoara. Within the sample we find 82 male adolescents, 43.9%, respectively 105 female adolescents, 56.1%. (Table 1)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid male	82	43,9	43,9	43,9
female	105	56,1	56,1	100,0
Total	187	100,0	100,0	

(Table 1 Frequency within the sample regarding gender)

Regards to the allocation on ages at the level of the sample, the data are: 57.2% are 17 years old, 42.8% are 18 years old. (Table 2)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid 17 years	107	57,2	57,2	57,2
18 years	80	42,8	42,8	100,0
Total	187	100,0	100,0	

(Table 2 Frequency within the sample regarding age)

Interpretation of the research results

In order to test the proposed hypothesis a program named SPSS was used performing correlations by means of the Person test.

The following step is the analysis the obtained results.

Regarding the first hypothesis, the data presented in table 3 illustrate the fact that between the two involved variables, self-esteem of students and mother's perceived parenting style (tolerant and affectionate) there is a

positive correlation with statistical significance ($r = .247, p = .001, r = .229, p = .002$). Thus, we can state that at level of the sample of adolescents involved, a high level of self-esteem is associated to a high level of mother's perceived parenting style (tolerant and affectionate).

The second hypothesis is also confirmed. The statistical data ($r = .184, p = .012,$

$r = .214, p = .003$) reveal positive correlations with statistical significance between the mother's perceived parenting style (tolerant and affectionate) and adolescents' emotional intelligence.

These correlation coefficient confirm the fact that tolerant and affectionate a mother parental style determines a higher degree of emotional intelligence.

Regarding hypothesis 3, the data presented in table 4 illustrate the fact that between the two involved variables, emotional intelligence of students and mother's perceived parenting style (Over-protective, Over-involved), there are no significant correlations from statistical point of view.

Regarding hypothesis 4, the data presented in table 3 illustrates the fact that between the two involved variables, self-esteem of students and mother's perceived parenting style (Over-protective, Over-involved) there is a negative correlation with statistical significance ($r = -.156, p = .033, (r = -.223, p = .002)$).

Hypotheses 1, 2, 4 of this study are confirmed and they support some of the data presented in previous studies mentioned in this paper.

		Over-protective	Over-involved	Tolera nt	Affectio nate
Self-esteem	Pearson Correlation	-.156(*)	-.223(**)	.247(*)	.229(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.033	.002	.001	.002
	N	187	187	187	187
Emotional intelligence	Pearson Correlation	-.025	.011	.184(*)	.214(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.735	.877	.012	.003
	N	187	187	187	187

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

(Table 3 Value of the correlation coefficient)

Conclusions and proposals

Due to the obtained data we observe the existence of positive correlation, highly significant statistically between the adolescents' self esteem and the mother's perceived parenting style (affectionate, tolerant). We also observe positive correlations, statistically significant, between the adolescents'

emotional intelligence and the mother's perceived parenting style (affectionate, tolerant). We observe statistically significant, negative correlations between adolescents' self esteem and the mother's perceived parenting style (over-protective, over-involved).

Taking into account the data obtained in our research on adolescents, in the investigation of parental style influences on the self-esteem levels and emotional intelligence, it is necessary to implement a program of psycho-pedagogical consoling to the pupils involved in this study and to their parents. This program should focus on improving the level of self-esteem and of emotional intelligence, and should develop capacities of self-closure, supporting the parents to improve educational style.

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INTERCULTURALITY IN READERS IN SERBIAN LANGUAGE FOR YOUNGER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL GRADES

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Abstract: *Cultural diversity as one of identity characteristic of contemporary society is reflected in different ways in the educational system as well. The textbook as an element of teaching is an important factor of mutual understanding, respect, acceptance of individuals who wish to preserve their cultural identity in the broadest sense. Reader as a kind of anthology of literary texts, didactically formed, allows acquisition of certain experiences (through the literary art), building up attitudes, development of competencies in the sense of interculturality. The author analyzes the content of 20 readers approved for teaching in elementary grades, in order to determine: (a) whether and in which way the thematic structure of readers for younger grades of elementary school contributes to the development of intercultural competence; (b) which elements of teaching, in the opinion of teachers, to the greatest extent contribute to interculturality. The research results show that: (a) a small number of literary texts in the analyzed readers contribute to the development of intercultural competences related to learning in order to know, learning to live together with others and learning to be; (b) teachers believe that the organization of teaching and the reader contribute the most to interculturality. Although the reader is primarily addressed to pupil, the teacher has the task to put the content of textbooks into function of interculturality development.*

Key words: *interculturalism, intercultural competence, reader, literary text, teacher.*

Introduction

Life in modern societies, which are heterogeneous in the national, linguistic, religious and other sense, actualize the question of multiculturalism, ie. the establishment of a pluralistic society in which any exclusivism will outgrow and achieve coexistence, mutual tolerance and equality of different cultures

in the broadest sense. Multiculturalism is an universal phenomenon, because in modern societies current issue of the right to diversity, which in one cultural dimension implies, above all, issues of education and the requirements for recognition of identity (Pejović according to Gajic 2011). The need to improve the quality of life in multicultural societies and the importance of achieving the equal rights of all to education and respect for diversity imposes to school a matter of personal, national and cultural identity and the question of the right to its maintenance and development (Gajic and Budić 2006; Gajic 2011). Rejection of static vision of culture as a mosaic of different groups according to ethnic origin, language, religion and the like, in opposition to dynamic, interactional model is resulting in the idea of interculturalism, from which in education is expected to respect the civil and human rights and freedoms, to contribute to the further development of democracy, to better mutual understanding and cooperation, freedom and security. In that sense, modern education is defined as a process „which creates the conditions, norms and principles as well as the necessary competences which will make possible the dialogue between different cultures“ (Mlinarević et al. 2013: 13). Differences in culture are understood as richness which should be preserved and developed (Previšić 1996; Gajic 2011), and education in cultural diversity or cultural understanding affirms the right to difference, not discrimination because of them (Sekulić-Majurec 1996). The common acceptance of cultural diversity, mutual respect and tolerance contribute to acceptance of the cultural heritage on the one hand, but also to ensuring development opportunities, on the other hand.

Theoretical background

The idea of interculturality in education is the result of the need to regulate multicultural societies according to the principles of cultural pluralism (mutual understanding, tolerance and dialogue, experiences and permeation of its own and different cultural characteristics), universalism (common interests, beliefs, customs) and social dialogue (cultural particularities and shared links) (Hrvatić 2007: 42). Interculturalism implies a positive and active relationship between groups and individuals, which differ according to national, ethnic, religious, class, race or gender characteristics. Principles of interculturalism include „openness to the other, active respect of the differences, mutual comprehension, active tolerance, respect of the other culture, ensure of equal opportunities and combating discrimination“ (Martinelli and Taylor, 2003: 33).

Intercultural education is an inevitable link that enables effective work on conflict transformation, typical for the modern world, and development of respect for other people, cultures and values (Hrvatić 2007). It is defined as a theoretical and practical approach directed toward development and

improvement of interaction between pupils of different backgrounds, as well as acquiring knowledge of different cultural, religious and linguistic traditions present in schools and societies. It includes the belief that meaningful encounter and dialogue encourage mutual understanding, enrich the intellectual and social life (Sleeter and Grant 1994). Intercultural education aims to overcome the passive coexistence and to achieve developed and sustainable way of living together in a multicultural society, which is achieved by building understanding, mutual respect and dialogue among groups of different cultures, by providing equal opportunities and by combating discrimination. Therefore, the aim of intercultural education is not knowledge, but the attitude towards knowledge, new construction and the level of knowledge that enable the creation and operation of intercultural educational (school) community. Intercultural education of every individual requires knowledge of himself and his own culture in order to be able to understand other cultures, which aims to „better understanding of cultures in modern society; the ability to communicate between people belonging to different cultures; more flexible attitude towards cultural diversity in society; greater willingness of people to participate actively in social interaction with people of other cultural backgrounds and the recognition of the fundamental characteristics of human nature as something they have in common“ (Ouellet, according to Gošović et al., 2007: 6).

Upbringing and education for interculturality affects changes of negative stereotypes towards different social groups. In order to establish, people who have developed intercultural competences, and who accept and implement intercultural dialogue with those who are different are necessary (Mrnjauš 2013: 322). Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to recognize and use cultural differences as one of the resources for learning (Berthoin-Atal and Friedman 2003). In order to develop this competence, it is necessary to acquire the skills related to respect for others and self-expression. In order to achieve this it is necessary a good knowledge of their own culture and sense of identity, which are the basis for openness to other cultures and respecting their diversity (Račić 2013).

The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century identified four pillars upon which education should rely: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be (Delors 1998). Learning to know as a key competences implies intellectual curiosity, critical thinking and problem-solving strategies, and in the context of interculturality, competences are: understanding the basic concepts of social justice; knowledge of the differences that exist; the identification of mechanisms that foster inequality; perception of diversity as a richness, exploration of diversity and the willingness to enter into contact with

diversity. Learning to do involves the application of knowledge acquired in contact with others, and the key competencies are related to the ability of appreciation of diversity as an integral part of life, knowledge of their rights and obligations and respect the rights of others. Learning to live together in the context of intercultural learning involves encouraging pupils to discover differences and to treat them as an incentive for development, and to connect with others through constructive dialogue (Delors 1996). Learning to be involves competencies that are more related to personal value orientation, beliefs or norms than on specific knowledge and practical skills, for example, tolerance of the uncertainty, openness to new experiences, risk taking, and the like (Vranješević 2013).

The aim of intercultural education is:

- „to promote the conditions conducive for pluralism in society through increasing the sensitivity for their own culture and to remind children to the fact that there are other ways of dealing and other value systems;
- to develop childrens respect for the lifestyles that differ from their, in order to be able to understand and appreciate each other;
- to cultivate commitment to equality by empowering children to make choices responsibly (based on knowledge of the facts) and to take actions directed against discrimination and prejudice;
- to recognizes the similarities and differences of the values and enable all children to speak for themselves and to articulate their culture and history“ (Gošović et al. 2007: 14).

The key role in intercultural education belongs to teache, who functionally connects the different elements of teaching, mediates between pupils and teaching content, between pupils and textbooks. For that reason it is necessary to develop teachers' competences related to the openness for changes in the paradigms of education, objectives, forms, contents and methods of teaching and learning, scientific knowledge and the like, but it is necessary it is necessary to develop a sensitivity of teachers for the identification and understanding of the characteristics and needs of members of different groups, particularly in multicultural environment. In order to be able to develop intercultural competence of pupils, teachers should master the civil, the interpersonal, the intercultural and the social competences, which are necessary for intercultural education. Respectively, unless the required professional and methodical knowledge and skills of motivation of pupils, teachers should have a pro-social, empathic, assertive and creative abilities (Jozek, Lomnický and Žbirková 2007).

The development of attitudes towards people from other cultures is influenced by different factors: family discourse and practice in relation to the cultural groups; content of the school curriculum; way of presenting

cultural groups in the mass media, as well as personal contact with individuals from other cultures (Byram et al., 2009: 6). The curricula of Serbian language in elementary grades include tasks which are related to the upbringing and educational intentions of a broader range, that go beyond the subject, class and institutional frameworks, such as: exploring, developing and preserving of national and cultural identity; respect, care and improvement of cultural heritage; educating of pupils in the spirit of the highest moral values (humanism, solidarity, altruism, cosmopolitanism ...) (*Pravilnik o nastavnom programu za četvrti razred osnovnog obrazovanja i vaspitanja* 2006). In this way, by developing sense of belonging to someone's own community and to mankind as a whole, young people are becoming aware of their national and cultural identity, but also learn tolerance towards diversity, which is the main task of the intercultural education (Spajić-Vrkaš 1993).

Intercultural education and developing of intercultural competences in teaching in elementary grades could be implemented in various ways, including through a reader as a textbook for teaching literature. In order to encourage intercultural competence, a textbook „should be a source of knowledge about the diversity, should develop the skills of communication and living together and to encourage the formation of values which ensure respect for diversity“ (Vranješević 2013: 46).

The textbook that would be suitable for the development of interculturality should include topics that would encourage the development of intercultural competences on three levels, adapted to the developmental abilities of pupils:

- *The level of knowledge and information* – learning the language, customs, standards and values of other cultures, as well as the specifics of their worldview; Learning about the mechanisms of formation and maintenance of stereotyped thinking, prejudice and different types of discrimination or inequality.

- *The individual level, the level of personal competencies* – thinking about ourselves, about our own identity and relationship to the different groups to which we belong, seeing oneself from the perspective of others, controlling one's own behavior in an intercultural context, the development of critical thinking, ie. critical attitude towards reality that surrounds us.

- *The level of social skills* – learning communication skills and constructive solution of conflicts in an intercultural environment, developing of empathy skills, support and solidarity, increasing tolerance to ambiguity, teamwork skills and cooperation in an intercultural context (Vranješević, Trikić and Rosandić 2005).

Reader as an anthology of literary texts may be suitable for cross-curricular learning of intercultural content and developing of intercultural

competencies. It is a specific textbook which affects „the developing of students' personality, communication, independence, creativity, cultural identity and developing habits, too“ (Cvetanović 2007: 80), by its functions. In literary teaching reader has the role of a reliable interlocutor to pupil which, in communication with the literary text activates and stimulates pupils' intercultural competence. We were interested in the potential of readers in Serbian language in elementary grades to develop interculturality.

Research methodology

In order to examine the possibility of developing interculturality in teaching literature through textbook *the research tasks* were related to the determination of: (a) whether and in which way the thematic structure of readers for younger grades of elementary school contributes to the development of intercultural competence; (b) which elements of teaching, in the opinion of teachers, to the greatest extent contribute to interculturality.

The research is based on the use of descriptive *method*, and was conducted using a survey and a content analysis technique, which was implemented by two independent researchers, one of whom was the author of the paper. The categories of intercultural competences: acquisition of knowledge about diversity; developing the skills of living together, cooperation and constructive communication; the formation of values that ensure respect for diversity were identified by analyzing the thematic structure of the texts represented in readers. The protocol of content analysis and closed-ended questionnaire, which examined contribution of some factors of the teaching to development of interculturality were used as research instruments. The survey was anonymous, to avoid giving desirable answers.

The sample consisted of a sample of teachers and a sample of textbooks. The sample of teachers was selected from the population of employees of 2014/2015 school year, in elementary schools in the Republic of Serbia, and it consisted of 225 teachers from 25 elementary schools in seven districts. The sample of textbooks consisted of 20 readers for younger grades which were included in the *Catalog of textbooks for primary school*, approved for the period from 2016 to 2019.

Independent variables were: (a) years of work experience (up to 10, 11 to 20, 21 to 30 and over 30) and professional qualification of teachers (college and university).

The obtained data were processed in the statistical package IBM SPSS Statistics 20, and were reported using the statistical measures of counting, relative relationship and average. From the statistical tests the Chi-square was applied as a non-parametric procedure.

Results and discussion

1. Readers in Serbian language in younger grades of elementary school in function of developing intercultural competence

Development of competencies for life in multicultural environment by intercultural dialogue can be achieved through a literary text. The attitude of younger school age child to literary art, among other things, is characterized by: enjoyment in the content and the manner of presentation of such content; empathic identification with the world of the characters and their actions; a strong emotional response to the message of the text. The literary text affects consciousness, knowledge, imagination and language of the child. In this regard, we have analyzed the thematic structure of literary texts from readers in Serbian language for younger elementary grades, in order to determine whether the intercultural contents is one of the structural elements of these texts.

The results of a content analysis show that out of a total of 1138 texts in 20 readers of 5 publishers, 35 (3.08%) texts with its thematic structure contribute to development of interculturality. Some texts are repeated in several readers, so we evidenced a total of 22 (1.93%) different texts which thematic structure can contribute to the development of some of the categories of interculturality. Some readers do not contain any text that fits this criteria.

Based on these results it can be concluded that the texts which contribute to the development of interculturality by its thematic structure are not represented enough in the Serbian language readers for the younger grades of primary school. Since there is no subject in younger grades to deal with interculturality, contents that are related to this topic to the greatest extent are learnt in the course of Civic Education, but also through World Around Us, which is most suitable for intercultural learning in the younger grades of elementary school (Vranješević 2013: 40). Since knowledge about intercultural relations at this educational level is generally acquired cross-curricularly, it is necessary to: (a) make use of literary texts from readers in function of developing intercultural competence by appropriate teaching treatment; (b) carefully select literary texts suitable for developing of interculturality, which may be included in teaching through textbooks or choice of children's press or linguistic-methodical text and the like. In this sense, the obtained results can be of use to teachers and authors of textbooks.

Regarding by categories of interculturality, the results show that thematic structure of texts from readers relates to following:

- Personal and group identity (25 texts);
- Rights and rules for regulating common life (of 5 texts);

- Understanding the perspectives of other social groups (2 texts);
- Mutual understanding and respect (2 texts);
- Permeation of cultural groups and their mutual influences (1 text).

Good knowledge of oneself and his own culture and a sense of identity are the basic prerequisite of openness to other cultures and respect of their peculiarities (Račić 2013). The largest number of texts in readers contributes to the introduction of personal and group identity by its thematic structure, and in this sense, the thematic structure of the textbooks meets the requirements for developing interculturality. On the other hand, understanding the behavior of others, the language of others and their ways of thinking and viewing the world as the basic elements of intercultural competence (Mlinarević et al. 2013: 15) make the element of thematic structure of small number of texts.

We have analyzed the content of readers in the context of the four pillars of Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors 1996), assessing the contribution of thematic structure and meaning of literary texts to the development of intercultural competencies of students. The following texts are suitable for *acquiring knowledge about cultural peculiarities* (lifestyle, cultural habits, cultural heritage):

- *Icy North* (Marinković, S. i Marković, S. (2016). Čitanka za prvi razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Kreativni centar);
- M. Pupin: *From pasture to scientist* (Todorov, N., Cvetković S. i Plavšić, M. (2016). Trešnja u cvetu – Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Eduka);
- D. Lakićević: *The legend about the boy from New York* (Žeželj Ralić, R. (2016). Maša i Raša „Reči čarobnice”, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Klet);
- T. Rodić: *With children around the world* (Stanković-Šošo, N. i Čabrić, S. (2016). Beskrajne reči, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Novi Logos);
- P. Bak: *Sisters* (Šojić, V. i Kasapović, M. (2016). Čitanka 3. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- P. Bak: *White and yellow girl* (Todorov, N., Cvetković S. i Plavšić, M. (2016). Trešnja u cvetu – Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Eduka);

The following texts can contribute to the *acquisition of knowledge about physical characteristics* (race, gender):

- J. J. Zmaj: *The song about the Chinese* (Jović, M. i Jović, I. (2016). Čitanka za prvi razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Eduka);

- L. Tumijati: *Erika* (Manojlović, M. i Babunović, S. (2016). Čitanka za drugi razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Eduka).

Development of skills of living together, cooperation and constructive communication can be achieved through the following texts:

- A. Šopenhauer: *Barbed piglets* (Manojlović, M. i Babunović, S. (2016). Čitanka za drugi razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Eduka);
- A. Šopenhauer: *Nice manners* (Juzbašić, M. i Trkulja, N. (2016). Čitanka 2. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- S. Ćosić: *I also have some rights* (Arandelović, M. (2016). Čitanka 4. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- Lj. Ršumović: *Primer of Children's Rights* (Stanković-Šošo, N. i Čabrić, S. (2016). Beskrajne reči, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Novi Logos);
- *From the Declaration of Children's Rights* (Arandelović, M. (2016). Čitanka 4. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- Lj. Ršumović: *I have the right to an attitude* (Juzbašić, M. i Trkulja, N. (2016). Čitanka 2. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- *Convention on the Children's Rights* (Juzbašić, M. i Trkulja, N. (2016). Čitanka 2. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- A. Dž. Peker: *Socializing, going out, having fun (Drugovi s posebnim potrebama)* (Stanković-Šošo, N. i Čabrić, S. (2016). Beskrajne reči, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Novi Logos);

The following texts are suitable for *the formation of values that ensure respect for diversity:*

- *Lessons of wise chief* (Šojić, V. i Kasapović, M. (2016). Čitanka 3. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- R. Damjanović: *The sky above the circus* (Juzbašić, M. i Trkulja, N. (2016). Čitanka 2. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
- J. J. Zmaj: *Gypsy praises his horse* (Arandelović, M. (2016). Čitanka 4. Beograd: Bigz školstvo; Todorov, N., Cvetković S. i Plavšić, M. (2016). Trešnja u cvetu – Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Eduka; Stanković-Šošo, N. i Čabrić, S. (2016). Beskrajne reči, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Novi Logos; Žeželj Ralić, R. (2016). Maša i Raša „Reči čarobnice”, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Klet; Marinković, S. i Marković, S. (2016). Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Kreativni centar);
- Lj. Ršumović: *Homeland defends by beauty* (Arandelović, M. (2016). Čitanka 4. Beograd: Bigz školstvo; Todorov, N., Cvetković S. i Plavšić, M. (2016). Trešnja u cvetu – Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Eduka; Stanković-Šošo, N. i Čabrić, S.

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- Lj. Ršumović: *Homeland* (Cvetković, M., Cvetković, S., Živanović, T., Plavšić, M. i Prvulović, B. (2016). *Vodeno ogledalo – Čitanka za treći razred osnovne škole*. Beograd: Eduka)
 - A folk song: *Christmas is tapping by a stick* (Arandjelović, M. (2016). *Čitanka 4*. Beograd: Bigz školstvo; Todorov, N., Cvetković S. i Plavšić, M. (2016). *Trešnja u cvetu – Čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole*. Beograd: Eduka; Stanković-Šošo, N. i Čabrić, S. (2016). *Beskrajne reči*, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Novi Logos; Žeželj Ralić, R. (2016). *Maša i Raša „Reči čarobnice”*, čitanka za četvrti razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Klet);
 - D. Erić: *Christmas Eve* (Šojić, V. i Kasapović, M. (2016). *Čitanka 3*. Beograd: Bigz školstvo);
 - K. Ilić: *A dream of Christ* (Žeželj Ralić, R. (2016). *Maša i Raša „Reka reči”*, čitanka za treći razred osnovne škole. Beograd: Klet).

Competences related to knowledge of the diversity can be developed through texts that talk about the lifestyle, cultural habits, cultural heritage, race, and gender. At the same time, it does not indicate to a sufficient extent to the interdependence of different cultures, and the similar are the findings of the analysis of Nature and Society textbooks for the fourth grade (Vranješević 2013: 46). When it comes to social skills that relate to life with others, the readers contain texts about the rights and the way of regulating these rights, the rules of living together and constructive communication, cooperation and support of others and different. Texts about personal and group cultural identity, personal value orientations, beliefs or standards fall into the category which is suitable for the development of competencies to be (Delors 1996). It would be significant to analyze the methodological apparatus, ie. issues, tasks, directions, incentives for experiencing, understanding and interpretation of literary texts which contribute to the development of interculturality by its thematic structure.

2. Teachers attitudes about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of interculturality

In order to achieve intercultural learning, the following preconditions have to be satisfied: exposure to contacts with other cultures and its members; motivation for involvement and engagement in this domain; curiosity; empathy; knowledge of oneself and its own culture; acceptance of complexity, contradictions and frustrations (tolerance to ambiguity) that

occur in situations of encounters with different cultures (Vranješević, Trikić and Rosandić 2005). Teacher as a mediator between pupils and teaching content plays a significant role in achieving the teaching tasks which are related to interculturality. Each of these preconditions of intercultural learning can be achieved with indirect or direct action of teachers.

Bearing in mind the importance of the role of teachers in education for interculturality, we were interested in the attitudes of teachers about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of interculturality. The following factors of teaching were offered: *curriculum*, *organization of teaching*, *pupil*, *reader*. Teachers were asked to indicate which factor to the greatest extent contributes to the development of intercultural competencies of pupils. Also, teachers had the opportunity to supplement proposed list.

Table 1: *Attitudes of teachers with different work experience about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of interculturality*

Work experience	Curriculum	Organization of teaching	Pupil	Reader	Total
0–10	14 34,1%	16 39%	4 9,8%	7 17,1%	41 100%
11–20	5 7,7%	31 47,7%	1 1,5%	28 43,1%	65 100%
21–30	9 10,2%	38 43,2%	6 6,8%	35 39,8%	88 100%
More than 30	0 0%	11 35,5%	8 25,8%	12 38,7%	31 100%
Total	28 12,4%	96 42,7%	19 8,4%	82 36,5%	225 100%

$$\chi^2=42,208 \quad df=9 \quad r=0,001$$

According to research results, the highest percentage of teachers believe that *the organization of teaching* (96 or 42.7%) and *the reader* (82 or 36.5%) to the greatest extent contribute to the interculturality, while *the curriculum* (28 or 12.4%) and *the pupil himself* (19 or 8.4%) contribute to the development of intercultural competences of pupils in the lowest extent (Table 1). The data according to which teachers give the great importance to reader in developing the interculturality is surprising, if we bear in mind the results of the first task in this study, according to which a relatively small number of texts from readers for the younger elementary grades can contribute to the development of intercultural competences with its thematic structure and meaning. On the other hand, teachers believe that the organization of

teaching is very important for the interculturality, ie. they emphasizes their role in achieving this educational task. This data shows that teachers are aware of their role in the development of intercultural competences of pupils, so it could been expected that their activities will be proportionate to their beliefs about the importance of themselves in the realization of this teaching task.

We examined the influence of work experience and educational level of teachers as independent variables on their attitudes about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of pupil's intercultural competencies. The results indicate that there are certain differences in opinions of teachers with different work experience (Table 1). The largest number of the most experienced teachers (12 or 38.7%) believe that *reader* has the greatest significance for the realization of this teaching task, and all other subgroups formed according to teacher work experience considered that the organization of teaching to the greatest extent contributes to interculturality. It is interesting that a large percentage of teachers at the beginning of their career (14 or 34.1%) consider that the *curriculum* to the greatest extent contributes to the development of intercultural competencies of pupils, which is not surprising if one bears in mind the importance which teachers attach to the curriculum. Also, about a quarter of the most experienced teachers (8 or 25.8%) consider that pupils themselves to the greatest extent contribute to the development of their intercultural competences. This result can be interpreted in two ways – either teachers base such attitudes on their experience or they want to share responsibility for the realization of this teaching assignment with the other participants in the learning process.

Results of statistical analysis ($\chi^2 = 42.208$, $df = 9$, $r = 0.001$) show that the differences in the attitudes of teachers with different experience in teaching about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of interculturality are statistically significant.

Table 1: *Attitudes of teachers with different education level about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of interculturality*

Education level	Curriculum	Organization of teaching	Pupil	Reader	Total
College	2 6,3%	17 53,1%	5 15,6%	8 25%	32 100%
University	26 13,5%	79 40,9%	14 7,3%	74 38,3%	193 100%
Total	28 12,4%	96 42,7%	19 8,4%	82 36,5%	225 100%

$$\chi^2=5,725 \quad df=3 \quad r=0,126$$

More than a half of teachers (17 or 53.1%) who have a college degree, the organization of teaching determined as the most important factor in developing of interculturality of pupils, while a quarter of this subgroup of interviewed teachers (8 or 25%) the highest significance in this area gave to the reader (Table 2). On the other hand, somewhat smaller percentage of teachers with the academic education the greatest importance attaches to the same factors in function of developing interculturality. Statistical analysis ($\chi^2 = 5.725$, $df = 3$, $r = 0.126$) shows that there are no significant differences in the attitudes of teachers with different professional qualifications about the contribution of the factors of teaching to the development of intercultural competencies of pupils.

A reader is a significant element of teaching which by its content structure, thematic direction and meaning of literary texts, by comprehensiveness and the quality of orders within the methodical apparatus can contribute to the development of intercultural competencies of pupils, but not without a teacher. „Textbook can do a lot, but it can not do it alone“ (Antić 2016: 32). Teacher and textbook must work together in the process of developing the interculturality, too.

Conclusion

Multicultural society requires intercultural concept of teaching and learning, which includes the creation of a constructive dialogue, understanding different cultures, ensuring equal rights and opportunities of free formation of the identity of each person (Mrnjauš 2013: 322). Results of the content analysis of readers in Serbian language for younger elementary school grades show that there is a little quantitative representation of the literary texts which can contribute to the development of interculturality of pupils by its thematic structure. Assessing the contribution of thematic structure and meaning of literary texts to the development of intercultural competence of pupils in the context of the four pillars of Education for the Twenty-first Century (Delors 1996), it was found that the texts which can contribute to the development of competences related to learning in order to know, learning to live together with others and learning to be are represented in analyzed readers.

The results of the survey of teachers attitudes about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of intercultural competences of pupils indicate that in this area teachers valued the most organization of teaching, and their role and the role of readers in achieving these learning tasks. Since teachers are aware of the significance of their role in developing the intercultural competences, it could be expected that their activities in this

area will be proportionate to their beliefs about the importance of themselves in the realization of this teaching task. Results of the statistical analysis show that the differences in the attitudes of teachers with different experience in teaching about the contribution of some factors of teaching to the development of interculturality is statistically significant, and the difference in the attitudes of teachers with different professional qualifications about the contribution of factors of teaching to the development of intercultural competences of pupils are not statistically significant.

Although readers in Serbian language for younger elementary school grades allow developing of pupils intercultural competence, the contents of the reader are not enough to acquire the necessary experience, building of attitudes, development of competencies in the sense of interculturality. The key role in intercultural upbringing and education – which bears the mark of individual and collective action, tolerance, protection of their own socio-cultural identity and self-awareness – belongs to a teacher, as an important initiator and promoter of intercultural values (Mlinarević, Brust-Nemet 2012). Although the reader is primarily intended for the pupil, teacher has the task to put the content of readers into function of developing interculturality.

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IMPROVISATION IN MUSIC ACTIVITIES IN THE PRIMARY SCHOOL

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A life without purpose, a path without destination, an untuned violin... that's how life would sound like without any improvisation.

Abstract: *This project was done at the Orthodox Highschool Roman Ciorogariu from Oradea with the 4th grade (year 2016-2017). This class is made of 28 pupils, 10 girls and 18 boys (unbalanced number in gender). It came into being as a strong desire to observe the impact of improvisation in music activities in the primary school, on the pupil within this criteria level. The main observation concerning this criteria of pupils (during a lesson of music improvisation of a professor done on this class) was that they are receptive on everything that is new, which demands creativity and imagination. More than that we wanted to investigate if, by bringing up a music improvisation program, children would reach the highest level of improvisation (see Levels of improvisation) in relation to their age level and their musical experience. The passion of the professor and of the primary school teacher, the atmosphere full of warmth and harmony of the class, made me curious and determined me to do this research. I believe it was necessary because it presents another angle of education. Improvisation in musical activities allows self-knowledge, it demands the interaction of human beings to reach the same objective, develops confidence and assertiveness, and develops essential communication abilities.*

Key words: *improvisation, music, activities, primary school, pupil*

Theoretical foundation

Learning improvisation is a continuous process from the beginner till the expert. Kratus described a model of seven consecutive levels for the development of improvisation abilities (Kratus, apud Bauer, 2014):

Level 1. *Exploring*. This could be considered a pre-improvisation level in which the student tries different sounds without a certain structure. Exploring is similar to children's babbling. Since hearing is a necessary ability for the middle and advanced improvisation, the teacher can help the pupils in developing this while he gives enough time and necessary instruments to ease the improvisation as an exploration part.

Level 2. *Improvisation oriented towards the process*. At this level comes genuine improvisation. Pupils have a certain control over the process, coordinating movements through sound patterns created intentionally, patterns that often repeat. Pupils see improvisation as a process (to do) rather than a creation of a musical product at this stage, and their improvisations lack entirely music components that offers coherence for a listener. At this stage the teacher can point out the patterns of improvisation of the pupils and how they can be associated. The teachers can also help the pupils to develop their ability of listening and offer them opportunities to improvise with the help of these, and then absorb the improvisation of others.

Level 3. *Improvisation oriented towards the product*. The pupil knows better the musical structure-tone, meter, rhythm, changes in the harmony and phrases-and begins to use them in improvisation, which gives the listener to take out a great musical meaning of it. During this stage the teacher can broad the children's understanding concerning the structure of the music elements and can help them to develop their musical "ear" and sensibility in harmony variation, tempo and meter.

Level 4. *Fluid improvisation*. The pupil manifest more control and automatism on technical aspects of interpretation (being able to sing without the necessity of being conscious of it) with great fluidity in sounds, meter and tempo. At this stage the teacher should highlight the right technique for the children to do and offers exercises for technical development and will facilitate opportunity of improvisation, among which the best ones will be put in authentic musical contexts and will facilitate opportunities of improvisation that uses a variety of tempos, meters, tones and harmony of chords succession.

Level 5. *Structured improvisation*. The pupil uses musical structures more extended in improvisation and techniques as a development of melody conception, tension and liberation, and connections between musical conception in an improvisation. Improvisations became consistently coherent for the listener, as a clear beginning, a mean and an end. During this study the teachers can propose strategies for the children to use in developing an

improvisation. Pupils can also gain a lot through analysing techniques that others use in improvisation.

Level 6. *Stylistic improvisation*. Pupil is capable to improvise fluently in a particular style, using proper melodic, harmonic and rhythmic procedures. At this level teachers can help children to achieve a repertoire that includes melodies, rhythms, harmonies and pitch specific to the style. Learning these standards, continuing to analyse professional interpretation and having opportunities to interpret with the professionals, concerning the style, it will be a benefit.

Level 7. *Personal improvisation*. The last achievement for a musician is to develop a unique improvised style, that can be acknowledged. The teachers can encourage his pupils to become fluent in a broad range of styles which could become, along the way, a mixture in an innovative stylistic approach.

Methodology

The assumption upon which this experimental demarche was structured is the following:

We assume that the musical improvisation program implementation leads to the improvement of the improvisation level in fourth grade pupils.

The experimental intersession focuses on three goals. These reflect the improvisation level that fourth grade pupils can reach during those five months of program implementation, the benefits that the improvisation has upon the learning process and the way in which the improvisation is contributory to working together as a cooperative group. They are:

O1. To identify the improvisation level of the fourth grade pupils and the evolution of these pupils during the activities;

O2. To emphasize the benefits that improvisation has upon the learning process;

O3. To emphasize the way in which improvisation is contributory to cooperative group working.

We have reached these goals through this program by using the following research methods: the initial interview addressed to the pupils, the observation chart, the opinion survey, the final interview addressed to the pupils and the interview addressed to the teacher.

After administrating the preliminary observations we started implementing the intervention program: a series of eight lessons lead by the researcher. This program emphasizes the concept of musical improvisation used in certain integrated activities for pupils in elementary school (Purton, 1999). The efficient exploitation of the eight activities was due to making the

musical instruments from recyclable materials, which we used with great success in the group working (Bertles, et al., n. y.).

In the first activity we integrated the musical improvisation with the practical abilities (Campbell and Scott-Kassner, 2014). The children made various instruments which they used during this study in completing their tasks (*Como elaborar diez instrumentos*, 2014).

In the second activity poetry was integrated with musical improvisation (Comett, 2010). They had to render musically in logical fragments the poem *Acceleratul (The Fast Train)*.

For integrating the musical improvisation in math we used the musical instruments and different geometrical shapes. In the third activity every shape was represented by an instrument sound within different types of groups: architects, composers and athletes (Popa, 2010).

The fourth activity helps integrating musical improvisation in civics (Limb, 2010). For this, children made a musical entitled *The Feelings* in which they described a school day. At the end of the activity they had to render the feelings they experienced during this class in a *Musical Journal* (Bedore, 2004). For each feeling they had to think and find either an instrumental sound or a vocal sound (*A Turkish Couple Arguing*, 2014).

In activity number five we have integrated musical improvisation with arts (Muntean, 2013). The pupils had to do a drawing with lines and at the end of the activity the whole group had to symbolize it using musical instruments, vocals, body percussion or even motion.

In the sixth activity we have integrated the musical improvisation with narration (Laurian, 2010). Children represented *The Bear's Tale* using the musical instruments that they made and in the end, for reinforcing the notions of half note and quarter note they had learned before, they had to dance, having a he-bear and a she-bear for the half note in each group, as well as cubs for the quarter note.

For the activity number seven, musical improvisation was integrated in geography. Kids had to role-play the meteorologist and present the *Forecast* so that the audience understood how the weather would be in order to be able to adapt to the weather conditions (*How to impress a woman*, 2010).

In activity number eight, musical improvisation was integrated in spelling and pupils had to render musically a text improvising a specific sound for every punctuation mark (Borge and Martin, 2009).

Results

From pupils' perspective 58% consider that they have achieved level 7 of improvisation. See Fig. 1 *Improvisation levels - pupils' view*

In activity number eight the notes percentage was as follows: 100% pupils past level one of improvisation, 93% pupils past level two, 54% past level three and 18% reached level four. See Fig. 2 *Implementation levels – researcher’s view*

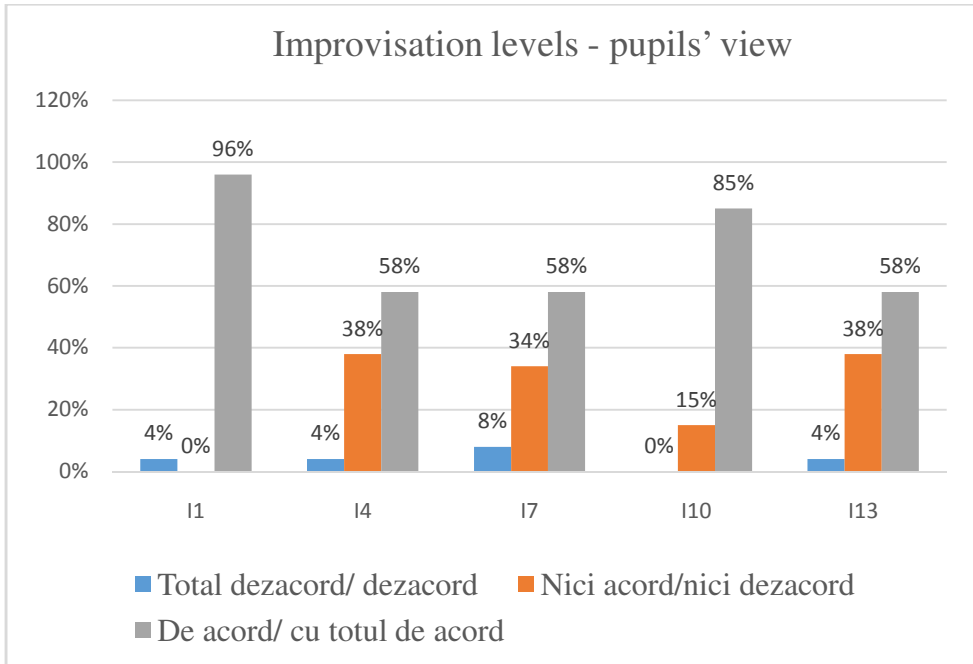


Fig. 1 *Improvisation levels - pupils' view*

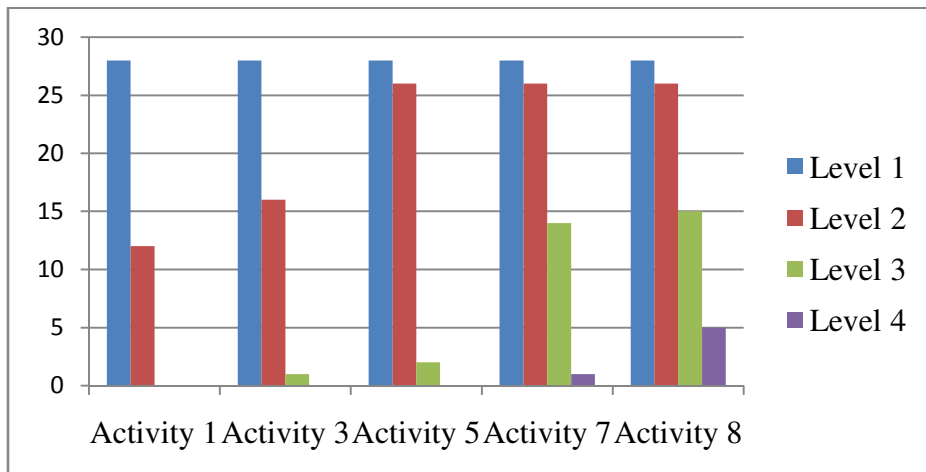


Fig. 2 *Implementation levels – researcher*

Discussions

According to the data analysis resulted from the interview addressed to the teacher, she has the same opinion with the researcher. The majority of the pupils are at levels 3 or 4 of improvisation, while children evaluate themselves at level 7 of improvisation. This gap is due to the difference between the children's mindset and the adults. It is easily noted that children are at this age think that everything is possible and with a little bit of effort you can realize everything you wish for. Nevertheless, adults are not so flexible and their mindset involves more effort in adapting to new, unpredictable situations.

Conclusions

Considering that classrooms are not equipped with musical instruments, in my opinion, this research program was a great benefit for pupils stimulating their appetite for music as well as for real musical instruments. I affirm this because, even after the initial interview addressed to the pupils, one girl that made a guitar out of recyclable materials affirmed that she was so impressed of this instrument that the next instrument she would like to have is a real guitar. Another child during this initial interview said that he loves the worlds' composers very much and he would like to know how to play a real instrument, for instance the violin, because the instrument he made doesn't stand up to his expectations, he would like it to make more sounds and be a real instrument. Not after a long time, during the program, I heard from him as well as from his teacher that he started learning to play a real instrument, the piano. Another child started being tutored for canto singing and at the final interview he sang his first composition. One girl that was very impressed with the making of the musical instruments from recyclable materials told me at the interview that she enjoyed the activity so much that for her brother's birthday party she wants to make more instruments in order for her and her friends to play them in a mini concert.

After the first class where improvisation was implemented with these pupils, at the end of the activity, a child took the teacher's chair and amazed us by starting to create a rhythm with it. The other children joined his rhythm with their musical instruments made out of recyclable materials and thus we witnessed a real concert.

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MOBILE GAMES AS THE FACTORS OF MOTORIC SKILL'S DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN AGED FROM 3 TO 4 YEARS

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Abstract: *This paper presents the results of research which main goal was to explore the impact of mobile games in physical education on the development of motoric skills of children aged 3 - 4 years. The children's motoric capabilities have been assessed according to the six tests applied in the areas of explosive and general strength, accuracy, vitality and velocity. Obtained results have been statistically analysed using t-test. Results obtained from a sample of 60 children divided into two groups (experimental and control) showed statistically significant differences between investigated groups. According to the results of the final measurement, it was concluded that different methodological approaches of mobile games, and the programmed motoric activities that was carried out with the children in the experimental group had a significant positive impact on the development of motoric skills of these preschool children.*

Keywords: *motoric skills, children aged 3-4 years, mobile games, tests for the motoric skills determination.*

Introduction

The main focus of our research was directed to the finding of an effective tool for development of motoric skills of preschool children and to develop their an interest and motivation for physical exercise, since the life need is to become fast, agile, strong and courageous. The development of motoric skills is of great importance in daily life and work of a every man. The current findings have shown that all motoric skills could be develop at greater or lesser manner and the final level of this development is affected by genetic basis, as well as influence of the social environment. Acquisition of motoric skills is one part of the adaptive human behavior. In order to develop

and improve custom templates with which a certain individual act and interact with their environment, countless requirements for motoric responses were placed in front of every living,

"Motoric learning can be defined as a specific type of learning differently defined material based on the problem-solving process that involves cognitive and verbal processes" (Dedaj, 2011:95).

Motoric learning experience can be viewed as a series of processes associated with exercise in which people acquire new motoric skills. Common to all definitions is that the process of learning and improvement of motoric skills is gradual.

"The process of motoric learning usually involve learning based on demonstration, ie. the mode learning. The foundation of every learning is cognitive process, because the movement is made up of mental action, sensory neural stimuli, internal actions of the central nervous system and the external physical movement "(Kosinac, 2002: 14).Ages from 4 to 10 years are very important for human motoric development. It is believed that this period has the general development character and the child solves motoric problems with whole being, or whole body that is motoricly very uneconomical. "This is because differentiation of various motoric structures has not took part yet" (Bala, Krnjeta, 2006: 602).

Motoric abilities are very important for the child's motoric skills and child's movement apparatus, so-called "locomotoric apparatus" as executive subsystem by which they are manifested. Every movement is caused by synchronization of space-time relations, actually by the kinematic structure of the movement, that is responsible for the informational component of movement. Frequently used terms in practice are coordination, precision, flexibility, balance, various power types, force and endurance. Since the age of children from 3 - 4 years is generally early stage of children development when the organs and organ systems are still developing and when they have not reached its full maturity, the most effective way to develop motoric skills is through game. The game is a reflection of the child's need for activity and activation of the whole body; expression of emotion; satisfaing of social needs; need for movement and engagement of all the senses; intellectual mastery of reality that surrounds it; the creation of identity and self-awareness; integration into society; realization of desire and creativity, independent and autonomous action (Rule book on a general basis of preschool program of Republic of Serbia, 2006: 75).

Game is way of child's life, it reflects how child thinks and acts. It is an activity that is essential for all areas of its development, it strengthens and develops the child's motoric skills, and promotes its emotional development. For the child, game is a joy that it is accompanied by pleasure and happiness,

and besides that, during a game child processes his own experiences from its family and the community in a personal manner.

Mobile games are the best form of exercise for children in a pre-school period, as they meet the child's need for acting and thus becomes a natural and important stimulus for growth, development and promotion of the health. Mobile games consist of various content and tasks. It is a free activity characterized by pleasure and joy of player to engage and confirm themselves in it. The mobile game provides unity of intellectual, motoric, emotional and social factors in the development of the child, as well as child's need to socialize with its peers, engaging curiosity, adopting rules of behaving, gaining first experience of life, friends, self-affirmation, and so on. (Ivanovic, 2008: 15).

Investigation of the influence of mobile games on the development of children motoric skills, and of results of their exercising and adopting of both skills and knowledge in these games are based on individual child capabilities and state of physical development of a child. These problems are still insufficiently explored in the scientific and methodological literature. For instance, there was study called "The impact of programmed physical exercise on motoric development in preschool children" by Mesaros-Zhivkov, Mark (2008). This program was conducted for six months, every day and it lasted 30 minutes. The results of this investigation showed a statistically significant difference in all motoric abilities between children in experimental and children in control group.

In other study, Rodic (2010) examined the influence of selected program on motoric abilities of preschool children. The sixty children aged from 3 to 4 years have been included in this study, where four indicators have been evaluated: in manifested area for the evaluation of coordination, explosive strength, flexibility, precision). Author found significant difference between experimental and control groups in the initial and final state of motoric skills in children of preschool age. It was concluded that the targeted program activities significantly improved development of motoric skills within the experimental group, while in the control group it was strictly the consequence of growth and development.

Stanisic, Kostic, Uzunović, Markovic (2008) conducted research on 80 girls at preschool age (6-7 years) and confirmed the relation between the quality of performing dance acts and capabilities for motoric coordination. During the 6 months of this program, girls attended organized dance activities (Waltz, Polka and Moravac). The analysis of the obtained results have made the link between the quality of dance acts and motoric coordinative ability.

Research Methodology

The main objective of this research was to assemble scientific data upon which will be attainable to identify, justify and experimentally verify the possible impact of mobile games on the motoric skills development of children aged from 3 to 4 years. In other words, this research should be able to find out whether the mobile games, methodically implemented through modern playroom, present a determinant of the development of children' motoric skills. This goal has been realized through several factors: a) collecting data by measuring some motoric abilities (speed, integrity, strength of arms, legs and overall strength), b) implementation of mobile playgrounds in the experimental group, c) implementation of physical activities with children in preschool at the applicable Program guidelines. The experimental sample included children from kindergartens "Hero Mouse", and "Children's Gaj" in Belgrade. This sample included 60 children of ages from 3 to 4 years. All the children in the sample attended preschool program of education. Basic characteristics of the sample that underwent the study and variables to which they were classified were motoric skills of children. This approach allowed the verification of basic research hypotheses in which it was assumed that the physical education program, which puts mobile games as a primary activities, has positive effect on motoric development of children aged from 3-4 years, as well as that there is statistically significant difference in the results of some measurements of motoric abilities in the final measurement, in favor of the experimental group.

Kinesiology research techniques used in this paper study were techniques of anthropo-motoric status evaluation.

Table 1. Directly measured motoric variable with measuring units

Nr	Parameters	Units
1.	Bend on the bench – effectiveness, flexibility and elasticity	cm
2.	I and my muscles – strength of stomach muscles	reps/s
3.	Pin Running at 10 m – endurance, body's ability to prolong moving	s
4.	Long Jump – explosive strength of leg muscles	cm
5.	Lateral transfer of body weight from one foot to another – ability of skilled and agile body weight shifting	s
6.	Throwing the Ball – throwing ability, explosive strength of arm muscles	cm

For each used variables we calculated: mean (AS); standard deviation (SD); standard error (SE); and statistical significance of differences was determined by t-test (T); the level of significance (p), as an indicator of the significance level of the results according to t-test.

All analyzes were done using a statistical package for data analysis (SPSS - Statistical Package of Social Sciences - for Windows).

Results and Discussion

The control groups realized usual activities of physical education, actually contents provided by the Plan and Program of Preschool Physical Education. Mobile games in modern play games were used through directed activities with the children in experimental group. This treatment consisted of non-traditional mobile games. The results were presented in Table 1. We analyzed each variable individually. Statistical significance was calculated for each test. For each variable of motoric ability, after initial measurement and comparing to the examed groups, the significance of difference (t-test) was calculated. The results showed that despite the numerical differences, there are no statistically significant differences at the level of $p = 0.05$ between control and experimental groups.

Table 1. Results of the initial measurement

Test number	T	p
1	2,24	0,67
2	3,21	0,45
3	054	1,12
4	0,98	2,09
5	1,12	0,08
6	0,34	1,01

Legend: 1 - Bend over the bench; 2 - I and my muscles; 3 - Pin running; 4 - Long Jump; 5 - The lateral transfer of body weight; 6 - Throwing the ball.

Interpretation and analysis of the indicators of children motoric skills at the final measurement

Vitality and motility were measured by (forward) Bend on the Bench. Values were expressed in centimeters. As was shown in Table 2, the final measuring of children in the experimental group displayed better outcomes than children in control group. Based on the results of t-test ($t = 0.22$ and $p = 0.82$) the hypothesis which assumed that in the area of flexibility there would be present statistically significant difference in favor of the children of the experimental group, it was not confirmed and thus may be discarded.

Table 2. The difference between the control and experimental groups at the final measurement on the test “Forward Bend on the Bench”.

Test	Group	AS	SD	SG	t	p
Front bend on the bench	Control group	39,97	12,25	2,28	0,22	0,82
	Experimental group	45,40	5,28	0,96		

Legend: AS - Mean, SD - standard deviation, SG - standard error of the mean, t –“t -test”, p -level of significance.

Analysis: flexibility, as motoric skill requires daily exercise. If daily exercise is not present, the value of this ability rapidly declines. In the implementation of this test it has been shown that children did not sufficiently mastered with this skill (two children in the control group did not successfully perform this test, since each flexion of trunk was followed by bending of the knee). The test should be carried out through the form of game and children must be motivated.

The power of the lower limbs was measured by the jump out of the site (“Long Jumps”) and was expressed in centimeters, while the power of the stomach was measured with the test “I and my muscles” and was expressed with reps in seconds. The hypothesis for the first test which assumed that children of the experimental group would show better results than the control group children in these tests can be partially accepted and partially rejected. The results for the stomach strength observed by the task “I and my muscles” showed that there was a difference between the results of the experimental and control groups ($t = 2.24$ and $p = 0.03$) and thus difference was statistically significant. The results of the strength of the lower extremities explored with the “Long Jumps” showed no difference between the results of the experimental and control groups ($t = 1.62$ and $p = 0.09$), so that the hypothesis can be partially discarded.

Table 3. The difference between the control and experimental groups at the final measurement in tests “I and my muscles” and “Jump out the site”

Test name	AS	SD	SG	t	p
My muscle and me					
Control group	1,73	1,26	0,23	2,24	0,03
Experimental group	1,8	1,0	0,18		
Long Jumps					
Control group	46,74	28,55	5,13	1,62	0,09
Experimental group	57,19	19,03	3,42		

Legend: AS - Mean, SD - standard deviation, SG - standard error of the mean, t – “t-test”, p –level of significance.

Analysis: The inborn coefficient of strength in children of this age is very small. Developing these capabilities can significantly be improved by practicing. Implementation of the test “I and my muscles” does not require much coordination abilities as much as the realization of the test “Jump out of the site” where nine results were 0 because the children were not able to do the movement correctly. Given difference in the results should be sought in a part of motoricic coordination, where Long jumps require several synchronized movements of upper and lower extremities, so children who haven’t exercise cannot perform that.

Endurance or the body's ability to extend its movement was measured by test “Pin running at 10 meters”. Values were expressed in seconds. It is shown in Table 4 shows that the final measurements of the children in the experimental group showed better outcomes than ones in the control group. Based on the results of t-test ($t = 2.00$ and $p = 0.04$) hypothesis, which assumed that children are able to extend the movement running at 10m, the difference that was statistically significant in favor of the experimental group children was found.

Table 4. Difference between controls and experimental group in final measurement of test Pin Running at 10 meters

Test	Group	AS	SD	SG	t	P
Pin running at 10 m	Control group	12,67	2,25	0,41	2,00	0,04
	Experimental	11,62	1,71	0,37		

Legend: A - Mean, SD - standard deviation, SG - standard error of the mean, t - test, p -Level significance.

Analysis: The speed is not universal, which means that the results depend on the individual abilities of the child and the selected test. We opted for explosive speed that requires quick reaction to start, then for the speed of single movement and speed of a higher frequency of steps per unit of time. The results confirmed earlier studies and suggested that the speed of development of children in our study was influenced by the selected program of mobile game that was organized and implemented to the children twice a week.

Ability of a skilled and agile moving of body weight in children was evaluated with the test “Lateral transfer of body weight from one foot to another”. It was shown in the Table 5 that the final measuring of children showed better outcomes in the experimental group than in the control group. Based on the results of t-test ($t = 0.19$ and $p = 0.84$) hypothesis, which assumed that on the ground of balance and coordination there would exist

some statistically significant difference in favor of the experimental group children, was not confirmed and may be discarded as well.

Table 5. The difference between the control and experimental groups at the final measurement in the test “Lateral transfer of body weight from one foot to another”.

Test	Group	AS	SD	SG	T	p
Lateral body weight transferring	Control group	5,83	3,2	0,58	0,19	0,84
	Experimental	6,00	3,5	0,64		

Legend: A - Mean, SD - standard deviation, SG - standard error of the mean, t - test, p -Level significance.

Coordination means performing complex motoric operation. Most authors considered coordination as motoric intelligence. Children aged 3-4 years have not mastered intermediate skills such as orientation in space and time, balancing, and have no control over individual movements, and thus coordination develops in the coming years.

Throwing ability, or explosive strength of the upper extremity in children was measured by the test “Throwing the ball”. Values were expressed in centimeters. Data in Table 6 showed that the final measurement of children in the experimental group showed better outcomes than the children in the control group. Based on the results of t-test ($t = 2.94$ and $p = 0.00$) hypothesis, which assumed that there was statistically significant difference of explosive force of the upper extremities in favor of the experimental group children was confirmed and can be accepted.

Table 6. The difference between the control and experimental groups at the final measurement in the test throwing the ball.

Test	Group	AS	SD	SG	t	p
Throwing the ball	Control group	0,97	0,76	0,14	2,94	0,00
	Experimental group	1,5	0,63	0,11		

Legend: A - Mean, SD - standard deviation, SG - standard error of the mean, t - test, p -Level significance.

Analysis: improving of throwing skills goes simultaneously with the development of the central nervous system. Earlier studies that included preschool children (or older children) showed great progress of the children

when they exercise this motoric ability, so that a statistically significant difference between these motoric skills groups can be sought in this section.

The results of this research, as well as previous studies, confirmed that each organized, programmed and dosed form of physical activity contributes to the positive development of motoric skills in preschool children. If the children are younger there more they ought to exercise more. Stimulating the motoric abilities significantly affects the raising the level of cognitive functioning, it allows gaining experience and knowledge upon which they continue to build their higher cognitive functions and social experiences.

Concluding Remarks

Motoric skills in children aged 3-4 years are not yet differentiated so often raised question of its applicability and validity for some tests used for assessing individual (hypothetical) dimensions of motoric status stands. Another problem is in the measurement protocol of motoric skills. The measurement of motoric skills include maximum engagement of respondents. At this age, it is practically impossible to achieve this because children are not aware of the need to achieve maximum energy engagement, which is the basis for the precise determination of the state in certain motoric skills.

In this study, based on the analysis of obtained results, it can be concluded that groups of children at the initial measurement, ie at the beginning of the experiment were equal and that there was no statistically significant difference in the results achieved in tests of motoric skills testing. During the experiment, the experimental group has implemented with a special program of physical education (non-traditional playground of mobile games) in which the exercise activities were based on the development of basic motoric skills for a period of three months. The results of research on the final measurement showed statistically significant differences in variables which tested the strength of the abdominal muscles, precision and speed.

The results came as expected, and in line with most previous research. It is important to emphasize that the testing has been done on subjects who are at the stage of early motoric development and where the motoric space is treated as unique matter. Difficulties in determining the correct motoric status of the child in the observed group were the fact that when performing motoric tests they do not show an isolated individual motoric skills as well as in adults, so it is very difficult to determine the assessment of which motoric skills they serve to.

Motoric skills are manifested in the way that one compensates another, and child in different situations and tasks manifests its complex motoric ability (Nićin, 2000). No matter the fact that motoric skills during the preschool age have not yet been fully defined, this period is very important in the development, particularly basic (general) motoric skills. Application programs with specific mobile games has enabled that when mastering motoric movement tasks (by which the child's motoric skills is assessed) it actually exhibited general affection of various abilities and skills of the child. Practically, it seems that the children with their overall motoric skills achieved the realization of motoric movement tasks. Therefore, many experiences speak that physical exercise in a period of three to seven years should be based on games in making a better foundation, i.e. practically preparing a better basis for future development of specific motoric skills.

Motoric development encourages the emotional, social and intellectual development of children, and the lack of games and the opportunity to participate in different physical activities can slow physical and mental development of children. Following this thought every organized program, which will expand and allow systematic work on the development of motoric skills may be recommended.

The importance of work for teachers and future research is reflected not only on the need to modernize the current programs and introduce new one, but also the need for a differentiated approach respecting the child's individual abilities and skills. Changes in relation to the monitoring and programming development of motoric skills and motoric competence of preschool children are needed. In this regard, it is necessary to fully examine the motoric level of functioning of individual, collect data that will enable educators to structure and choose the type and form of physical activity, appropriate methods, location, devices and requisites, to determine the correct level of programs and its content in accordance with the training principles, age and individual abilities of children. It is necessary to warn accountable to specific problems and dangers and thus prevent the failure of the educational process before the situation would become critical or irreversible. If the teacher monitors and evaluates the progress of each child, he/she would have an insight into the achievements of each individual and will directly influence its development and health.

This paper is an introduction to further research with an attention focused on monitoring in order obtaining some information about the state of physical and motoric development and health of children, essential in solving various tasks of the educational process of physical education.

Longitudinal studies on a sample of preschool children are rarely enforced. Research should be intensified and encouraged for solving this issue and analyzing the effect of new, modern programs and their impact on

the motoric status of children. The conclusion of this study is that the implementation of the physical education program through the game generally, specifically designed through non-traditional mobile games that should present the base ground from which ideas would derive and some programs would be created that would make a positive impact and trend of development of loco-motoric abilities of preschool children.

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THE VISUAL-MOTOR COORDINATION-BASIC COMPONENT IN LEARNING WRITING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

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Abstract: *One of the main activities of the first grades of primary education, is learning writing and reading. To write correctly, the children need a perception sufficiently developed to capture details, visual-motor coordination between hand and eye in order to reproduce in the notebook the signs that are drawn on the board or book. The author presents her results on one sample of children from the primary school, to whom she tried to improve the visual-motor coordination by didactic games. The decrease in average frequency of errors is the result of a better hand-eye coordination of the children, because the games we have used and whose effectiveness can not be denied. Our results, allow us to say that the working hypothesis proposed at the beginning of the experiment has been confirmed by the practical results.*

Keywords: *learning writing, visual-motor coordination, primary school children,*

Theoretical frame

Entering school is an exciting moment in education and child development. This moment requires meeting certain standards of physical and mental development, but requires also, from the child a higher ability to adapt to new, given that the school environment is completely new and requires compliance with certain rules and regulations.

Learning reading and writing begins at the age of 6-7 years. At this age, typically, the child has spatial representations of shape, size, spatial orientation, spatial-temporal structure and has the motor maturity necessary for coordination in the specific movements of writing graphic signs, so he has the potential for learning the writing. The development of the child thinking is reflected in the use of some forms of memory. At this age occur symptoms of voluntary attention. Thus, pupils listen attentively to the teacher's explanation on how to do an action. They can control their own actions subordinating them to a purpose, more or less close. Their emotional

states are deeper and richer in content. They develop some feelings like: the feeling of friendship, intellectual and aesthetic feelings. All this does not happen by itself, but under the influence of education and instruction.

The entry into the school environment requires a certain level of development of mental processes: to focus on the lesson, to develop the spirit of observation, of voluntary memory, to develop the thinking. Even in the first days of school, the child must undergo precise requirements as: to control his behavior, to express himself properly, to control his movements, to observe certain rules of conduct.

Acquiring and appropriating writing child will win a new way of communication: that via written language. Associated to writing, the reading will develop fully this new form of communication, helping children to broaden their horizons and gain new knowledge.

In the first grade writing is a voluntary activity. The child makes a volunteer effort to write each part of a letter that he verbalises (stick, oval, dash etc.). Subsequently, by continuous practice, writing will become an automatism and even the rules of good writing can become automatism. In this respect, it is very important to teach writing correctly from the first purchase. As all psychologists say, a habit is easier to mold it correctly than to correct a wrong habit formed.

The writing is essential in human life and its evolution. From notes that students take in school notebooks, to the exams to be given, to reports by institutions, everything is based on the use of the written language and preferably written language as correctly.

This period is under the influence of school learning (Ilica, 2006). General motor activity develops under the influence of physical education activities, are developing the mobility of small muscle practiced also by writing activities. Visual perceptions are heavily involved in reading and writing and therefore is characterized by:

- *general visual sensitivity* increased by 60% compared to pre-school and 45% of the differential sensitivity. Under these conditions, perceptions become clearer and more precise: starting with the age of 6, children can quickly determine symmetries and asymmetries in the images they perceive; when they learn to read and write, they perceive with finesse the graphical signs small dimensions, the differences between letters; by targeting the small spaces are formed the perceptive schemes for small and large letters, handwritten and printed, with dexterity (Gavrilă-Ardelean, M. Gavrilă-Ardelean, L., 2015);

- *eye movements* - increase in terms of speed, up to 1-3 hundredths of a second. In the act of reading, eye movements achieved the following: fixing the letters and syllables that are pronounced then; anticipation of what will follow through better functioning of the peripheral field of vision; regression,

ie return to those already read for control and wholeness of meanings; crossing from one place to another (this passage is at first carried out by tracking his finger on letters);

At the age of 6-7 years, there is a widening of peripheral and central visual field, increasing the accuracy in distinguishing chromatic nuances (Cucos, 2000).

At the hearing analyzer, increase self-speech capability and can be considered the distance between objects by sounds and noise they produce. Perceptions are shaped by demands of the learning activity. Syncretism (the whole perception) decreases in at the small schoolchild by increasing of the perceptual acuity relative to the perceived object. Distances perceived by the child grow and produce generalizations of spatial direction (right, left, forward, backward); it appears the topographical sense. Spatial perception retains a touch of situation (for example the difficulty in recognizing certain geometric construction whose position has been changed) (Gavrilă-Ardelean, M. Gavrilă-Ardelean, L., 2015).

If at the entry into school representations are confusing, less systematized under the learning action, representations widen, getting rich and diversified. The child manages to break down the representation into its component parts which they recombine, creating new images. Thus, in the individual experience enter information and knowledge about the phenomena and objects that have not been directly charged. It occurs also an increase in the degree of generality of the representation. All these are human specific traits and are part of indirect knowledge (Schwartz, Kelemen, Moldovan, 2007). Tactile perceptions become finer, getting rich and starting to be trained in writing. Although in the beginning, the pupil (first the one who did not attend kindergarten) is under the sway of gum, deleting repeatedly what he wrote, but also under the influence of sharpening, breaking frequently the tip of the pen (and paper to write); by exercise, tactile-kinesthetic sensibility grows, providing the necessary skills for drawing and fluent writing.

Significant progress is noticed in terms of the ability to observe, meaning that students can grasp new aspects, more complex, more subtle when looking at objects or phenomena. But the basic premise remains the lead by teacher of their observation work (Cerghit, Vlăsceanu, 1988).

The visual perception is based on biological and cultural factors, such as sexual response, self-preservation, aggression, friendship and meaning of a term in a culture or another. (Cerghit, 1997).

Motricity - basic of mental development of the child

One of the basic needs that a child feels at this age is the need to move. It is envisaged not so much the movement on muscle contractions or the travel into space with mechanical and physiological load, but the

movement brought in the motor act and its subordinate to it, moving regarded as constituent element of actions with objects. On the first plan is the psychological load of the movement, reporting to objects, images, intentions prospects for it (Gavrila-Ardelean, 2009).

Schoolchild, more than preschoolers, finds a real pleasure to take all sorts of actions: he imitates what grownups do, he accompanies and emphasizes his words by mimic and pantomime, so by movements in different parts of the face or body. In some activities the movements are unpredictable, free, spontaneous their execution order having not too much importance. Other activities, however, take on a certain degree of stereotyping, automation, the order being predetermined. In this case, the movements are converted into skills. (Cristea, 2002).

The need for action by performing various movements, underlies the psychological development of the child. A child who acts with an object is more likely to develop an adequate picture about it than another who just contemplates the object. Motricity and action with the objects not only contribute to the enrichment and diversification of the child's cognitive plan, but also contribute to the completion of his personality. As the development and consolidation of different types of motor independent conduct, the child stands out more strongly about the environment, individualized himself (Kelemen, 2007).

Characteristics of psychomotricity to young schoolchildren (Arcan, Paunescu, cited by Miut, 2001):

- *postural balance*: go in a circle drawn on the floor; high jump easily;
- *visual-motor coordination*: draw a diamond by model; makes in drawing the right proportions to different objects (humans);
- *orientation in the body schema*: easily movement of orientationb in body scheme (acknowledges right, left)
- *time-space orientation*: intuits the space, distincts the time (here-there; then-now);
- *quality of the action*: has power and balance (salt 40-50 inches tall); manufactures by hand of simple objects perfecting his movements as finesse and speed in action (selects, classifies prompt different images);
- *perception*: perceives, auditory, all phonemes of mother tongue, indicating 6-7 colors or shades, has sustained attention ability of concrete object (oriented language);
- *self-awareness*: is retained, self controled, proves self-consciousness in various activities and actions (that I can do, that I do not manage)
- *consciousness of others*: communicate easily with adults, is receptive and responsive to requests, jealous in relationships with siblings, dialogues, collaborates in groups to achieve certain tasks;

- *ability to learn*: learns to write the alphabet, operate with different concepts;
- *motricity-skills*: can be guided by the language, develop their voluntary attention, improve their fine movements of the hand, removes some spatial illusions, learn to control his reactions.

This development of psychomotricity is approximate, it may vary from one individual to another, differences still occurring in the normal range. Sometimes, even after 6 years old the normal child can present coordination difficulties.

Perceptual motor and visual perceptual organizing

People fail to perceive scenes that include surfaces, parts and whole objects arranged in a coherent way in the given space. Factors that cause the perception of simple elements as organized groups are called grouping laws or principles: the principle of proximity, similarity of color and shape, good continuations, closures and joint movement (Wertheimer in 1923 cited, Miut, 2001).

It is believed that everyone has a „map" or a mental image of ambiance, namely of personal space which refers to areas where are all the personal items in an order that allows effortless use and find them fast. These dimensions are formed during elementary school. Personal space is structured around 10 years and is impregnated by the personality expansion (Munteanu, 2009).

In the training of the reading and writing, the correct functioning of the orientation activity and space structuring become sine qua non, because drawing graphic signs and follow the succession of carrying letters into words, words into sentences, the sequence of lines and keeping the spaces between them are constitute as phases of the process of lexo-graphic acquisition (Macavei, 2001).

Hypothesis

The research was conducted on the following working hypothesis:

If using specific didactic games to improve visual-motor coordination to school children, there will be some improved performance in writing acquisition.

Working from the hypothesis follows several objectives that we follow in our research: choosing a suitable sample of children - children in first grade; choice of methods by which we want to improve visual-motor coordination of children; the creation of benchmark tests to use in initial and final phase of the experiment in order to appreciate the progress made by children; use of statistical methods for processing the data that we get from the experiment.

Studied sample

We studied a sample of children in first grade. Of the 20 children in the first grade 13 were girls and 7 were boys. Since the first grade we have children of different ages between 6 and 8 years old, we considered necessary a presentation of subjects by age distribution, see Table 1 and Figure 1

Table 1

The distribution by age of the study group

Age	6 years	7 years	8 years
Number	2	15	3

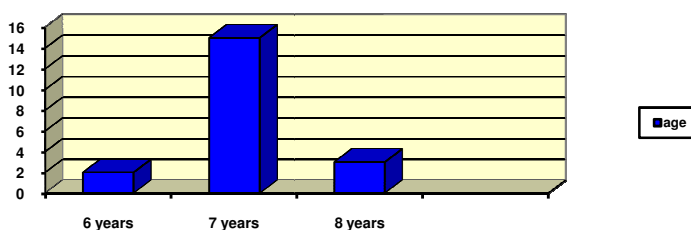


Figure 1 The distribution by age of the study group

As it is noted in the table and distribution we have 2 children of 6 years and 3 children of 8 years. Most children - 15 in number - were 7 years old.

The presence of children of 6 years can be explained from two perspectives. On the one hand the children were sufficiently well developed, both physically and mentally, from kindergarten they had been given earlier and so they followed all three groups - low, middle and high. On the other hand, the new education law, passing the preparatory class at school determined parents to give their children to school quickly to avoid complications.

The three children of 8 years old, were born in January and then the parents gave them at school, in fact, to 7 years and 8 months, considering that they prolong a little their childhood.

Methods and techniques used

Assessment Method

To appreciate visual-motor coordination of children in first grade, we considered necessary to conduct a writing sample, which was actually the first and final testing of children. The sample consisted of writing the two rows of signs on a notebook lines to first grade, signs which are commonly

used in compiling letters. Otherwise children had to write: two rows of bars, two rows of rods and two rows of oval shapes.

We took into account the mistakes made by children in the task, as follows:

- mistakes related to overcoming the horizontal lines - up or down;
- mistakes related to overcoming the vertical lines - right or left
- errors related to the actual size of the model - very small or very large figures.

For each type of mistakes made by the children was awarded one point. The share at mistakes is inversely proportional to the visual-motor coordination: the share of mistakes is higher, the visual-motor coordination is weaker and, conversely, the share of mistakes is lower, the visual-motor coordination of children is higher.

This assessment was carried out both at the beginning of the experiment - the initial evaluation and at the end of his - final assessment.

Between initial and final test was administered the experimental factor, which consisted of choosing some games to improve the visual-motor coordination of children. They will be presented in the next section.

Training methods - didactic game

By consulting the literature (Kelemen, 2007; Piaget, 2005; Jinga, Istrate, 2001) we chose the following games, we thought that have more relevance for the development of visual-motor coordination in children: *the game of introducing geometrical bodies in proper shape of a plate; beads stringing game; puzzle game; Lego.*

Results and discussions

Initial evaluation

As mentioned the assessment test of visual-motor coordination of children consisted of two rows of write indents, rods and oval shapes. The mistakes we registered were the following, see Table 2.

Table 2.

The frequency of errors in the initial assessment test

	Types of errors	number
a	overcoming the horizontal line up	75
b	overcoming the horizontal line down	63
c	overcoming the vertical line to the right	71
d	overcoming the vertical line to the left	74
e	figures too small	32
f	figures too big	41

For understanding the numbers in the table we should make an observation: there were recorded the errors of children, but a child can do

many types of errors or to repeat the same error several times, hence the larger number of errors than the number of children.

The boys recorded the highest number of errors exceeding the vertical line on the right. We appreciated this type of error as being due to the haste to finish the task outlined by the teacher. How writing is done from left to right, normally in their rush to perform the task, the boys tended to move their hand to the right for the other figure and that is why there is a greater number of this type of errors.

Next in frequency, is the exceeding of the vertical line on the left, which can have the same explanation for three children who write with their left hand, but it can be interpreted as exaggerated tendency of children to fit the space. Because at the beginning they have no assurance that the figure will go into space, they will exceed the line on the left, where starts the figure.

The lowest number of errors made by boys is figure too small. Here we met only 12 errors of this type suggesting that the boys appreciate relatively fair the amount of available space and the size of the figure they must enter in this space. Girls recorded a larger number of errors than boys, but this can be considered normal considering the fact that girls outnumber boys. Girls maximum errors are recorded at the type: overcoming the horizontal line up. But overcoming the horizontal line down registered also a high number of errors (45). This means that girls seem to have greater difficulty framing the letter between two horizontal lines compared to boys.

To see the types of errors compared to boys and girls, in the idea of establishing specific errors by gender, the results of the two sexes are shown in Table 3. and Figure 2.

Table 3. The frequency of errors compared to boys-girls at the initial assessment test

	Types of errors	boys	girls
a	overcoming the horizontal line up	20	55
b	overcoming the horizontal line down	18	45
c	overcoming the vertical line to the right	31	40
d	overcoming the vertical line to the left	28	46
e	figures too small	12	20
f	figures too big	17	24

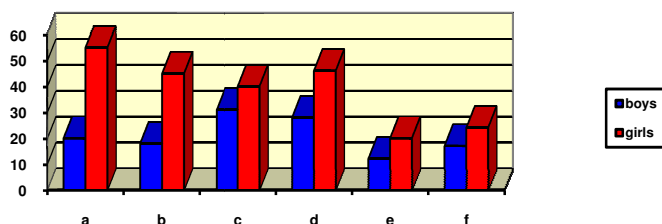


Figure 2. The frequency of errors compared to boys-girls at the initial assessment test

Boys-girls comparative analysis highlights the fact that the type of error yo which is recorded maximum number of replies is different in the two groups. For boys the maximum errors are recorded in employment between vertical lines, whether right or left (31 respectively 28 errors). For girls, the maximum errors number is recorded to overcome horizontal line up and down (55 respectively 45 errors) and to overcome the vertical line to the right. We can say that the boys fit more easily between the horizontal lines and harder between vertical ones, and the girls, conversely, fit better between the vertical lines and harder between the horizontal ones.

The lowest number of errors is recorded for both groups to figure size too small. Children of both sexes properly appreciate how small must be the figure and have less errors to realise small figures.

Figures greater than the space provided recorded also a lower number of responses compared to other types of errors. This suggests that children generally fail to appreciate pretty good the figure size which must fit to the allocated space and that mistakes appear more of a finesse coordination of motric movements and the visual, coordination which fails to fit the movement in the landmarks up, down, left and right.

The frequency of errors is presented comparatively on the three age groups (6 years, 7 years old and 8 years) - Table 4 and Figure 3

Table 4. The frequency of errors compared by age initial evaluation

	Types of errors	6 years	7 years	8 years
a	overcoming the horizontal line up	31	29	16
b	overcoming the horizontal line down	23	25	15
c	overcoming the vertical line to the right	20	35	16
d	overcoming the vertical line to the left	22	34	18
e	figures too small	13	11	8
f	figures too big	15	16	10

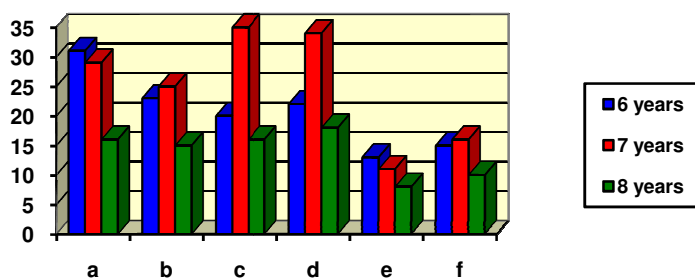


Figura 3. The frequency of errors compared by age initial evaluation

All three age groups show a relatively small number of errors in terms of figure size, whether it is reduced or enlarged. As we mentioned, we consider this as evidence that students fail to appreciate relatively fair the space allotted to the figure with its size. Regarding visual-motor coordination of great finesse, all age groups recorded a significant number of responses to overcome vertical line to the left or right, or to overcome the horizontal line up or down.

As a general finding, we should note that, overall, group age of 8 years recorded the lowest number of errors. This stuff is not surprising if we think to the stage of children development and the fact that at this age hand-eye coordination is better than at younger ages.

We must not understand erroneously that students of 7 years make the most mistakes but to think that this age group was the most comprehensive in terms of numbers. Overall the number of mistakes drops significantly with age children. As they are more aged children acquire visual-motor coordination resulting from better handling the various objects of everyday life.

The final evaluation

To complete the experiment was applied once again the writing assessment test, in the final stage. We asked the children to write the same number of rows, the same graphic signs and figures as at the initial assessment and have followed the same types of errors: overcoming the horizontal line up or down, overcome the vertical line left or right, the figures size - too small or too large.

We felt that the games we've made with the children and practiced by them for two months led to improving visual-motor coordination of children and therefore to decrease the number of errors they make to the assessment test.

The decrease in average frequency of errors is the result of children better hand-eye coordination, because the games we've used and whose effectiveness can not be denied.

For an even better view of the children progress we have made a comparative analysis between the results of the initial evaluation and final evaluation. The comparative data are found in Table 5 and Figure 4.

Table 5. The average frequency of mistakes in the initial and final evaluation

Nr. crt.	Types of errors	Initial evaluation	Final evaluation
a	overcoming the horizontal line up	75	34
b	overcoming the horizontal line down	63	22
c	overcoming the vertical line to the right	71	26
d	overcoming the vertical line to the left	74	28
e	figures too small	32	19
f	figures too big	41	17

Interesting to note is that the final evaluation increase the number of errors known as figures too small comparing with the initial evaluation where there were much errors of figures too great.

Probably from the use of games where the mistakes of forcing the parts have considerably diminished, the children found it safer to lower figures to be sure that they am not mistaken. To this is added a further precision to the winning hand-eye coordination, obtained from the use of specific games and that translates into better employment of graphic signs and figures in the adequate space.

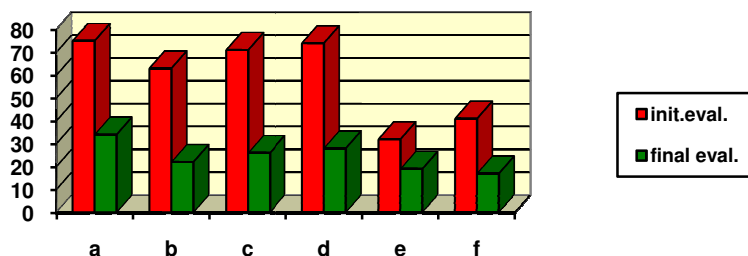


Figura 4. The average frequency of mistakes in the initial and final evaluation

The graphical representation of results is more suggestive in showing the comparative development of children within one month from the initial assessment to the final.

In Figure 4 it is more than obvious that the average frequency of errors drops to final evaluation by more than half of the average frequency of errors in the initial evaluation. This phenomenon is true for all six types of errors that we considered in the assessment test for visual-motor coordination (exceeding the horizontal line up or down overruns vertical lines right or left, figure size - too big or too small).

Our results, allow us to say that the working hypothesis proposed earlier in this experiment has been confirmed by the results.

Visual-motor coordination of children can be improved through the consistent use of specific games that bring growth and improvement of it. Of course there are other games which can be used for this purpose. We do not claim to say that only the games we use can improve hand-eye coordination. The game "Learning to sew" (where you put the needle and thread to be executed certain types of stitches that are within certain limits) can be also successfully used for the same purpose. Maze games - where a ball should be taken to the center of the maze by tilting it to one side or another - can also achieve the same role. Choosing the appropriate game for visual-motor coordination improvement depends on the imagination and teacher resources.

It is very important that teachers be constantly preoccupied to improve skills of children, obtaining higher performance, to facilitate their assimilation into the school faster school skills, reading and writing.

How, at this age, the game is still one of the main activities of the individual in its development, it is clear that only by game can be obtained the results you want and that will contribute to the harmonious development of children.

Conclusions

During the interval of eight weeks, while we used those games, we found a gradual decrease in the average number of mistakes. Thus, if the initial to the first use of games overall average error was 78.32, last used games before the final evaluation of visual-motor coordination of children overall average error was 21.07.

As regards the comparison between the initial and final results these were:

The average frequency of errors drops to final evaluation by more than half of the average frequency of errors in the initial evaluation. This phenomenon is true for all six types of errors that we considered in the assessment test for visual-motor coordination (exceeding the horizontal line

up or down, overruns the vertical lines right or left, figure size - too big or too small).

The decrease in average frequency of errors is the result of a better hand-eye coordination of children, because the games we've used and whose effectiveness can not be denied.

Our results, allow us to say that the working hypothesis proposed earlier in this experiment has been confirmed by the results.

Choosing the appropriate game for visual-motor coordination improvement depends on the imagination and teacher resources.

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SPSM EMPLOYABILITY IN EUROPE: AN INNOVATIVE PROJECT

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Motto: «*A man is truly a man only if he is free: he is free only if he works* »
Raoul Follereau

Abstract. *This article aims to present the problematic, the approach and the results of the Project Santé Publique - Santé Mentale (SPSM). The Project SPSM - Employability brings together academic actors and those from the health and social sectors of 5 European countries. It refers to the practices of professional accompanying to work of people with psychic handicap. In Public Health, it constitutes an interventional research. SPSM - Employability aims to put in place a training module intended for socio-professional integration specialists and to ensure each country's durability. With duration of 3 years, the Project SPSM encourages the return of experiences and exchanges between partners in Romania, France, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg. It produces knowledge through the conception and implementation of a pilot training action for socio-professional integration specialists. Co funded by the European Funds Erasmus+ Strategic Projects, it illustrates the current issues of the research in mental health promotion in a participatory, communal and international approach. The SPSM Project aims to find a better adequacy of training between the new realities of employability in companies and administrations and the mental health sector. The aim is to go beyond the local 'know-how' (skills) in order to provide a more open training perspective, adapted to the tendencies observed in Europe.*

Keywords: *mental health, socio-professional integration, specialists, SPSM Project, Erasmus + training.*

Introduction

The Project SPSM-Employability brings together academic actors and those from the health and social sectors of 5 European countries. It refers to the

practices of professional accompanying to work of people with psychic handicap. In Public Health, it constitutes an interventional research: this last one has as «*objectives to demonstrate the effectiveness of interventions, to analyze the levers of mobilization, the mechanisms of interventions, their terms and conditions of implementation, their reproducibility and durability*» (Alla & Kivits, 2015). SPSM Employability aims to put in place a training module intended for socio-professional integration specialists and to ensure each country's durability. With duration of 3 years (2014 - 2017) the Project SPSM encourages the return of experiences and exchanges between partners in France, Belgium, Switzerland, Romania and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg. It produces knowledge through the conception and implementation of a pilot training action for socio-professional integration specialists. Co-funded by the European Funds Erasmus+ Strategic Projects, it illustrates the current issues of the research in mental health promotion in a participatory, communal and international approach (Gavrilă-Ardelean & all, 2016).

Erasmus+, Strategic Projects of the European Union for education, supports several European partners in order to design, implement and evaluate (2014 - 2017) a pilot seminar to train socio-professional integration specialists for people with psychiatric disorders. This program is intended to perfect the training of 75 health and medical-social specialists from the 5 European partner countries, through a program of theoretical and practical courses and exchanges with homologues from other countries.

Mental Health, a Preoccupation

The professional insertion of people with psychic disability is a major preoccupation in Public Mental Health and concerns all socio-professional integration specialists. In the European context of employment crisis and complexity in the relationship between economical and social world, we take up the challenge of proposing a reflection, an approach and an innovative conception of training socio-professional integration specialists for people with psychic handicap.

The SPSM Project aims to find a better adequacy of training between the new realities of employability in companies and administrations and the mental health sector. The aim is to go beyond the local 'know-how' (skills) in order to provide a more open training perspective, adapted to the tendencies observed in Europe.

The Aims of Research

The aims of the project are divided into 4 axes of action:

1. Completing the qualifications of socio-professional integration specialists;

2. Strengthening the attractiveness of professions related to Mental Health;
3. Establishing a link between the specialists and researchers in Europe through the transmission of knowledge;
4. Facilitating the integration and socio-professional monitoring of beneficiaries.

Issues and theoretical framing

The Project SPSM- Employability is part of the approach that considers the traditional «medical or bio-medical model» a basic but insufficient element to approach, all by itself, the issue of socialization and professional integration of people with mental illness. Cognitive deficiency due to illness hinders the autonomy, and the remediation has a handicap-reducing effect. But the «bio-social model», promoted in Public Health, considers that individual determinants and environmental determinants displace the look of the specialists to open the accompaniment and to act in a multi-disciplinary way. The term "model of overcoming disability" is used to recognize the essential role of environmental or situational determinants. Non-biological factors, broader than the medical perspective, constitute a specific and complex field of investigation and intervention. *“Empirical researches are about the predictive factors for returning to work, or about assessing the functional repercussion of psychiatric disorders. They emphasize that the assessment of psychopathology and cognitive performances is insufficient to realize the professional reintegration opportunities. This returns us to the need of specifying the other relevant dimensions”* (Pachoud, 2009). The complexity of factors involved requires, for our interventional research project, a multi-disciplinary approach and consideration. According to the Ottawa Charter, (WHO - 1986) it is necessary to act in an intersectorial way and in living areas (work, school ...) to promote good physical and mental health, and social integration of vulnerable people.

On the issue of accompanying people with psychological illness to employment, a review journal showed that there are few jobs and workplaces at international level. However, the experiences and accompaniments at professional insertion are carried out in the countries that compose our project. Therefore, like in other European countries, psycho-social structures and services exist and propose to people with psychic handicap some transition and monitoring paths in terms of professional insertion, to which ESAT solutions are added in France, Protected Workshops in Belgium and in Luxembourg.

On the other hand, several Anglo-Saxon researches that were published highlight, with traditional methods, other major models of accompaniment:

- “Supported employment”: according to comparative studies (controlled randomizations), the employment support model gets an insertion

rate, in the ordinary work environment, at least two times higher than the traditional methods (Bond & all, 2001- Drake & all, 2012)

- “Individual Placement and Support”, IPS: Professional integration with an individualized accompaniment is defined by seven principles (Greacen & Jouet, ASDP, 84-2013). While the insertion rate is usually 24% in traditional methods, it is about 60% after 18 months, according to several met analyzes. (Bond & all, 2008). This method reverses the traditional methods of "train and place" and replaces them with a "place and train" process. The role of the professional "job coach" is primordial in searching for a job, in insertion, and in supporting the user.

- The Corbière publications in Quebec show that in 23 compared programs, the variations of the results of insertion rates of 27% to 78% depend mainly on the quality of the accompaniment and more particularly the competences and the aptitudes of the "Job coach" professionals (Corbière, 2002).

These last very pertinent works show that it is not the users' characteristics and behaviors that are decisive for the success of professional integration and keeping a job, but the mode of accompaniment and the qualifications of insertion specialists who put in place optimal conditions for the success of insertion.

These performing methods of accompaniment require skills, knowledge, know-how and competences of the insertion specialists who accompany the users. What is their nature?

The Project SPSM focuses on the need to identify the competences required for insertion specialists. It is based on the concept of "empowerment" of people with psychiatric illness for their access to and maintenance of employment in the ordinary working environment on the 1st market. Our project aims to question the competences implemented by the insertion specialists. How do they respond to problem situations which present themselves like obstacles to realize the final mission of maintaining users in employment? What competences do professionals need? From the cross-view perspective of users, bosses and team leaders, what competences have to be identified to accompany and maintain this specific population in employment? In what contexts are they exercised? Which are the brakes? How to overcome them? What do the insertion specialists say about the exercise of their competences in this field? Do they find them sufficient, relevant and adapted to the new economic situation? Do users, bosses and insertion specialists identify gaps in terms of training to cope with problem situations?

After examining the scientific and professional literature (SPSM literature review) and relying on the experience of the project partners, it seemed relevant to us to complete the corpus of knowledge with preliminary field

surveys in the 5 countries that make up the project (Kelemen, Fond-Harmant & all, 2015).

In order to be able to elaborate pilot training seminars in the different project partner countries, we have identified the training needs in terms of improving the insertion specialists' competences, to produce a training referential, a base of analyzes and an indispensable tool for structuring pilot training activities.

Because we are studying complex situations, it has been necessary to decompose the professional practices and to identify the new qualifications required for integration specialists.

Research Methods

Research method use the co-construction of 3 data collecting tools to reference the training needs.

After having collected documentary and bibliographic data, we constituted a reflection committee composed of insertion specialists and researchers in Public Mental Health and education, from the 5 partner countries: Switzerland, France, Belgium, Luxembourg and Romania.

The general objective of our demarche was to identify the adequacy between the users' needs and the enterprises' needs in terms of employment, and the perimeter of the function of the professional integration jobs in terms of competences.

From a methodological point of view, it was necessary to create, in common, 3 data collecting tools to reference the training needs in order to improve the insertion specialists' competences:

1. **Collecting tools for users' needs:** Which are the users' needs to cope with the 1st job market? Which criteria to retain?

2. **Collecting tool for the training needs of insertion specialists:** What new competences do the insertion specialists need?

3. **Collecting tool for the competences expected by companies:** What is the position of bosses and team leaders in terms of competences needed to accompany at employment and keep the jobs of people with psychic handicap? Which competences are expected in terms of knowledge, soft skills and know-how for the employment insertion specialists?

We federated and collected our points of view argument with the knowledge and experience of each of the European partners of the SPSM project. We have has reflected on the appropriateness of developing an individual grid and / or an audition grid to be realized in focus groups.

What is the competence?

Several definitions of the concept of competences retained in the specialized literature guide our approach work:

▪ The competence... “An integration of skills, knowledge and capacities required for the application of a specific task” (Voorhees, 2001).

▪ The competence... “The combination of a set of relevant resources (knowledge, know-how, qualities, resource networks) to manage a set of professional situations” (Le Boterf, 2004).

▪ The competence... It is “A complex learns act... based on effective mobilization and combination... of a variety of internal and external resources... within a family of situations...” (Tardif, 2006).

Analysis of Training Needs

The analysis of training needs is an indispensable step in the development of a pertinent pilot program. In order to construct training referential, we have determined the essential elements of the professional competence, mobilized for accompaniment in the professional insertion and work of users suffering from mental illness (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2015).

We organized ourselves in 3 mini-workshops to identify the needs of 3 groups of major actors in the employability process of the users:

- Users themselves,
- Work integration specialists,
- Bosses and team leaders.

For the analysis, we relied on Urie Bronferbrenner's "nested system levels" (1979) whereby the systems: Micro / Individual, Meso / Relational, Exo / Communal, Macro / societal + chrono / temporality system, constitute grids of pertinent lecture of the ecological model.

These subsystems include individual activities and collective behaviors (users, professional integration specialists, bosses and team leaders) in interactional and interactive processes depending on each other. This systemic approach leads us to examine the situations as social dynamics and constitutes benchmarks for the action and the intervention in training. It serves as a conceptual lecture tool to seize the complexity of situations (Kelemen, Fond-Harmant & all, 2015).

The fundamental issue is to know, through an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, the practices and professional organizations, the mobilized competences and / or those that should exist, and how to develop and improve them (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2015).

This work constitutes a first step in elaborating a common training referential. In 2015 and 2016, it was completed by visits and exchanges in each partner country, in order to refine a definitive Program of Pilot Seminars realized at the end of 2016 and in the first semester of 2017.

Results

Our survey results allowed us to develop a job referential that we have published (Gavrilă-Ardelean & all). This approach led us to elaborate the training referential of a 5-day module, organized in 5 pilot seminars in the 5 partner countries of the project.

Over the period from November 2016 to June 2017, 75 professional integration specialists will be trained.

The results of the 180 investigations of people interrogated through interviews and auditions, in the 5 countries of the project, show the "expected functions" of the professional insertion specialist, from the point of view of users, enterprises, and specialists themselves. On the triptych: level of action - level of people - level of information, Mintzberg (1984, 1995) proposes to define the professional function in role. It distinguishes 3 main types of roles:

1. Interpersonal Roles,
2. Roles related to information,
3. Decision roles.

Thus, for the function of professional integration specialist, we have declined the prescribed roles: the expected posture, regarding the actors (users and enterprises), an explanatory description, and identifiable activities.

We have conceived a proposal table of classification for all the data we have collected in order to structure them with a competence referential according to the Mintzberg model. This classification was discussed and amended in a steering committee to fix a definitive text.

From all this process of surveys, auditions, analysis of the lands of the five partner countries and our exchanges since the beginning of the project, there are already six main thematic axes, in terms of training needs:

1. Business strategies and business culture,
2. Managing the impacts of mental illness,
3. Preparing the user to enter in the enterprise and to keep his job,
4. The modeling of inclusion factors,
5. The position of the professional integration specialist in psycho-social accompaniment,
6. Methods and tools.

It includes the emergence of three axes of knowledge: conceptual, relational and technical, which form the foundation of the construction of the training referential for professional integration specialists:

1. **Conceptual knowledge:** they are based on competences of adaptation to cultural knowledge that form the mental structure and favor a strategic and global vision of situations. They favor a macro and systemic lecture of events and develop the adaptation to environmental evolutions and

allow self-adaptation. They also relate to organizational competences and regroup the collective, individual and managerial organization.

2. **Relational knowledge:** they concern the social competences internally, externally and in the relationships with the hierarchy.
3. **Technical knowledge:** they are based on the know-how, linked to the experience and the acquisition of methods and tools useful for professional activities.

Discussion

How is SPSM an innovative project? The interventional approach since the beginning of the project is, at the same time: a communal (professional insertion specialists, users), multi-disciplinary (sociologists, psychologists, educators, psychiatrists, managers, social assistants) and multi sectors (social, research, education-training) approach. It is a mad challenge to bring together, for 3 years, this diversity of European partners, to build a common issue, and to find methods of action and research tools, corresponding to the competences and resources of everyone. It is a successful challenge to meet regularly in common interpretations of our results, while our disciplinary languages could separate us. We were able to build and federate around shared values on the necessity and the urgency to respond to new European challenges in terms of training of professional integration specialists, in order to help the development of practices in our professional and geographical fields (Kelemen, Fond-Harmant & all, 2016). We are in the process of realizing Pilot Seminars, and this is our final step towards achieving our project objectives. Regarding the interventional research approach that founds our activities, we know that it places all the actors of the SPSM Project as actors of change, as well as that the research finds a relevant social role for the modification of professional practices.

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FORMATION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE LINGUISTIC COMPETENCES OF THE 3RD AND 4TH GRADERS

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Abstract. *Starting with the 2016-2017 school year, all the primary school grades study according to the Framework plan approved by OMEN no. 3418/19.03.2013 and the school curricula approved by OMEN no. 3418/19.03.2013 (preprimary, 1st, and 2nd grades) and by OMEN no. 5—3/02.12.2014. The new curricula bring, through using the communicative-functional model, a pragmatic perspective on the study of language. Do the alternative textbooks facilitate the study of language, by applying the communicative-functional model? How does the primary school teacher apply the requests of the new curricula for the 3rd and 4th grades? These are the questions to which this article will try and find a suitable answer.*

Keywords: *school curricula, communicative-functional model, linguistic competence, pragmatic perspective, national evaluation.*

1. Introduction

The autumn of the 2016-2017 school year marked, for all the 5 grades of the primary school, the final step of the transition to the new model of curricular projection, focused on competences, by the 4th grade curricula having become valid. Now, the pupils study the *Communication in Romanian language* and *Romanian language and literature* with new textbooks, approved between 2014-2016.

The school curricula for *Romanian language and literature* for the 3rd and 4th grades were designed on the *Framework for developing the native language communication competences*, developed between June-August 2014, starting from the conclusions of the studies in 35279 POSDRU project, *A Performant Learning System Based on Fundamental Decisions – Strategies of Using International Evaluations Regarding the Learning*

Outcome (Presentation note in The school curricula for Romanian language and literature. 3rd and 4th grades. Annex no. 2 to OMEN no. 5003/02.12.2014, Bucharest, 2014, p.2).

The *Framework for developing the native language communication competences* emphasizes the communicative-functional aspect of the native language and literature learning, as showed also in the *Romanian language and literature* curricula in 2004: „integrated development of the capacities of oral receive, oral expression, as well as receive of the written message (reading) and written expression”(Presentation note in *The school curricula for the 3rd grade. Romanian language and literature. Annex.no. 3 to OMEC no. 5198/01.11.2004*, p. 2).

In creating the new school curricula, there were used the *Key competences for Lifelong Learning – a European Reference Framework, Recommendation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18th December 2006*, in Official Journal of the EU, 30th of December 2006; *Literary Framework for Teachers, LiFT – Reference framework for literature* designed with European support and implemented in 6 member countries, among which Romania (<http://www.literaryframework.eu>); *PIRLS Assessment Framework* (<http://timssandpirls.bc.edu/pirls2011/framework.html>) – The international study regarding the progression of the reading competences by the end of the primary school, in which Romania is part since 2001 – with tests in both Romanian and Hungarian languages); *The European Language Portfolio* (http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/linguistic/Portfolio_EN.asp).

The new curricula’s aim is an educational approach based on the pupils’ and society’s needs, providing learning contexts which offer the pupils quality acquisitions within oral and written communication field.

2. The study of language in the 3rd and 4th grades curricula and textbooks

We intend to achieve an analysis of the school curricula designed is 2004-2005, as well as in 2014, following the reference objectives and specific competences, examples of leaning activities, and learning contents which approach the language issues.

Table no. 1 - The Map of Learning Contents for the *Language Study Field*

Valid school curricula (since 2014)		Former school curricula (from 2004 and 2005)	
3rd grade	4th grade	3rd grade	4th grade
Vocabulary			
		The word (update) Words with different form and similar meaning (update). Words with opposed meaning (update)	
			Words with the same forma,

Valid school curricula (since 2014)		Former school curricula (from 2004 and 2005)	
3rd grade	4th grade	3rd grade	4th grade
			but different meaning.
Phonetics			
		Sound and letter. Vocals and consonants. Writing and pronunciation of the words starting with e (personal pronouns, verb to be). Writing and pronunciation of the words containing diphthongs. Writing and pronunciation of the words containing hiatus: ee, ii (without given terminology) and of words containing the letter x. The syllable. Splitting words into syllables (writing problems).	(update) Splitting words into syllables (update).
Morphology			
Inferring the morphological classification – noun, qualifier adjective, personal pronoun, verb Inferring the number, and gender		The word - part of speech	
		The noun. Common nouns and proper nouns. Number.	The noun (update) Gender. Number. Syntactic position: subject (update); secondary sentence part.
		The adjective. The noun and the adjective number agreement. <i>*The position of the adjective to the noun, within the sentence. *The orthography of the adjectives ending in „-iu”</i>	The adjective (update). The noun and the adjective gender and number agreement. The position of the adjective to the noun, within the sentence. The orthography of the adjectives ending in „-iu”
		The pronoun. Personal pronoun. Person. Number. Polite personal pronoun – identifying it and using it in the communication.	The pronoun(update). Personal pronoun. Number. Person. Gender. Polite personal pronoun (update). Syntactic function: subject (update); <i>* secondary part of the sentence</i>

Valid school curricula (since 2014)		Former school curricula (from 2004 and 2005)	
3rd grade	4th grade	3rd grade	4th grade
	Inferring the person, and the tense.	The numeral – identification. Orthographic and orthoepy problems: writing of simple and compound numerals – without given terminology)	The numeral (update). Orthographic and orthoepy problems: compound numerals, ordinal numeral.
		The verb. Person. Number. Orthographic and orthoepy problems: verbs to be and to take	The verb (update). Person and number (update). Tense: present, past (all forms), future (literary form) Syntactic function: predicate. Orthographic and orthoepy problems: verbs to be and to take
Syntax			
	Inferring the simple relation between words: subject- predicate	The part of sentence. Syntactic function of subject. Subject expressed by noun and subject expressed by personal pronoun. Syntactic function of predicate. The subject and predicate agreement. Main parts of sentence.	The subject. Simple subject and Parts of speech expressing the subject (noun, personal pronoun). Verbal predicate. Subject and predicate agreement.
		Secondary parts of sentence.	The attribute – secondary part of sentence which determines a subject. Attribute expressed by: noun, adjective, * <i>adjectival numeral</i> The complement – secondary part of sentence which determines a verb. Complement expressed by noun. * <i>Complement expressed by pronoun.</i>
		The simple sentence. The compound sentence.	The syntax of the sentence. The sentence (update). The simple sentence and the

Valid school curricula (since 2014)		Former school curricula (from 2004 and 2005)	
3rd grade	4th grade	3rd grade	4th grade
			compound sentence. *The affirmative and negative sentences.

As one can see, the present school curricula emphasize on the intuitive learning of the language, and request avoiding the metalanguage. Is not the terminology that is the interest here, but the *language in function*.

In the school curricula for the 3rd and 4th grades, valid until the previous school year, the simple enumeration of classes and morphological categories led to a „need” for a frequently exhaustive approach, which didn’t take into account the specifics of Piaget development stages.

The conceivers of the present Romanian language and literature curricula for 3rd and 4th grades propose a new approach to the language issues – at a first glance, much more simple, but with an increased responsibility, which influences the formation and development of each pupil’s personality.

To study intuitively the grammatical notions means, firstly, to rethink the way of approaching the grammatical aspects of the studied (literary and non-literary) texts, to „exploit” the formative-educative potential of the speech acts, to valorize the learning experiences, with the purpose of developing metacognitive habits, necessary for these times when „the new generations live in another horizon and in another rhythm, both to be taken into account by the education” (Florentina Sâmișăian, *A Didactics of Romanian Language and Literature. Present Challenges for the Teacher and the Student*. Bucharest: Art Publishing House, 2014, p.22).

To paraphrase the linguist Michael Halliday, the students should learn the language, about the language, and through the language, from any linguistic situation which bear a meaning. And this is made possible by the teacher who offers varied learning situations/activities to the students, so they can valorize their own life and learning experiences. Kolb considers that experience is a foundation for creating knowledge, while “Learning is the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience” (Kolb, 1984, p. 38, apud Illeris, 2014, p. 154).

Kolb’s theory, created on the basis of experiential learning model, comes to support the intuitive study of grammatical notions. The learning cycle, from Kolb’s perspective (1984, p.21, apud Illeris, 2014, p. 156), seen as a circle, starts from the concrete experience, goes through observations and reflections, to get to creating abstract concepts and generalizations, then to testing concepts implications in new situations. To the first two stages may correspond the intuitive learning of grammatical notions in the primary

school, but we have to take into account that in Kolb's learning cycle there are historic elements combined (the return to personal experiences) and theoretical (the last two stages: conceptualization and testing the concepts implications in new situations). However, Bente Elkjaer sees the researcher as focusing only on individuals: „In my opinion, Kolb won such a prominent place in practice and research in education because he states something that seems correct intuitively, namely that is important to base the teaching on participants' own experiences. [...] Still the problem is there are lots of different experiences in a classroom, and the teacher is rarely capable to get everyone's attention by addressing their own subjective experiences.” (Illeris, 2014, p. 157).

But, in John Dewey's perspective, the experience may be both subjective and objective, it is future oriented, knowledge is part of the experience, hence one can learn from experiences (Bente Elkjaer, în Illeris, 2014, p. 151). As a consequence, shifting the interest towards pragmatic learning (see the studies of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger) contribute to a new approach to grammatical notions and language issues, one adapted to the times we live in.

The alternative textbooks, based on the curricula approved in 2014, must offer the teachers and students the necessary tools in order to understand this new way of studying the language, with respect for the link between the specific competences and learning contents.

In the 2014 curricula, the competences which target the variability of the language are:

-for the 3rd grade:

1.3. Observing some regularities of the language by heard messages;

2.4. Participation to interactions to find solutions to problems;

3.5. Observing some regularities of the language by read text;

4.1. Applying the rules of splitting words into syllables at the line end,

as well as

orthography and punctuation rules, when writing a text;

-for the 4th grade:

1.3. Observing the mistakes in heard messages, in order to correct them;

2.4. Starting and maintaining an interaction to solve individual or group

problems;

3.5. Observing the mistakes in read texts, in order to correct them;

4.1. Acknowledging and correcting writing and punctuation mistakes,

when writing a text.

Do the textbooks contribute to the formation and development of these competences? The analysis of the three alternative textbooks for the 3rd grade, from Editura Ars Libri, Grupul Editorial Art and Editura Intuitext, as well as of the three alternative textbooks for the 4th grade, from the same

publishing houses, shows a shy attempt to respect the demands of the school curricula in approaching the language notions. Through the selected contents and the proposed tasks, the authors targeted the formation and the development of the specific competences, for the two years of study, but they could not refrain from using the metalanguage. Therefore, the speech parts are studied explicitly, definitions are given, synoptic tables are drawn, the study of grammatical notions being done either deductively, or inductively:

- The noun. Types of nouns. Number of the noun. Gender of the noun. (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 3rd grade, semester I, Ars Libri Publishing House, p. 43-44);

- The adjective. Adjective-noun agreement. Adjective position to the noun. (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 3rd grade, semester I, Ars Libri Publishing House, p. 53-54);

- The subject. Subject expressed by a noun. Subject expressed by personal pronoun. Subject-predicate agreement. The simple sentence. Main parts of sentence. Compound sentence. Secondary parts of sentence. (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 4th grade, semester II, Ars Libri Publishing House, p. 32-35);

- The common nouns and the proper nouns (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 3rd grade, semester I, Editura Art, p.68), but the gender and number of the nouns are inferred, by giving the pupils tasks to number the nouns, without mentioning „singular”, „plural”, „masculine”, „feminine”, „neuter” (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 3rd grade, semester I, Editura Art, p. 72), while for the 4th grade these grammatical categories are already used;

- The subject. Simple subject and multiple subject. Subject-predicate agreement. (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 4th grade, semester II, Editura Art p. 54-55);

- The personal pronoun. Number of personal pronoun. Polite personal pronoun. Person of the personal pronoun. (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 4th grade, semester I, Editura Intuitext, p. 66-69) – all forms of the personal pronoun, including the atone ones, are indicated;

- The verb. Number and person of the verb, Tenses of the verb. (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 4th grade, semester II, Editura Intuitext, p.15-17);

- The predicate. The subject. Predicate-subject agreement. (*Romanian Language and Literature*, textbook for the 4th grade, semester II, Editura Intuitext, p. 49-50).

In my opinion, for a debuting teacher, such an approach to the elements which build the communication may lead to teaching acts that make receive more difficult, with pupils being asked to learn concepts and notions outside

the curricula. We must not forget that, for the majority of the primary school teachers, the alternative textbook is the main teaching resource.

3. Conclusions

The purpose of the Romanian language study in school is to form good users of Romanian language, who can use it both as a communication mean, and as a way of knowledge. The more languages one knows, the better that person can communicate with others, from different cultures and linguistic environments; one learns to be tolerant, flexible, spiritually enriched by his linguistic asset.

In primary school, the pupils learn that any speech act is a complex structure, whose components are conditioning and completing each other, they know the logic of language as a communication mean, get accustomed to using the Romanian language correctly and consciously.

The school textbooks, based on the valid curricula, have a very important role in developing the pupils' communication competences; therefore they have to offer the most adequate examples for the teachers and pupils, within the mentions of the curricula. This article was created from the need to draw the attention on the difficulties a teacher can encounter in trying to correlate the curricula with the resource – alternative textbook – and with the learning activities in class.

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COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF MUSIC EDUCATION SYLLABI WITHIN PRESCHOOL TEACHER TRAINING PROGRAMS IN SERBIA

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Abstract. *Preschool teacher education programs in Serbia correspond with the non-academic, vocational, three year programs abroad, but there are also a few academic, four-year programs as well, since ten years ago. In order to improve the current preschool teacher education programs in the field of music education, it was necessary to investigate the current situation in this field. Aim of this paper was to create a critical review and mutual comparison of the syllabi for all the courses regarding music education in the aforementioned institutions, in order to get an insight to the scope and quality of musical activities the students are being prepared for. We have gathered, analyzed and compared quantitative data (course duration, its placement within the study plan, continuity in presence of music-related subjects and number of ECT points) for all the music-related courses. Also, we have analyzed qualitative data (list of recommended literature, subject content, subject aims and expected results of the course) for courses Preschool music 1 and 2. This research shows significant differences in the organization and realization of the preschool teacher training programs in Serbia in all the selected categories.*

Key words: *preschool music; syllabus; teacher training;*

Introduction

Since systematic preschool education has been established in Serbia at the end of 19th century, music has been its integral part. In the field of school music education, many phenomena have been investigated and analyzed, but it is not the case with preschool music phenomena, at least not nearly at the same extent.

Teaching music for future preschool teachers at Teacher Education Faculty in Belgrade includes two semesters of practical work at kindergarten where interaction with preschool teachers is part of the process. Through communication and cooperation with them we have realized that there are significant differences among their competences in the field of music. Therefore we decided to investigate the background of these differences - analyze and compare the syllabi of all the music-related subjects within all the programs for educating preschool teachers.

Syllabi have been the most important means for course management for teachers all over the world. Their significance is increasing during the last decade in Serbia, too – most of the faculties had them developed and published (often online) for all study programs. This was caused by new and strict procedures in higher education accreditation process, together with increase of students' demand for more available information.

The literature about syllabi and their use mainly focuses on operational issues – what to include, which policies to rely on, how to be organized structurally, etc (Berschback, 2010; Cunningham & Omolayole, 1998).

Syllabi development is considered to be one of the most important phases in setting the basis of the course. The syllabus is often the initial communication tool and the most formal mechanism for sharing information with students regarding any course (Eberly, Newton & Wiggins, 2001, p.56). It usually contains all the significant information about the course. We are listing some of the categories Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2013, p.3) have systematized:

- Course title, level of studies it is present on, number of ECTS points;
- When and where the course takes place;
- Who the instructor is;
- What the course learning objectives and course policies are;
- What topics will be covered and required;
- What are the pre-exam requirements and what does the exam consists of, etc.

The level of precision and detail in predetermining the content and methods used during the course can differ among countries, universities or teachers. It is a document that comes directly from the instructor and officially represents his or hers expectations. (Graves, Hyland & Samuels, 2010, p. 296)

Fornaciari and Lund Dean (2013, p.5) point out three frames which dominated the literature about syllabi, their development and course usage:

- Syllabus as contract – its main goal is to set clear expectations from the course, even to protect the University from potential lawsuits. This is

mainly administrative document with lots of facts and figures and often difficult to read;

- Syllabus as power instrument – its main goal is to put more power to the hands of the teacher - the more detailed the syllabus is, the more power is in hands of the one who created it and has determined in advance what and how will be taught and assessed, without any student influence;

- Syllabus as communication or signaling device – its main goal is to establish the initial communication with the students, and to function as the source of information about the course for the students.

Since the syllabi are not present in Serbian higher education for a long time, it would be interesting to investigate the way they are perceived among university teachers – do they realize their importance, or just view them as an obligation that has to be fulfilled.

Method

In Serbia there are, altogether, 13 different programs for educating preschool teachers. Three of them are academic, 4-year programs of study (Belgrade, Jagodina, Sombor) and 10 of them are vocational, 3-year programs of study (Sabac, Novi Sad, Aleksinac, Gnjilane, Pirot, Kikinda, Sremska Mitrovica, Krusevac, Vrsac and Subotica). Within the programs for educating preschool teachers in Serbia, the topic of music is generally represented through two different subjects.

One is introductory course, often named *Basics of vocal and instrumental music* (BVIM), or *Introduction to music culture*, and includes the basics of music literacy, music terminology, together with introduction to playing and singing music.

The second subject is usually called *Preschool music education* (PME), which is usually divided into two courses. The first course (PME1) is dedicated to acquiring theoretical (mainly methodical) knowledge and developing necessary skills in this field. The second course (PME2) is usually dedicated to practical application of the skills acquired during the previous two or three years of study. It usually takes place in a kindergarten, where students create and implement their own original activities, give feedback to one another and receive feedback from the teachers.

Having gathered all the data from the preschool teacher education programs listed above, we have analyzed and compared the following *quantitative* data:

- course duration
- course placement within the whole study plan
- continuity in presence of music-related subjects
- number of ETC points

This analysis was conducted for *all the music-related courses* (BMI, PME1, PME2).

Also, we have analyzed and compared the following *qualitative* data:

- list of recommended literature
- subject content
- subject aims
- expected results of the course

This analysis was conducted for both courses dealing with the methodical approach in field of music – *Preschool music 1 and 2* (PME1, PME2) only.

Results

- Quantitative data analysis. Analyzing the plans of the studies of all the schools and faculties, we have realized that there are numerous differences in their structure. Therefore, introductory music course (Basics of vocal and instrumental music - BVIM) duration can vary from only one semester (at schools in Sabac, Novi Sad, Aleksinac, Gnjilane, Pirot, Kikinda and Sombor), two semesters (in Belgrade, Sremska Mitrovica, Krusevac, Vrsac and Subotica), to even twice as much – four semesters in Jagodina.

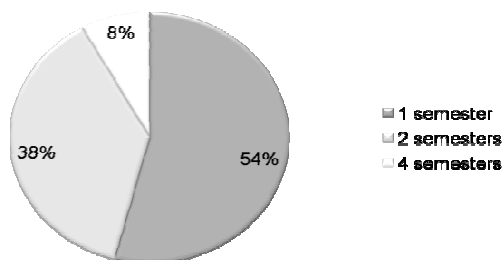


Figure 1: Course duration – BVIM – percentage of programs for preschool teacher education

There are big differences in the placement of the BVIM course within the study program, too, as presented in the following table.

Table 1: Placement of BVIM within the study programs

1 st semester	1 st and 2 nd semester	2 nd semester	2 nd and 3 rd semester	3 rd semester	3 rd and 4 th semester	1 st -4 th semester
Sombor	Belgrade	Sabac	Vrsac	Novi Sad	Krusevac	Jagodina
	Sremska Mitrovica		Pirot	Aleksinac		
	Gnjilane			Subotica		
				Kikinda		

We have also analyzed if there is continuity between subjects related to music – BVIM and PME1. Some schools have succeeded to enable the continuity – Aleksinac, Krusevac, Vrsac, Pirot and Jagodina. Nevertheless, most of the schools have not been able to accomplish this task.

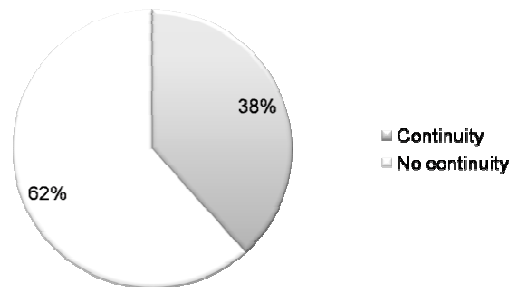


Figure 2: Continuity between BVIM and PME – percentage of programs for preschool teacher education

The number of ECTS points this course obtains also differs, from 3 in Novi Sad, 4 in Sombor and Gnjilane (Bujanovac), 5 in Belgrade, Sabac, Sremska Mitrovica, Aleksinac, Jagodina and Kikinda, to 6 in Subotica, Krusevac and Pirot (two semesters per 3 points) and finally 7 (3+4) in Vrsac.

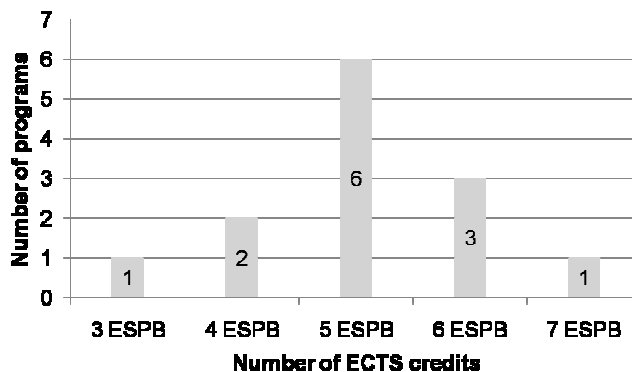


Figure 3: Distribution of ECTS credits among the programs for preschool teacher education - BVIM

The first of two courses dealing with methodical approach, Preschool music education 1, lasts one semester at all schools, except at Jagodina Faculty, where it is two semesters long. Its placement within the program is listed in the table:

Table 2: Placement of the PME1 within the study programs

4 th semester	5 th semester	5 th and 6 th semester	6 th semester
Aleksinac	Novi Sad	Jagodina	Belgrade
Vrsac	Sremska Mitrovica		
Gnjilane	Subotica		
Pirot	Sombor		
Sabac	Kikinda		
	Krusevac		

In all the schools there is continuity between the first and second Methodical approach courses (PME1 and PME2).

ECTS points for the PME1 course vary from three (Sremska Mitrovica and Gnjilane) to four (Belgrade, Sabac, Novi Sad, Aleksinac, Vrsac, Subotica, Krusevac, Pirot, Jagodina and Sombor) and five (Kikinda).

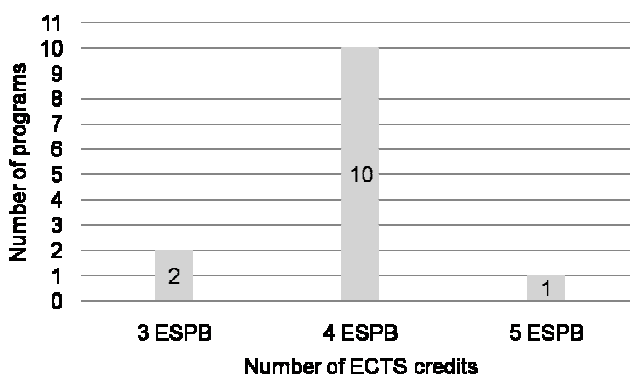


Figure 4: Distribution of ECTS credits among programs for preschool teacher education – PME1

The second Methodical approach course, the practical one (PME2), at most schools lasts only one semester, except in Belgrade, Jagodina and Gnjilane (Bujanovac), where it lasts two semesters.

Its placement within the program is presented in the following table:

Table 3: Placement of the PME2 within the study programs

5 th semester	6 th semester	5 th and 6 th semester	7 th and 8 th semester
Sabac	Novi Sad	Gnjilane	Belgrade
Pirot	Kikinda		Jagodina
Aleksinac	Sremska Mitrovica		
Vrsac	Krusevac		

	Subotica		
	Sombor		

There are significant differences in number of ECTS points for the PME2 course, too – they vary from 2 in Krusevac and Kikinda, 3 in Sremska Mitrovica, Vrsac and Pirot, 4 in Sabac, Novi Sad, Subotica and Sombor, 5 in Jagodina, 6 in Aleksinac and Gnjilane (3+3), and 7 in Belgrade.

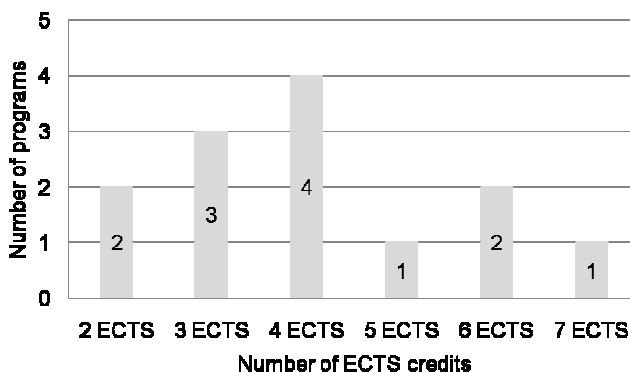


Figure 5: Distribution of ECTS credits among programs for preschool teacher education - PME2

– Qualitative data analysis

In the following chapter the results of the qualitative data will be presented for Preschool music 1 and 2 courses. It includes literature lists, content of the course - theoretical and practical part of it, aims of the course and its expected results.

We have categorized all the literature mentioned in any of the syllabi of the PME1 course in four categories. Every category is followed by a number of books/articles from each category, mentioned in the syllabi:

- Textbooks and different books/articles/materials for preschool teachers (12)
- Books from the field of psychology of music (5)
- Textbooks in music theory (2)
- Textbooks, books, articles, materials for school teachers (including the content appropriate to the school age) (8)

Having considered the purpose of their use, we concluded that only the books from the first two categories listed above are completely suitable for this course.

We analyzed each program's literature list, in order to establish the presence of at least one book from the each category of literature we consider necessary (first and second one), with the following result:

Table 4: Presence of books listed in literature lists to following categories

Programs	Textbooks/books/articles/ materials for preschool teachers	Psychology of music
Belgrade	•	•
Sabac	•	•
Novi Sad	•	•
Sremska Mitrovica	•	•
Aleksinac	•	
Vrsac	•	
Subotica	•	•
Gnjilane	•	•
Sombor	•	
Jagodina	•	
Kikinda	•	•

Therefore, we are concluding that four out of eleven courses (36%) has a literature list that does not entirely cover all the aspects of the subject.

Furthermore, we established that there are four books which are most frequently mentioned in the syllabi. These are:

1. Đurković-Pantelić, M. (1998). *Metodika muzičkog vaspitanja dece predškolskog uzrasta [Preschool music metodics]*. Šabac: Viša škola za obrazovanje vaspitača – present in 9 syllabi;

2. Volgar, M. (1989). *Kako muziku približiti deci [How to bring music closer to children]*. Beograd: ZUNS – present in 4 syllabi;

3. Mirković-Radoš, K. (1998). *Psihologija muzičkih sposobnosti [psychology of musical abilities]*. Beograd: Zavod za udžbenike i nastavna sredstva – present in 4 syllabi;

4. Manasterioti, V. (1982). *Muzički odgoj na početnom stupnju [Music education at an early stage]*. Zagreb: Školska knjiga – present in 3 syllabi.

The content of the PME1 course in majority of programs is divided into theoretical and empirical part. In cases where it wasn't divided physically, it was easy to divide it logically, which we did, in order to analyze all the contents following equal principles.

Analyzing the theoretical part of the content of the PME1 courses, we gathered all the data and created categories, including the main topics present in the syllabi and the frequency of their presence (for example, 81% presence implies its presence in 9 out of 11 syllabi):

- Principles of educational work and methodical approaches regarding music (in general) – 81%
 - Clarification of the concept, main goals and topics of the preschool music education, as a field of study – 72%
 - Principles and methodical approach for the specific topics: listening, singing, developing rhythmical abilities, games, music instruments, music structure, traditional music, etc. - 72%
 - Understanding and development of musical abilities -54%
 - Influence, importance and role of music in children’s lives - 27%
 - Teaching aids in preschool music - 27%
 - Presentation of written preparations for the activities – 27%
 - The role of music within the whole program of preschool education - 18%
 - Breathing and air support for singing, vocal technique - 18%
 - History of music – 9%
 - Musical classroom – 9%
 - Non-musical types of children – 9%
 - Learning specific expressions related to music and music theory – 9%
- Practical part of the content listed in PME1 syllabi contains the following topics in following frequency:
 - Methodical approach and specific content regarding:
 - Singing and playing music– 72%
 - Playing Orff musical instruments– 54%
 - Music listening– 54%
 - Responding to music through movement and different musical games – 54%
 - Developing rhythmical abilities – 45%
 - Improvisation and music making – 27%
 - Breathing and air support for singing, vocal technique – 27%
 - Observing and imitating different sounds – 18%
 - Traditional songs and dances – 18%
 - Music theory – 18%
 - Making music instruments – percussions– 9%
 - Investigating children’s musical abilities through tests – 9%
 - Preparation of didactic materials for music activities – 9%
 - Attending preschool institutions in order to observe the teaching process – 9%
 - Establishing criteria for choosing and combining adequate content in regard with children’s age – 9%

- Recognizing talented individuals and children with difficulties in musical development– 9%

Ten out of eleven programs have submitted the aims of their PME1 courses. For all of them, the most important aim of the program is preparing the students for practical realization of music activities in preschool. In some of the syllabi there are also recognized the following aims:

- Gaining knowledge about preschool music education as a scientific discipline 30%
- Gaining theoretical knowledge 30%
- Getting to know and use children's music literature 20%
- Gaining knowledge about specific characteristics of working with preschool children 10%

Among the expected results of the PME1 course, there is one that is recognized by the most of the 10 programs that have defined them – having students trained and prepared for independent designing and conducting music activities in a preschool (90%). Some of the syllabi also include the following expected results:

- Students understand the concept of children's musical abilities and the methods for their development - 20%
- Students have gained the ability for using relevant music literature - 20%
- Students have improved their pitch precision, vocal skills, piano-playing skill and knowledge of theory of music -10%

Syllabi for the PME2 courses were analyzed in a same way. We have categorized all the literature mentioned in any of the PME2 syllabi in six categories. Each category is followed by a number of books/articles present in it:

- Textbooks and different books/articles/materials for preschool teachers (12)
- Books in the field of psychology of music (4)
- Textbooks in music theory (2)
- Textbooks related to vocal technique and breathing basics (1)
- Textbooks regarding games at preschool age (2)
- Textbooks, books, articles, materials for school teachers (including the content appropriate to the school age) (4)

Only one textbook - Đurković-Pantelić, Milena (1998). *Metodika muzičkog vaspitanja dece predškolskog uzrasta*[Preschool music methodics]. Šabac: Viša škola za obrazovanje vaspitača, has been mentioned six times and all the others have one or two mentions in the syllabi.

Analyzing the content of the theoretical part of the PME2 course we have confirmed the presence of the following topics:

- Methodical approach for specific contents – listening, singing, music games, music making, etc. – 64%
- Organization and structure in preschool music education – 27%
- Correlation with other teaching fields – 18%
- Evaluation of children’s achievements - 18%
- Factors influencing children’s musical development - 18%
- Specific characteristics of music education of preschool children - 18%
- Traditional music – methodical approach/ importance and influence in preschool age - 18%
- Selecting adequate content, in regard to children’s age - 18%
- Music abilities and motor abilities in preschool age – 9%
- Preparing students for designing and implementing music activities - 9%
- Designing written preparations for music activities - 9%
- Different approaches and models in preschool music - Montessori, Waldorf, etc. - 9%
- Children’s voice - 9%
- Music theory, music terms, theoretical basis – 9%

Among the practical part of the PME2 course, the following topics are mentioned:

- Designing, implementing and analyzing music activities – 54%
- Observing and analyzing demonstrated music activities – 27%
- Music as an enhancement for expressing children’s creativity – 18%
- Singing and piano playing – 18%
- Working with preschool teachers, under their supervision and analyzing the obtained experiences - 9%
- Planning the goals, content and teaching process – 9%
- Specific characteristics of music education of preschool children – 9%
- Creating arrangements for rhymes – 9%
- Selecting adequate content, in regard to children’s age – 9%
- Theory of music - 9%
- Planning and evaluation of activities -9%
- Models of preschool education – model A and B - 9%
- General program basis, (official document) as a starting point for planning the content and methods -9%
- Learning a large number of children’s songs, games, rhymes – 9%

Among the aims of the PME2 courses, the most common (90%) was practical preparation for realization of music activities. All other aims are mentioned in one of the syllabi:

- Creating an understanding about importance of correlation between basic theoretical and methodological knowledge and practical knowledge and skills in the field of music preschool education – 10%
- Preparing students for team-work -10%
- Understanding specific characteristics of music education of preschool children – 10%
- Developing an adequate attitude and approach towards each age- group and individual abilities of preschool children – 10%
- Developing the sensibility for defining goals and tasks for the planned music activities independently – 10%
- Preparing for gradual development of realistic goals and their specification during working with children – 10%
- Developing focus on the process of enhancing the music making as a process and not the product – 10%
- Developing the abilities for working with children with disabilities – 10%

There is one expected result present in most of the PME2 syllabi (90%):

- Students are prepared to independently design and conduct music activities, in accordance to needs and the age of the group – 90%

Others are present in only one of the syllabi:

- Creating understanding about importance of correlation between basic theoretical and methodological knowledge and practical knowledge and skills in the field of music preschool education is created – 10%
- Students are prepared for team-work -10%
- Improving vocal and music-playing skills and knowledge of theory of music – 10%

Discussion

This research has confirmed numerous differences in the concept, structure, content and all the other aspects of the music-related courses within programs for preschool teacher training in Serbia.

We have noted the lack of continuity between BVIM and PME1 course. The break in learning music-related subjects is as short as one semester at some programs (in Sabac, Novi Sad, Subotica, Gnjilane, Kikinda), at some it lasts two semesters (in Sremska Mitrovica), or it is even a year and a half or three semesters long in Belgrade and Sombor. This break, especially when it is long – in gaining knowledge, but also in acquiring a specific skill such as instrument playing skill, certainly affects the learning process in a negative way. In Belgrade, there have been attempts to change the study plan in this regard, but with little success so far.

On the other hand, continuity between the first and second Methodical approach course is provided within all the programs, which is very important, concerning the connection between the topics they cover.

The differences in ECTS points are present for the all three courses between programs. The biggest difference was noted in the case of PME2 course (from two to seven ECTS points). This 5 point difference is extremely high, especially since the content of the subject is similar at all the programs. The difference is slightly smaller in the case of BVIM (from three to seven points), but still lacks explanation. In the case of PME1 it is between three and five ECTS points, which can be considered a reasonable difference, having in mind the differences among the syllabi.

In order to understand the categories we detected during PME1 and PME2 literature lists analysis, it is important to point out that preschool music methodic in Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian language has been in a sort of a standstill with not many textbooks published during the past decade. There are several textbooks from the 1970-ies and 1980-ies and one from the 1990-ies that are still in use. The general lack of recent publication for preschool level of education might provide the explanation for the presence of the school music materials in the syllabi, instead. Nevertheless, it is important to say that they are not quite adequate, since the nature, content and methodical steps of the subject are different for school and preschool children, so they do not entirely fit in the requirements of the subject.

There are several book titles covering the children psychology field from the perspective of music abilities and development, but they are not a part of all the syllabi (only Belgrade, Sabac, Novi Sad, Sremska Mitrovica, Subotica, Gnjilane). Our opinion is that these materials are substantial for the understanding the process of music reception and perception and they should be a part of all the programs for educating preschool teachers.

Some of the programs (Kikinda, Sombor and Jagodina) contain the textbooks in music theory (third category listed above), even though they are not necessary, since their content should have already been covered at the basic course (BVIM). However, it is true that its revision could be necessary, especially when continuity between basic course (BVIM) and Preschool music course is not achieved. Books from this category are in accordance with the nature of the subject and their presence can be justified, if they are not dominant in the literature lists, because the course should be oriented to acquiring methodical knowledge, so the most of the literature should be from this specific field. It is interesting to notice that the most recent books from the list of frequently mentioned titles have been published more than 15 years ago, but all of them are by its topic clearly suitable for the subject.

Analyzing the theoretical part of the PME1 course content, we noted that all the topics that are of utmost importance are present in most of the syllabi

(such as familiarizing with the concept, goals, topics and general or specific information about methodical approach in the field of preschool music). Nevertheless, this type of knowledge should not be acquired without having understood the nature and essence of children's musical ability development. This topic, though, is present in only half of analyzed syllabi.

Likewise, the topic of vocal technique and breathing basics is present with only 18%. The problem is that even at the Faculties for Music Education in Serbia, at Departments for Music Pedagogy, there are no courses (apart from choir, where there is no time for individual work with each student) where students' vocal technique is being developed. That is the reason why most of the graduated music educators, who often are the ones who are teaching the programs of educating preschool teachers in the field of music, have little knowledge in this field to pass on. There are few topics present in the syllabi, whose presence could be discussed, such as history of music and music terminology, since their presence would be more justified in the introductory (BVIM) music course. Also, one topic listed – “non-musical types of children” contains a very harsh term - *non-musical*, which implies division among children to those who are and those who are not talented for music. This type of music ability evaluation at early age requires sets of skills and knowledge that an average preschool teacher rarely possesses. The role of the preschool music teacher is to enhance the process of the musical abilities development for every child. This kind of provisional division could cause diminishing the expectations for certain children, even though their musical abilities could have been misjudged, based on underdevelopment of their vocal abilities, for example. Practical part of the PME1 course content brings, expectedly, concrete information about content and methodical steps for each segment of the preschool music – singing, playing and creating instruments, listening, movement, etc. Breathing and vocal technique are more frequent in the practical, then in theoretical part of the course content. Like in the theoretical part, in small percentage, there are attempts to teach students how to test children's musical abilities and distinguish talented, average and children with difficulties in musical development.

There is an important topic listed here, present in less than ten percents that should be a part of all the syllabi and includes enabling students to establish criteria for choosing and combining adequate content in regard with children's age. All of the PME1 course aims are defined in accordance with the course content. Only one out of ten programs does not have aims, content and expected results in coordination – the content includes only singing and theory of music, the expected results are defined as improved vocal and music- playing skills, together with knowledge in the field of music theory, but the main aim of the program is to prepare students to design and implement music activities in preschool independently. It is impossible to

achieve such an aim without providing the students with methodical steps for each segment of work in the field of music – songs, music listening, music games, playing children’s instruments, etc. In all the other PME1 course syllabi expected results seem realistic, in comparison with the aims and course content.

In Preschool music 2, in accordance with the aim of the course, the presence of the literature from any of the listed categories is just an asset, since the course is mostly about gaining practical knowledge and putting in use the theoretical knowledge acquired during the Preschool music 1 course.

Apart from a few journal articles, most of the books in this list are from the 1980-ies, 1990-oes, or the beginning of 2000-ies. The most recent titles are from 2005, published almost ten years ago.

Analyzing the theoretical part of PME2 course content, we realized that there are more topics present than in PME1 course syllabi, which is justified, since it implies further development of the basic knowledge gained during the first course. The direction of this development within the second course could be affected by course teacher preferences and experiences. Some of the courses are focused more narrowly, in order to master only the methodical approach for each segment of the subject, but some of them cover more topics, in order to provide a broader music education.

Content of the practical part of the PME2 course primarily includes individual attempts in designing, realization and evaluation of music activities, or observation of the activities preschool teachers implement. Like in the case of theoretical part of the course, the list of other topics is long and interesting, but they are not represented in high frequency.

Some of the aims of the PME2 course are too specific in comparison to the first one, but all of them seem to cover very important aspects of the course, which in some cases have not been elaborated in other parts of syllabi (especially course content). They can serve as a certain base for further development of this course in all the schools and faculties that implement preschool teacher education programs.

Here, like it was the case in the PME1 course, in only one out of eleven cases we have the same lack of coordination between the content, aim and expected results. Other expected results are in accordance with the content and defined aims of the course.

Conclusions

This research shows that there are significant differences among the syllabi, in all the categories we have analyzed - the duration of each course, its placement within the whole study plan, number of ECTS credits. Qualitative data analysis shows that most of the aims, content and expected results are defined in an ambiguous way and can be understood and interpreted in

various ways. Since all the preschool teachers, after finishing the programs at any of the listed schools are eligible for working at any of the state or municipality-funded kindergartens, the level of skills and knowledge should be at least similar and there is no explanation for many of the differences detected during this research.

It is necessary to initiate a dialogue among all the instructors teaching the music-related courses and attempt to create a consensus on certain matters we will try to identify here:

1. Define the main goal of the course – if that is singing with piano accompaniment, then number of hours dedicated to instrument playing skill development has to be increased, or the size of the student groups has to be decreased; if that is diversification of music activities, then the content, aims and results have to be adjusted accordingly;

2. Calculate and synchronize the adequate number of ECTS points and number of classes on a weekly base for each music-related subject, in accordance with the content, aims and expected results;

3. Initiate cooperation between programs, compare the results, share the experiences;

4. Create a set of precise outcomes for all the subjects regarding music, in mutual cooperation, in order to equalize the abilities within the preschool teacher profession;

5. Create a frame for dialogue among professionals in this field (course instructors for music-related subject), using modern technologies (a facebook group, a mailing list, or something similar), in order to provide the sustainability of the dialogue.

Also, a joint effort should be made on advocating for achieving some of the following goals within each institution:

6. Provide continuity in learning subjects relating to music;

7. Ensure agreed number of ECTS points and number of classes weekly, within the study programs;

It is necessary to continue research in this field, in order to improve the current preschool teacher education programs and, consequently, the preschool teacher profession quality in Serbia.

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PROFESSIONALISM IN TEACHING CAREER

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Abstract: *The study approaches the issue of high quality training of students who will become teachers. The policy of our faculty is oriented towards the implementation of the most adequate strategies to increase the quality of future teachers' training. Emphasis is placed on responsibility, efficiency, performance and value found in personal and social success. Our effort focuses on delivering constantly updated and improved study programmes. However, this would not be enough without the students' full engagement in their professional training by involving themselves in training along with thorough work. The 21st century calls for high quality teacher training given the competitiveness on the labour market and the progress of scientific conquests in all areas. It is necessary to consider and implement a curriculum that develops excellent competences in our students. It should bring a significant contribution to efficient training of future teachers in theoretical-scientific, methodological and practical terms so that teachers would be able to use their competences in a creative manner in the classroom. They should be taught to blend teaching with the students' needs. The performing competences result in students' positive learning results.*

Key words: *professionalism, competence, performance, quality*

Educational performance

Teaching is constantly subjected to challenges such as low income, many working hours, social pressure in a competitive society where emphasis is placed mainly on economic efficiency. Thus, one has the feeling that the teaching profession is insufficiently valued by the society. Lately, scholars talk more and more about an education crisis which raises questions about the training of teachers as main actors of the educational process. Criticism regarding the quality of future teachers' initial training is another common aspect nowadays. Thus, it is necessary to develop a new vision of professional standards for teaching career and the share between initial and continuous training and the professional evolution should be reassessed. Professional standards related to the level of teacher training refer to the

expected quality of teachers` work differentiated according to teaching positions, level of education and expertise. Competences require a certain level of performance in teaching activity and they can be of two types: cumulative and progressive competences. It means that students will acquire competences along with knowledge, skills, aptitudes and attitudes, experiences but also by manufacturing in a personal, creative and specific manner the realities from classroom practice.

The current society is a society guided by unprecedented changes. It is a society of knowledge and calls for rapid adjustment, mobility, flexibility and efficiency as response to rapid changes in the environment. Higher education which trains future teachers should consider these social premises in the process of teacher training. Teachers` initial training is oriented towards professionalism in teaching and its aim is the students` ability to *train constantly* as stated by the famous Czech pedagogue J. A. Comenius in the 17th century *tota vita schola est. Although „University turned into from an institution of intellectual development into a “company” capable of producing individuals suitable for immediate and efficient professional and social insertion”*(Bocoş, M., Albulescu, I. 2008, p. 36), initial training through undergraduate and master studies is considered insufficient.

The model for professionalism in teaching career – from aptitude to pedagogical competence

Current social tendencies along with the rapid pace of changes, frequent legislation changes and instability of legal educational framework, teaching practice guidance and other aspects, call for a reconsideration of teachers` professional and social status by reassessing and ranking their professional roles and duties. Changes in didactic/methodological training of future teachers are necessary according to relevant research and experiences in the didactic field.

Our faculty has followed certain strategic principles in teachers` initial and continuous training in the last decades:

- development of initial training system based on a set of competences and quality standards, aiming professionalism in teaching career;
- reshaping the balance between theoretical and practical part of the curriculum for teacher training (practical orientation – teaching practice);
- development of a mobility oriented initial training system;
- implementing partnership in inter-institutional relations.
- development of postgraduate programmes (master studies) for initial teacher training;

- orienting the training systems towards pedagogic competence and educational performance;
- adapting the teachers` continuous training system to the European pattern of continuous professional development/ lifelong learning;
- development of professional mobility and development programmes through the system of transferable professional credits;
- emphasising the role of E-learning, as support in teachers` continuous training system

High quality or top training requires the improvement of students` training level through student-teacher interaction. The reason for such interaction is the development of students` psycho-pedagogical and methodological abilities.

Performing schools are those which have performing teachers who use the most appropriate teaching strategies and determine their students to have high quality school performance. A teacher who promotes a system of values based on mutual respect, trust, interaction, who makes students think critically, discover knowledge and interact with their peers and who creates a warm atmosphere will improve the quality of learning in his/her class.

Optimizing students` professional training

We applied 4 sets of questionnaires on a sample of 60 Master students to see their opinions about the quality of future teachers` professional training. Our aim was the identification of students` perception regarding:

1. strong points of initial training programme for teaching profession;
2. the share of modalities of accessing professional training;
3. the importance of each training stage for teaching career;
4. the causes for poor quality training for teaching career.

After interpreting the answers in the below listed charts, we can identify relevant elements in students` answers.

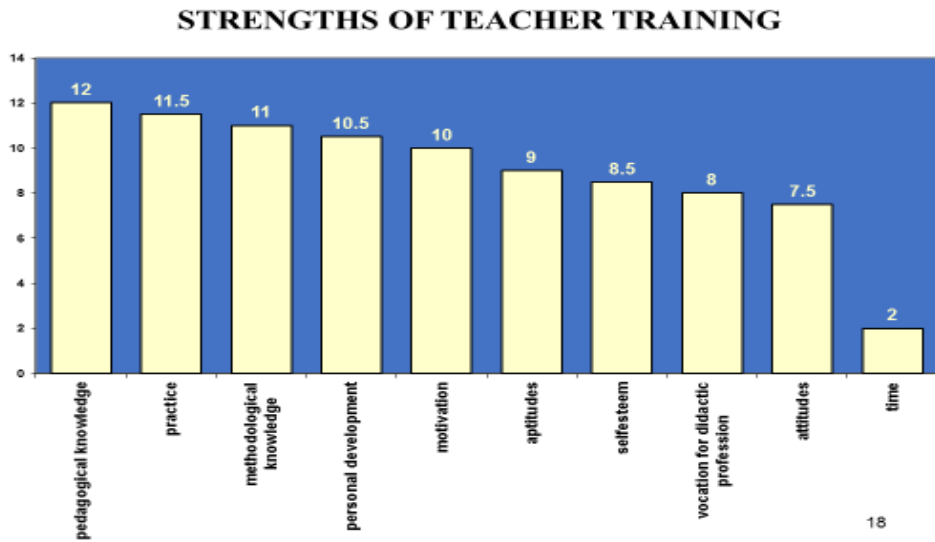


Fig.no. Strengths of teacher training

We observe that students place emphasis in their professional training on knowledge, i.e. acquisition of pedagogical knowledge. Practice is placed on the second position as students consider that practice along with methodological training lead to increased quality of training. Personal development, aptitudes and motivation share the same position along with vocation and attitude. Most students do not consider time management an important skill in the future teachers` professional training.

MODALITIES OF PROFESSIONAL FORMATION IN STUDENTS' OPINIONS

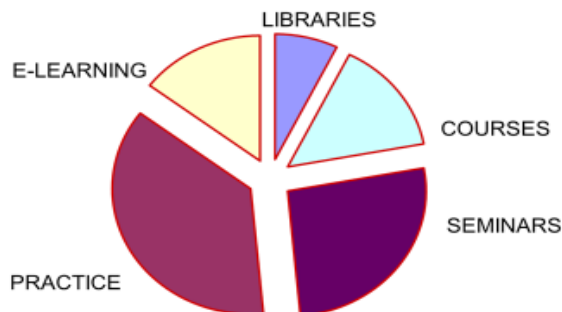


Figure no. *Modalities of professional formation in students' opinions*

In terms of students' perception of the share of each manner of professional training, we notice that they prefer practice and seminars followed by courses and e-learning, which share the same weight. Less appreciated is library study.

THE STUDENTS' POINT OF VIEW CONCERNING THEIR PROFESSIONAL TRAINING

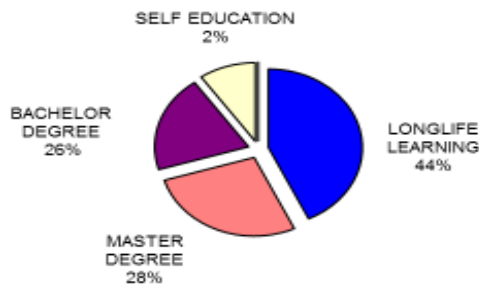


Fig.no. *The students' point of view concerning their professional training*

CAUSES OF POOR QUALITY IN INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

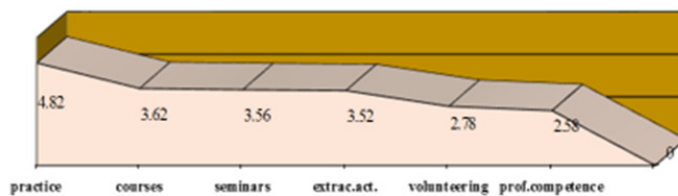


Fig.no. Students point of view upon causes of poor quality in initial teacher training

We notice that students identify the following causes for poor professional training: in descending order the low number of practice hours, followed by courses, seminars and extracurricular activities on the same position. Volunteering and trainers` professional competences share the same weight in students` opinions.

What should we do

Studying the outstanding educational results achieved by Nordic Countries, especially Finland, and the spectacular students` results at PISA tests, Pasi Sahlberg the CEO of Centre for International Mobility and Cooperation considers that the leading role in obtaining such results is played by the teachers, who have managed to train performing students. Teacher training in Finland, after 1970 is conducted by universities and emphasis is placed on:

- Strong preparation in content and pedagogy;
- Integration of theory, research, and practice;
- Professional Learning and Development;
- The Teacher`s Tools: Curriculum and Assessment (Pasi Sahlberg, 2010).

Training for the teaching career focuses on the rigorous development of education which blends theoretical training with pedagogical research. Training programmes for future teachers contain knowledge of pedagogy, methodology and education theory. However, they also aim to develop pedagogical research skills at students, who are encouraged to follow their own paths of pedagogical research i.e. teaching practice under an experimented mentor`s guidance.

Proper financial funds for education, decent salaries for teachers and proper working conditions would be a plus for a successful educational process.

Students` motivation for a better training is stimulated by a quantity and quality reconsideration of teaching practice.

The teaching profession has become a respected profession and teachers have acquired considerable autonomy and authority, including responsibility for curriculum design and students` assessment. Such aspects bring about responsible behaviour, as well as continuous analysis and training of their teaching activity.

Conclusions

High level professional training creates the prerequisites for a successful career. A proverb written by Lao-Tzu says the following: “If you tell me I will listen. If you show me I will see. If you let me experience, I will learn.”

We believe that a reconsideration of early teaching period or career debut by introducing the assistance and counselling system (introduction of a mentoring system) would be an important factor for a thorough training for the teaching career. Scholars have discussed the increase of efficiency in professional training at the international reunion for education. They have also emphasised the role of teachers, who do not only transmit easy assimilated knowledge but mostly they place students in situations where they have to use critical thinking, filter information, be actively involved in learning, develop assertive communication skills and adopt prosocial attitudes (OECD, 2011).

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„NOTHING IS SO THEORETICAL AS AN ASTONISHINGLY GOOD PRACTICE! “

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Abstract. *The present text was developed within the framework of the evaluation of a practice-oriented study program Social Work. The corresponding Bachelor program at the Baden-Württemberg Cooperative State University, combines studying at the university with a work placement at a social institution. The article deals essentially with three questions: (1) What is the role of practical experience for academic learning? (2) How practical training enables and promotes theory building? (3) What are the consequences for the professional support of the students in their work placements? Starting from very fundamental considerations about the theory-practice relationship this article attempts to develop “rules of thumb” for a successful practice guidance.*

Keywords: *competence, study program, internship, work placement, vocational training, tutoring*

1. The boldness to turn Lewin’s thesis around

The title of my article sounds provoking: How can someone question, that only a theoretical concept generates successful practice? Obviously it seems overbold to simply reverse the sentence of the famous social psychologist Kurt Lewin (“[...] there is nothing so practical as a good theory.” 1951, 169) and claim the opposite.

Someone who is putting practice at the center of academic learning is arousing great resistance from the educational world. Someone who claims that the best way to achieve awareness is to proceed in an active way evokes the cautious horror of all people who consider the academic way of acquiring knowledge at school and university as the best option to prevent ignorance and banality. Or in the words of Georg Neuweg (2015, 148): “Speech, education and even Western civilization is at stake.”

It seems clear what Kurt Lewin with his emphasis on theory wants to say: Professional action is not a headless act. Surreptitious action without a concept is harmful and ultimately unsuccessful. Theory helps act consciously

and purposefully in order to avoid hasty reactions with ultimately negative consequences.

Why should this thesis be rejected? I would like to show that theory is not the starting point but rather the end point of a more or less successful action. My explanation attempts do not refer to social work specifically, but are of a more universal nature. This affects competent action in general. The practical guidance of students will follow subsequently.

Four levels of action are to be distinguished: technical skills, social interaction, the linguistic level and abstract conclusions. First, however, the concept of "experience" needs to be determined more precisely.

2. Uncertain prerequisites, unexpected consequences of the appropriate action

As a rule, the social worker does not have any prefabricated instructions on how to solve a pending problem. In fact, he/she is constantly confronted with the demand that both his/her knowledge and ability as well as the framework conditions of the situation should be included in his plan of action. What determines his actions if he neither acts according to routine, nor according to the principle of trial and error?

What does the social worker need to act appropriately? Essentially, he/she needs experience in similar situations. "To experience" has to do with immediacy. In order to make experiences one has to be in direct contact with something - touching, feeling, attempting.

Experience has to be distinguished from pure observation or distanced reflection. In such a situation of direct, immediate contact the Social Worker cannot "stay out". Rather, he/she is bound by external influences and his/her own actions. "Having experienced something" therefore means: one has been confronted with, involved in, has shaped something, has reacted to a situation.

The particular thing about everyday situations is that (1) the prerequisites of action are always different and (2) the consequences of one's own action can never be predicted. Thus no fixed rules can be applied in everyday life. Rather, any complex situation must be captured as best as possible and answered accordingly. In this process experience can be instrumental.

"Experience" is therefore a guideline for appropriate action. But what is the difference between "experience" and routine or aimless experimentation? The philosopher Georg Gadamer says: "Every experience that deserves this name foils an expectation" (Gadamer 2010, 362). This means that experience does not originate from routine, nor is it directed at a known, defined goal. On the contrary, we experience something when something unexpected happens, something that we did not expect, something that breaks through both our routine and our plans.

Competent action thus arises from a reflexive processing of unexpected events and such key experiences can be either surprises or disappointments. Such reflexive processes always accompany our actions (Schön 1987). We are not aware of them but they are effectively incorporated into our action control. Through trying to act competently, we constantly develop, test and change hypotheses - without realizing it - and thus adapt our behavior accordingly.

3. Technical skills

How we cope in everyday life and how we solve everyday problems without thinking can be most clearly indicated in technical-practical skills.

Have you ever tried to explain to your son via telephone how to tie a cravat knot? What is the difficulty? While we succeed in this action immediately, we cannot put it in words and thus we cannot explain it. The Hungarian philosopher Michael Polanyi has said that "we can know more than we can tell" (Polanyi 1983, 4). He compares the relationship between theory and practice with the relationship between a tool and its use:

A hammer can be described and defined, but the meaning of a hammer can only be grasped by the person who uses it. In the artful ("competent") use of the hammer, the user senses the meaning (value) of what constitutes the hammer as such. By using the hammer, the user's knowledge changes.

So to understand what a hammer is, it is not enough to see a hammer. It would be more helpful to watch how a craftsman is using the hammer. A deeper understanding of what constitutes a hammer arises only when you use it yourself. Through this the user not only alters his knowledge. In addition, he also begins to understand in which situations it can be beneficial to use a hammer (Brown, Collins & Duguid 1989, cited by Neuweg 2004, 160).

Another example:

Please take note of yourself and your reactions when you try to answer the following question: If you are riding a bicycle and you notice that you are tipping over to the left: In which direction do you have to steer in order to not fall over?

Interestingly we usually have to use our body experience to answer this question. Cognitively, only a few people would be able to give a correct answer. So what can be done to keep the balance on the bike? There is little to be done with knowledge alone.

Therefore: Before you place your child on a bicycle, knock (not necessarily) the following rule into it (Neuweg 2015, 31):

"Any inclination angle shall be compensated by a steering movement in the direction of the imbalance which causes a centrifugal force canceling the action of gravity, while the radius of the curve described by the steering

motion has to be equal to the square of the speed of travel divided by the angle of inclination."

Of course riding a bicycle is not a professional competence.¹ But physical experience is the beginning of every intellectual development. The Swiss developmental psychologist and knowledge theorist Jean Piaget (1992) was the first who discovered the relationship between elementary motor activities and the development of intellectual skills. By means of experiments with objects, numbers and concepts, children approach logical thinking. The first theories - such as causality - very young children develop through physical activity. Only their own attempts and the successive generalization of its results enables them to intellectually capture abstract content such as mass, perspective, object class or transitivity.

The most important thing is that many physical / technical, but also social skills cannot be acquired through instruction. The immediate confrontation with the objects is indispensable for understanding. It is thus the practice that precedes the theory and ultimately makes it possible. The prerequisite for practical reflection is, therefore, one's own practical experience.

4. Social Interaction

Not only in the world of objects theory building practice precedes theory building. Even when designing social relationships we are first and foremost marked by experiences, which are subsequently used to explain behavior and relationships. Thus normally we cannot foresee whether a meeting with another person will be satisfying for us. Also we cannot know in advance, what we have to do or say in order to convince another person or even inspire them.

When we are attracted by something or someone, the concrete action will determine whether and how our aspirations are satisfied and our ideas fulfilled (Joas 1996, 239). Our values and preferences remain abstract, as long as they are not experienced in a concrete way. Most social actions are therefore not target-oriented. The direction of an action often develops only during its course. Only in retrospect it seems to us that pursued the achieved goal from the beginning. Hans Joas (1996, 239) quotes an example of the American philosopher Hubert Dreyfus:

"When a man falls in love, he loves a particular woman, but it is not that particular woman he needed before he fell in love. However, after he is in love, that is after he has found that this particular relationship is gratifying, the need becomes specific as the need for that particular woman, and the man has made a creative discovery about himself.

He has become the sort of person that needs that specific relationship and must view himself as having lacked and needed this relationship all along. In such a creative discovery the world reveals a new order of significance

which is neither simply discovered nor arbitrarily chosen.” (Dreyfus 1979, 277)

The fact that the choice of a partner usually does not follow rational laws, but nevertheless ends happily in many instances, is often referred to in scientific literature (for example, Gigerenzer 2007, 65). Our ability to make decisions is based largely on the fact that we are cultural beings who cannot live without trust, imitation, understanding and emotional attachment. Therefore we focus our actions in such a way that in the encounter with other people these values (which are necessary for us) can be applied (Moch 2015a).

Within this framework it is also immediately understandable why the relationship between a social worker and a client cannot be designed according to abstract rules. Although the professional rules and ethics are firmly established, only the actual encounter can resolve which professional approaches ultimately lead to the implementation of professional objectives.

5. Concepts and language

While technical skills usually get by without language, social interactions are mostly based on linguistic communication. The closer we get to the field of social work, the more important it tends to be how we communicate with one another.

Using language is a practice. While speaking, we make assumptions, make suggestions, formulate hypotheses, make predictions, describe our actions. We open up the abstract world by using terms and thus we are referring to tangible facts. Through depicting reality linguistically, we form theories. The formation of concepts is the core of every theory. But how do we form and use linguistic concepts, such as – for example - "residential care" or "child welfare". We assume a bundle of experiences that have slowly condensed into a concept in the course of communication.

Dreyfus & Taylor (2015, 85) provide an illustrative example in their latest volume on "Realism":

„As a boy I go with my dog every day to explore the woods yonder. We have to cross a stream, and we both hop across on some conveniently placed rocks. I don't have a word for these; I don't even feel the need one. We just both hop across on our way to the inviting, mysterious woods. Then my older cousin comes to visit, sees the woods and the stream, wants to cross, and asks me if there are any "stepping stones". Because "stone" and "step" are already in my vocabulary, I get at once his meaning. But more, I can answer his question, because I recognize at once that this is the right term for those rocks in the river that help me across. ... These hitherto mute facilitators have entered the linguistic dimension." A concept was formed, which only proved to be "practical" in the course of a described action.

Our everyday language always has its origin in actual experiences. It serves to communicate in social situations. Interaction partners assume from each other that they refer to situations in which they perform (successful) actions. Therefore, the words themselves initially do not have a conceptual character. The new word "stepping stone" first gains its meaning in the context of the real stream crossing and can then be increasingly abstracted in a second step.¹

This is also how concepts and a specialist language are developed. Stakeholders strive to describe and understand a situation collectively. That is also the subject matter of tutoring at the work placement: It has to be trained how a more or less successful practice can be verbalized to enable communication.

7. Forming abstract theory

Some readers may argue that the topics discussed so far have nothing to do with the construction of an exact theory. There are areas after all that can only be developed theoretically. In order to examine this argument as well, I would like to respond briefly with an example from an abstract, purely non-linguistic domain, namely trigonometric mathematics.

Most of you probably remember the famous "Theorem of Pythagoras", which might have caused many of you quite a headache at the time. By means of this theorem, the right angle in a triangle can be determined by the sum of the squares of the two sides "a" and "b" which is equal to the square of the hypotenuse "c". This theoretical knowledge has been formulated by Pythagoras about 600 BC.

Early historical research has discovered something interesting (Alsina 2016, 64): The right-angled triangle was already known to Egyptian builders about 1000 years prior. This was validated through inscriptions on a stone from the year 1600 BC which shows the theorem as well as the drawing of the right-angled triangle. The master builders of the pyramids used them as a craftsman's rule.

As experts, they regularly used the theorem quite practically to create right angles of buildings. They had not yet recognized the generality of the theoretical doctrine. However, only a 1000-year practice enabled later teachers, such as Pythagoras and Euclid, to stipulate this universal principle in a theorem (and thus bother pupils until today).

The central conclusion of this digression is that abstract theory formation also requires practice. Only if a theoretical model proves to be relevant in human practice, it gains in importance in teaching and training. As an abstract principle, something can be taught and understood only insofar as it proves to be successful in doing.

8. But: What role does theory play still?

If we have convinced ourselves that theory cannot directly guide our actions, what role does it play?

8.1 Theory is always relevant e wherever conscious action is taken. Unconscious expectations disappointed and surprised retrospections constantly accompany our actions. In addition, the more we associate a professional claim with our actions, we cannot help but continually consult theories or form new ones. We must not forget, however, that theory and practice are in a complementary, non-hierarchical relationship.

8.2 As soon as we give up the claim that theoretical teaching content must be practice-relevant, we enhance the status of theory as such. Analysis, synthesis, and modeling are then given their own value if they are given room separate from practice in which theoretical statements have their own validity. At the moment when we *express our practical experiences and assumptions linguistically*, we take them to a different level, which can certainly be viewed as a conceptual mirror image of experienced practice.

8.3 In this way, we are able to comment critically on experienced practice. We gain our competence of criticism from the fact that we compare, for example, routines or inadequate behavior, not only with existing theorems, but also with our implicit knowledge. We notice and "know" that something is wrong. This implicit knowledge, however, is nothing more than a not validated theory (Moch 2014).

9. Conclusions: „Rules of thumb“ for the work placement tutor

Finally, we return to the practical guidance and the primacy of a reflexive practice. The main aim of the study program is to prepare students for professional practice (Moch 2013), in which they can fulfill their professional duties in a reflexive and critical manner. What is the responsibility of the Professional who instructs the student directly during the work placement?

We have seen that there are no classical methods of teaching ("instructions"), or one-way methods ("goal-oriented") as appropriate means. What remains as intermediary between the tutor and the student? In what way are practical competencies passed on and acquired in study integrated internships? Finally, some "rules of thumb" (Gigerenzer 2007, see also Moch 2015a).

9.1 Students should learn to question their implicit rules of action. The prerequisite for this is that the professional practitioner as a tutor is able to reflect his/her own action. Why did she / he act in a given situation as she / he did? A discourse about this "setting" can clarify whether and to what extent the action in question follows a "rule of thumb" and which conditions have favored it.

In the dialogue about a (jointly experienced) action situation, the tutor explains his / her own reasoning. In doing so, he/she presents his/her assumptions about the situation openly and incorporates them into the joint reflection with the student. The student therefore has the opportunity to query or correct his / her own interpretation both with regard to actions as well as with regard to the institution.

9.2 During work placements events that counteract a routinisation of action sequences should be focused upon. Such situations confront the student with consequences of his / her actions which he / she did not expect or was not prepared for. The confrontation with the unexpected, for example with his/her own reactions to unexpected action sequences intensifies the need for reflection.

The same applies wherever situations are not clear and appropriate interpretations have to be introduced and "tested". Whenever routines are not available, when unforeseen situations force spontaneous action, the focus on "rules of thumb" that guide action is enhanced.

9.3 Students are often confronted with situations in which they doubt the correctness and appropriateness of their actions, but still have to act. In dealing with these situations, it is important that the implicit action-rules, interpretative patterns, assumptions (hopes, fears, beliefs) are detected and discussed with the tutor (and possibly other interns). Professional competence is thus created by making public his/her own implicit rules as well as , opening them for discussion and questioning by others (Schön 1987).

9.4 Reflections on certain practical situations should be made promptly. The less time passes between the event and the common reflection, the more instructive the analysis of the situation. The cooperation between the student and the internship tutor should therefore be organized in a fashion that allows the discussion of shared experiences and interpretations immediately following the situation. This enables documentation as well.

9.5 In distinction to the instruction in a technical profession, practical guidance in social work is characterized by the peculiarity of a "learning cascade": A student (learner) is to be stimulated and encouraged how he/she can promote - on his/her part – the learning processes on the client side (which in turn are learners). Similar processes therefore take place at different levels. One of the basic skills of the practice guidance is to

demonstrate such patterns of action (recognition, participation, reflection), which are also useful for the student in dealing with the clients (Moch & Aparicio 2016).

9.6 However, this recommendation appears to be simpler than its implementation. It is not easy for the tutor to react to inadequate behavioral theories and patterns of the student in such a way that the reflection and learning readiness of the student is promoted.

In order to avoid the cycle of negative feedback and demotivation, the tutor should actively overcome negative, learning-inhibiting patterns of action in the sense of a second-order reflection (Schön 1987, 262-263). The tutor can only fulfill this once he/she is aware not only of the restriction of his/her own behavior patterns and theories, but can also develop alternatives in each given situation: How could I have acted in another way? Since there is no general rule for escaping this inhibiting cycle of criticism and counter-criticism, it is essential in the guidance situation that both sides remain open for possible action alternatives, which then have to prove themselves in practice.

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DEMONSTRATION AND OBSERVATION OF TEACHING METHODS USED IN TEACHING LESSONS OF ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

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Abstract: *Demonstration is the indirect method of exploration, present in this paper, which proves a reality, a phenomenon or process on the basis of concrete material, applied to the presence of examples, logical arguments and practical actions that favor a model of Romanian teaching at primary level. The paper appreciates the advantage of this method that enables collaboration by the two signaling systems of images and words. As a complementary segment of demonstration appears the observation that, in this case, involves the phenomenon of Romanian language teaching process in lower grades, and appears in systematic and organized way, which reflects on the operational objectives. Registration of reality, which is outside the artistic fiction is meant to challenge students' interest in the literary world for artistic written word.*

Keywords: *demonstration, observation, environment, education, cognitive act.*

Introductory remarks

Modern educators point out that modern education should be defined as a process of active partnership and acquisition of competencies of students and teachers using a variety of forms of work, methods, teaching aids and media intervention. Quality education, and contributes towards a flexible school organization and teaching process designed to enable each student verbal, visual and auditory stimuli that contribute to the development of individual potential.

Modern teaching needs to have character development which means it should be characterized by such organization that will influence the development of cognitive and general intellectual abilities of students, the ability to acquire new knowledge and their application in new situations, the development of independent and creative thinking. This means aktivizaciju intellectual abilities, memory, imagination, abstract reasoning, and the inclusion of emotional and volitional elements of the personality of students. It is important to take into account the development of various skills by means of the senses because it enriches cognition. Should be able to come to the fore all students - with different learning styles and multiple abilities and preferences. It is important that in this set during construction of knowledge, ie. learning through the creation of knowledge, students develop divergent thinking, open up new questions and find solutions to problems they encounter. All this considered important assumptions of modern teaching performance.

Also, it is important to motivate students "internally" because the research process has personal meaning for them - their intellectual processes are imbued with interests and emotions. W. Glaser, thinking quality teaching methodology, started from the inner motivation of students and teachers; explained in the theory of control and thereby the teaching methodology incorporates motive for achievement, love, respect, freedom and fun. Control theory is applicable in collaborative forms of teaching, in a joint learning in small groups.

The paradigm of constructing knowledge to develop different abilities, interests and wishes of continuous creative learning, so it contributes greatly to the success of the teaching. However, the lack of knowledge of constructing a paradigm is the fact that in the background remains the continent's knowledge and logic of the subject, and system concepts. In the view of Vygotsky, an insight into the whole system is important formative agent, meaning and goal of any education, as is the experience of research practice and problem solving. Therefore, it is necessary to construct the paradigm of modern knowledge combined with what turned out to be positive in the traditional classroom.

Sensory contact with things, beings and phenomena helps man to know the environment, to assume a basic image of the world and acquire new experiences permanently. This sensorial curiosity and responsive strength represents the most universal way of learning. Acquiring new knowledge through direct observation generally acts as a factor of development, human adaptation and survival, and therefore is superior to all forms of direct learning.

Education, particularly the primary one, is just a cover and an extra incentive in the strengthening and acceleration of spontaneous, experiential

and lifelong learning, which is given to a man with the senses and natural ability to work with observed data. The reciprocity of sensory activity and thinking in cognitive act manifests itself as a psychological legality particularly stated by the philosophical empiricists (Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, and Hume). Their conviction that there is nothing in mind, which was not previously in the senses, is based on mental function senses that by receiving external excitations enrich consciousness with concrete information and preparing it for abstract thinking and rational knowledge.

While other methods of information exclusively use linguistic signs (of speech or writing), these methods introduce the objective reality in teaching and its various forms of sensory projection, indirectly using the verbal one, too, mainly for developing and directing the attention of students. In this way we get a lot of initial information, because when things occur, and the traces, fingerprints, images and their patterns are observable, they mostly talk about themselves and surroundings *better, more and more convincingly* than a language can do. The eyewitnesses and bystanders are in a better cognitive role than listeners and readers. The saying: *Eyes are more faithful organs than ears* - especially emphasizes the unreliability of voice calls, which incidentally or intentionally disagree with the truth. The advantage of direct observation to language notifications highlighted Plaut by saying: *More valuable is a witness who saw than ten witnesses who have heard.*

Sensory and logical knowledge

The observation method bases its processes on the principle of sensorial education (visibility, sharpness). According to this principle, initial and permanent incentives for development of consciousness and human thought come from outside, from nature and society as a multitude of sensory impressions that are received and perceived not only as a subjective image of world, but also as its objective appearance, the liquid form of its existence. No matter how much material factors of the world are processed critically and imaginary in human consciousness, they still remain as a gathered and lived factual material, as a corpus of necessary experience, underlying abstract thinking and logical learning. In the development and enrichment of all mental operations (eg. Comparison, argumentation, assessment, induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis ...) from the beginning, and certainly in parallel and alternating with them, is observing. Therefore, the observation method after its objectivity is considerably broader and more comprehensive than the reality which a teacher can demonstrate.

Observation as a research method in education is often done without the professor. When the teacher in a process of collecting materials for oral or written exercises instructs students to look as a researcher at a street, a

landscape or scene table, then it is left to their choice of objects, time and place of observation, and the fact that he will not be able to attend individual acts of observations and have any opportunity to demonstrate it. Education largely successful in using sensory experience that students acquire spontaneously out of school, and only in appropriate conditions an "attached" school knowledge through memories, application and system integration knowledge properly.

Observation method is not always subject to a proper demonstration. The demonstration is only prepared teaching circumstance in which essentially functions as a methodological observation. Due to its global presence and inalienable human experience her cognitive process, observation as a research method can be included in the general methods (logical). The research activity of the senses is a prerequisite for realization safe, induction and analysis, which continues to serve as the basis of its intellectual and methodological logic correlates: abstraction, deduction and synthesis. Between concrete and abstract thinking, sensory and learning between rational and thorough understanding there is a correlation: As observed, in and so it concludes.

Without sensory education would become too verbal and abstract, would depart from the practice of living and learning would reduce mechanical. On the other hand, sensorial without abstract thinking, would only lead to recognition of the objective world, and such knowledge would be unilateral and impotent to stand up to scientific vision of the world. Only full reciprocity and unity of sensory and rational learning gain knowledge creation that are safe and practical sense and in the sense in theory.

Direct and indirect demonstration

The demonstration is classified intuitive methods (Cerghit, 1980) and defined as a method of teaching - learning, in which the message is sent to the student includes a concrete object, a concrete action or their substitutes. Teaching demonstration in direct and indirect use. *Direct demonstration* is accomplished by sensory things and phenomena in the field and placing students in the best position of observation. She performed in school premises (classroom, laboratories and workshops), and outside them. The school premises can only see objects of suitable size, ie those that allow easy handling in space (eg. Books, manuscripts, paintings, collections of minerals, exhibits). Direct encounter with the world of the senses most extensive and far is done outside school premises: carrying students on excursions in nature, in the near and far, in museums, in the face of cultural and historical monuments, performances and exhibitions, meetings with the grounds of the village present the creations of writers and artists.

Indirect demonstration is performed while the genuine objectivity is inaccessible or too complex and abstract for sensory knowledge. Then,

instead of genuine reality, it shows evidence of it, and its implications, its traces and projections in various material forms. Intermediaries strong for knowing things and phenomena are thus *photos, sketches, drawings, illustrations, charts, maps, models plastic-coated documents and audio*. Teaching literature as indirect sources of information it uses, and all kinds of artistic and documentary works that appeared at literary creations and their authors. These are *plays, screenings of literary and documentary films about writers and literary phenomena*.

Most educational means are adapted to show indirectly reality by reproducing images or sounds (sometimes together), for example. *diafilmele, slides, overheads, instructional videos, electronic books and projection equipment properly*. Educational programs are based on radio and TV audio-visual scenic mediation that creates the illusion that genuine objectivity appears before our senses.

Sensory responsiveness is a prerequisite for acceptance and recognition of signs of any semiotic system, so and the language. Therefore, the demonstration method (observation) in the widest sense, includes the expressive function of language in various aspects of its practical application and poetic. *Expressive reading and story* either monologue or dialogue, especially when reaching artistic, can not pass on personal ability without prior demonstration, ie listening and exercise a valuable model after model. It is the same with training in writing skills. Most understood written exercises and sensory experience in the form of observations, experiences and testimonies.

Sensory imagination (internal visibility)

Teaching literature, especially in the perception and interpretation of texts artistic, apply a special form of observation as a teaching method that is almost diametrically opposed to visibility literal and physical considered normal in teaching natural sciences, especially biology, physics, chemistry and geography . Most artistic texts can be perceived and understood only if the reader turns the plastic images and linguistic signs actualizează sensory objectivity offered. Thus, imagination plays a crucial role sensory or internal visibility. The ability to see with your eyes closed longer and better than with open eyes is based creative reading.

In reading texts only artistic visual receptors are upon alphabetic characters, while *spiritual eyes* are obsessed with fantastic vision and create a new world. This empathy has no boundaries, it is beyond the physical principles, providing senses *ubiquity* and look beyond the barriers. It is a source of aesthetic experience and inherent to any university in charge of artworks of any kind.

Interior sense in teaching literature is more important than any form of physical display. Film, theater, television and art (painting, photography and illustration) starring as places of indeterminacy in the text of art to approaching their means of expression, but it will make only one way, and when is the best, suffer from a limitation. By such reduction literary and artistic images ambiguous visual notifications unambiguously prevents sensory imagination and leads to oversimplified and unilateral interpretations of literary works. The above said points to the enormous aesthetic advantages reader has free creation (updating) literary images to the viewer receives final images on the screen. The reader feels artistic flair and creativity of its own, when the viewer of a film and TV largely lacks such pleasure. Movies (educational, documentary, cartoons), TV shows, slides and illustrations are means first class education, but only in cases that do not impede sense inside when not trying to stop the activity of reading and replace literary art.

Bear in mind that only some artistic statements, especially descriptive texts, works as images to be caused by sensory imagination, while avoiding more concrete reasons and suggest shortcut thoughts, attitudes and feelings appropriate. Therefore, and students should be advised to imagine that only plastic objectivity (images, art critics, ambiente), who is also represented with artistic intention to resurrect conscious reader's imagination.

Interior sensorial stimulation and development is one of the most delicate processes methodical that the teacher appropriates the best of writers, that of artistic texts. In painting objects writers use many more viewing angles and excitation synesthetic than what can artists and film. It is enough to recall the description of folk poetry Court of Arges monastery in Arges and compare it with photographic records and direct observation of the same construction. Each picture offers only a spatial perspective and angle of view, and this addition to the many opinions sensory poetry, popular author introduces mythical aspect, ethical, historical, philosophical and illusionist.

If during processing this popular poems would show students the picture monastery or be used impressions direct pupils (from the trip), this method will work best if it leads students to solve the problem of creative relationships between objective reality and superstructure artistic between builders as useful practical skills and literary and artistic creativity. Descriptions artistic value will reflect more the differences, similarities and less subject to prototype.

Demonstration method in teaching literature

Internal sense is based reading practice so spontaneous and creative insights that is subordinated every foreign educational demonstration.

Observing reality that is outside of artistic fiction is meant to arouse students' interest in the literary world, author and artistic circumstances that generated the word. The contemporary reader is weaned of anonymous texts (except popular folklore). His consciousness title is somewhat fickle and hard work be retained if it is not related to the author's name, and often its physical form. Name the author and his creation are related to emotional and sometimes merge into rhythmic phrases, pronounced and retaining the lyrics, like epic verse: *Povestea lui Harap-Alb* - Ion Creanga and lyrical verse: *Mai am un singur dor* - Mihai Eminescu.

For many values of a literary reader seek and often find spirituality facial coverage and agreement of the author. Mihai Eminescu on his face radiates imagine that same wisdom and moral consistency that has incorporated in his literary work. Alecsandri's face it objectively and design gets all the precision and research spirit manifested in the process of artistic creation of the writer. Whether the establishment of such approvals are based on the belief prevailed illusionist images appear objectively writers as an important aspect of initiation and recall of literary and artistic experiences lived. Physiognomy appearance writer becomes reader (especially the young) a kind of "brand" and the first destination outside sensory text around which gathers associative literary works read or known only after the title of the work.

For this reason writers images can be very spontaneous reminder to books and readers' needs. They need not be unique, but as often as possible in the same visual field to the books and texts so as to be in a reciprocal perceptive. Reading books and supplementary reading books must always contain images with significant writers of Romanian literature and universal. Enlarged portraits of writers and scholars, when put on the walls of classrooms, laboratories and libraries, create favorable working conditions.

In classrooms and offices have to be present literary maps as a tool for teaching Romanian language and literature (especially if they are rich in artwork and names of new writers). On the map are inserted only important data, especially large cities, but marks special birthplaces of authors. The designation village writer photo anneals properly. Map images can gradually enrich and complete advance and use as a means of teaching completed. On it is obvious how some writers are distributed regionally, so that you can successfully use to understand the reasons natal their creations and the chance of visual memorization important biographical data.

Drawing on the blackboard or presentation drawings prepared in advance can successfully explain the meanings of words and expressions unknown in literary works. Such procedures shall apply as illustrated in the vocabularies. For example, when processing a fairy tale if students do not know how showing *the dragon* after popular belief, they can show their

drawings enlarged the mythological dictionary or appropriate illustrations of fairy tales (the scenes with mythological creatures). Students do not know many concepts related to the material life of the Romanian people eg calpac, ax, halberd, lamb's lettuce, strap, pivot ... verbal presentation of these and other concepts too abstract and uncertain, so are welcome additions in the form of improvised images or drawings on the blackboard. Explanation oral and written words and expressions unknown description Village Humulești (the autobiographical novel Childhood memories of Ion Creangă) exceeded half the time allowed to conduct the lesson in Romanian, with a reasonable suspicion that the work would be finished success.

Illustrations literary text itself (scenes, descriptions and events) contribute to a better understanding of the literary work only if they themselves have a high artistic value, and serve as a new and profound challenge readers' imagination. Thus illustrated lecture for secondary school students, especially primary school (fables, tales, anecdotes, stories for children) stimulates interest in the book, illuminates and refreshes the readers' attention. Pupils must be given regularly for homework to express the experience in plastic literary works, even alone to illustrate literary texts read and processed. This process is only continue updating sensory artistic and literary images, so students should not be limited to a particular technique of plastic expression. Mirroring the illustration, without a pattern (of another) previously self-expression is a form of creative students. Each in its own way will imagine and draw a scene from childhood memories, will illustrate the song's Woods Eminescu will rise and exalt the tree's creation Alecsandri same name ...

Lots of plastic creations which, although not inspired by classical literature, as reasons for their messages come in a very close relationship with certain literary works, so that they can serve their valued subsequent artistic illustrations. In this way, living painting "Sunflowers" by Van Gogh can be creative "cast" in the poetic world of Grigore Vieru and his work with the same title to strengthen not only updating sense of the lyrics, but also to correct by images literary people's fates are exhausted to relentlessly in the sun on his ideals.

Plastic art works are successfully used for the presentation of cultural periods, epochs creative and artistic movements. Painting, sculpture and architecture act directly, faster and easier confronting the public with material and spiritual traits of past centuries, so that eases the literary pictorial retrospective. Even advocates of aesthetic autonomy of literature, recognize that "as spontaneous as literary documents, they take advantage of lessons learned and produce better in the traditional" (Calinescu, 1992: 4).

Sensorial teaching literature can be achieved by presenting old books and magazines and literary first editions of major works by providing

manuscripts and student government at book fairs and visits to museums and memorial houses of writers.

A literary experience can become deeper and closer through music appropriate. Listening to music Nocturne (Chopin), students will transfer more spontaneous and more empathy in the world and the poetry of Lucian Blaga songs in the night. A good song choice and discretion, whether listening to before the reading, whether it pursues reading, creative imagination enhances and accelerates identification poetic subject. For this reason, it is particularly useful in machining tales, descriptive texts and poems of love. The songs can be heard and some ballads sung by students, with the reason to develop interest in the creation of poets and lyric interpretation of the background music. For example: Besides the odd poplars (Eminescu) and others.

Knowing Sensory / sensorial teaching of grammar

The current Romanian language textbooks and the direct teaching practice increasingly shows graphic language apstracte phenomena, concepts and relationships between linguistic signs. During processing sounds and pronunciation training place using drawings organs of speech. Romance languages spread is represented by a "tree language" properly and dialects spread, subdialectelor and dialects presents dialects map. Formative elements of words (root base, prefixes, suffixes, endings) recorded segmented outlined, rounded classified synoptic tables. Relations between subject, predicate and object, transitive verbs, intransitive and reflexive can be represented by appropriate illustrations of appropriate sentences.

Transitive verbs

The children **ate** cakes bought by their mother.



Picture 1.

Intransitive verbs

Children **go** to school.



Picture 2.

Demonstration method has broad field of use in teaching understanding of the specifics of each side sentences sentence. The process commonly used in these cases is transforming regent parties sentence in the semantic appropriate sentences. The handiest example, if the definition of subordinate clause properties subjective transformation of the subjects in sentences subordinate subjective regent (Parfene, 1999):

The expensive loses more

Subject → predicate

Who gets more expensive / loses more /.

Subjective sentence → Main

The drawings are convenient to represent the significance of spatial prepositions and forms causal role of tutor personal pronouns and adjective relations Secondary clauses in the sentence, as well as various types of systematic notions of language.

Illustrations linguistic phenomenon applies after the presentation in text and speech circumstances. Their role and link the text and comments reveals students themselves, but with the encouragement and help of the teacher. Illustrations simpler teacher draws on the blackboard and most complex prepares hours before using talented students in the field of plastic expression.

Illustrations and short texts can be transferred onto transparencies and reproduced in appropriate conditions. However, school board, if used selectively and clearly when everything that is written on it and draw visual highlights are grouped and in proportion to its importance, remains one of the most obvious teaching tools. Practice shows that those teachers who in the best way they use the school board about cost-effectiveness criteria highest teaching methods and I know independently and with more

inventiveness to prepare teaching materials suitable for audio-visual educational techniques.

Conclusion

The method is the best way and manner by which participants in learning and teaching acting in pursuit of educational goals and objectives, especially in the purchase educational content, using standards, public and educational facilities.

Option teacher for a particular method is a decision of great complexity strategic, they must be adapted to the needs and particularities of the working group, so the result, that education itself is considered an art, namely to adapt to a situation precise .

Methods "effective" in this paper can provide support in developing personal career teacher. Maybe other methods would have deserved to be shown but we opted for this structure in order to give a steady job. The methods described can be tested, tailored and combined to achieve effective learning concept.

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INSIGHTS OF CASE MANAGEMENT APPROACH: AS A DISCIPLINE OF STUDY AND AS A METHOD OF WORK IN CHILD PROTECTION

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Abstract. *Case management can be approached from a double perspective: as mandatory work method in child care services and also as study matter for students enrolled in Social Work. Proper knowledge and use of case management as coordination and integration method in social services regarded as means of improving the beneficiaries' situation and development of abilities in case investigation are the competences aimed by Case Management study matter. Training and development of such competences are absolutely necessary to future social workers; however, the complexity of case management procedures makes it difficult to develop such competences with students. Thus, professors are challenged to point out very briefly numerous actions, interventions, procedures conducted simultaneously by specialists of various institutions. This study tries to draft a model of organizing course contents and seminar activities for the subject matter Case Management, so that it would enhance the understanding of case management as procedure/work method in child care. I would like to focus on the use of modern, interactive teaching methods but also on team work along with specialists involved in case management services. The paper points out the most important elements of case management used as study matter as well as the difficulties that emerge while teaching it. We have to refer to this method considering the complexity of the process of integrated services for children in difficulty.*

Keywords: *case management, study matter, work method.*

Case Management as Study Matter

Case Management is among the compulsory courses in the study programme Social Work according to the indicative list proposed by the ARACIS¹. A brief analysis of syllabi used in different universities reveals that this subject matter is or is not taught in these universities although it is possible that

similar contents are approached during other courses. For instance, Case Management is not taught as such at the University of Iasi, but it is studied at 1 Decembrie 1918 University of Alba Iulia (3rd year of study, 1st semester, 2 hours course, 1 hour of seminar) at Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad and the University of Oradea.

The Romanian field literature refers to case management in a few works. The topic is approached as work method used in child care services; one reference work in the field is Ștefan Cojocaru`s work, who makes a thorough diagnosis of the practices used in case management and presents the real situation in Romania in the year 2008.

For students enrolled in the study programme Social Work, Case Management is at first a pretty easy study matter. It presents clearly the stages of case management and the actors involved in the process. Considering the high share of interventions in the field of child care services, we presume that the study matter is important as it tries to place the student in the centre of integrated interventions in the field of child care. Case Management along with *Work with the group*, *Conceptual theories and framework*, *Family and couple therapy* all belong to the category entitled *Theories and practices*, which are a major thematic area for the study programme Social Work. A study conducted in 2014 shows that *Case Management* and *Work with the Group* cover approximately 5,6 % in the share of subjects taught at Social Work study programmes in Romania (Universities of Iasi, Bucharest, Cluj, Arad, Oradea) in terms of thematic area. The percentage drops significantly at Master programmes, namely to only 1,3% (Hatos, 2014, 135- 138). This study matter is approached at Aurel Vlaicu University of Arad, in the 1st year of study, by Social Work students. It has been assigned with 1 hour of lecture and 1 hour of seminar.

The relevance of the programme in the training of social workers is reflected by the professional competences assigned for the field of social work (according to RNCIS¹); out of 6 professional competences, 4 can be developed by this study matter, namely:

C1. Identifying, collecting information, documentation, assessment and recording of information, analysis, evaluation and specific interventions to reduce social risks at individual, family, group, community and society level.

C4. Consultancy in accessing community resources for socially excluded persons and groups or for those at the risk of social exclusion (institutions, services, social benefits)

C5. Counselling and other intervention methods for families or institutions (hospitals, schools, penitentiaries, antidrug centres, social work institutions) with respect for the values and principles of social work

C6. Communication and professional connections with the beneficiaries and other involved social actors

The study matter develops these competences by putting theory into practice. Case Management focuses on the practical aspects of the study matter, being in close connection to *Internship*. The understanding of all stages of this method should be doubled by use of techniques proper for each stage. These techniques refer to collecting information, intervention techniques. etc. Case Management is for professors the perfect opportunity to revalue the students' knowledge acquired during lectures such as *Counselling in Social Work*, *Public-private Partnership in Social Work*, *Methods and techniques used in Social Work* and to use their communication and organizational abilities as well as other qualities required by a successful intervention. Some of them are connection making between needs and services, promptness, diplomacy in approaching the problem situation, problem solving with respect for deontological values and principles. More than any other study matter, Case Management will help students understand and use the answers to the following questions:

Table no1 *Some easy questions that describe the Case Management method*

Question	Answer and reference to legislation
Which is the beginning of case instrumentation? How are such cases disseminated?	The case is reported by different people (family, institution, social worker, neighbour)
Who has the responsibility of immediate intervention?	The case is registered at SPAS (Public Services of Social Work) and the social worker has the duty of making a house call
What is the goal of a social worker's house call?	Determining the gravity of the case (it will be instrumented by SPAS if abandonment can be prevented, or it will be taken over by the DGASPC (General Directorate of Social Work and Child Care) if the social worker suspects child abuse or the family's impossibility to raise the child)
Who has the responsibility of coordinating child care services?	Appointment of case manager and coordination of services
What is the meaning of integrated services for children?	Assessment of all child's needs and provision of specific interventions: medical, emotional, social, educational, legal, religious, etc.
Where will the child live throughout the separation period?	Knowledge of the type of child care institutions: residential placement centres, family houses, maternal care
What is the child's status throughout the placement period?	The child's legal situation depends on the parents' existence, on their desire and ability of getting involved in the child's nursing
Under what circumstances is the case considered closed?	The child can be adopted, can be institutionalized until the age of 18 or 25, can be integrated in a family or socio-professionally

The above questions briefly capture the whole path of case management procedures and I consider that learning by discovery is the most appropriate

method of understanding it. We should start with concrete notions and shift towards abstract in understanding case management.

There is a varied offer of interactive methods suitable for teaching case management. The use of such methods leads to the development of desired professional competences. The selection of proper methods and teaching procedures for case management involves the identification of methods which would enhance finding proper solutions, building learning situations and use of ideas/knowledge in real work situations: Case study, Role play, Problem-solving.

The Cube, the Cognitive map, the Tour of Gallery, Brainstorming, Venn-Euler Diagrams, Jigsaw or the Thinking Hats are only some of the interactive methods which successfully develop the systematic and selective thinking, bring about the discovery of new connections and solutions and stimulate students' involvement in solving real cases. When doing so, students follow each step and stage of case management.

The approach of theoretical aspects concerning intervention in child care is absolutely necessary, according to Coposescu, (2007) who tries to prove that *"silent involvement and explanation of theoretical aspects used in the social workers' professional arrangements is inevitable and crucial for the public acknowledgement, the autonomy and development of social work."* The student needs to understand the context of applying this method, the structure of social work system and also to learn the social networks which favour his/her client in order to be able to use the complex procedure of case management.

In this respect, *Law 272/2004 on child's rights* and *Order 288/2006 for the approval of SMO¹ regarding case management* contain fundamental information on the contents which need to be taught in this subject matter. We often call up legislation in teaching social work issues in the study programme Social Work because the procedures covering all three elements (context, social worker and client) are regulated by laws. Many times, the protection of clients calls for changes in his/her legal status. Observing the stages of case management is therefore impossible without knowledge of the way specialists have to deal with specific situations. Specialists work in different institutions but their work and actions overlap, intermingle, and follow one another. Apparently, as students pointed out, these actions have no logical explanation or if any, it is a very complicated one.

Operationalizing notions: Case management as work method in child care services

When referring to case management we focus on the Order 288/2006 which defines it as *a compulsory work method used when instrumenting cases in*

child care services; it is a method which comprises a set of techniques, procedures and work tools that coordinate all the activities and interventions undertaken by various professionals in the best interests of the child. Almost undisputedly, this definition can be found in case management literature along with *M.Weil and J.Karls`s definition (1985). They see case management as a set of logical steps within the network of services by means of which the beneficiaries get what they need in an integrated and efficient manner.* Case management is now considered a pivotal component of long-term care service delivery and as a likely adjunct to primary care in managed health care systems ([Grower, 1997](#), in Newcome, 1997)

If in the USA, case management has existed since the 19th century, in Romania, the legislation appears only in 2006 when the GO 288 on Minimal Compulsory Standards in Case Management has been issued. Of course that before that date interventions were conducted after a similar model but without a grid of activities and properly standardized moments. In other words, the interventions were adapted to the beneficiaries` needs but also to the resources of the agency which provided the services.

Although the legislation refers to case management as a working method in particular for the protection of children in difficulty, the procedure is similar for other areas of intervention (elderly, refugees etc.). For other areas, the services provide specialists with working procedures, completed with mandatory standards and quality indicators.

Order 288/2006 regulated the steps that need to be taken in case instrumentation, appoints the actors involved and delegates tasks to the case manager and case responsible. The management of the whole case management path called for the establishment of a Case management Compartment, a Service of Entries and Exists.

Short Insight into the Complexity of Case Instrumentation

The study matter Case management recommends taking also courses of *Social Work Systems, Methods and Techniques in Social Work* or knowledge of Law 242/2007 and Law 292/2011. It is also advisable to have some knowledge of the Adoption Law. When we talk about case management, we refer to both children separated from their families and to children in families with abandonment risk.

I will focus on the first situation as it is much more complicated and therefore more time consuming in terms of actions.

For starters, theoretical understanding of the stages of case management does not pose many difficulties to students. These steps go absolutely logically and naturally, so their completion seems a very easy step for students who want to understand how a case works from the moment it is signaled to the authorities until it is closed. There seems nothing easier than to accept that the initial assessment is followed by comprehensive evaluation which aims

to identify the child's needs in order to develop the intervention plan. Information is gradually completed so that each stage requires knowledge of the actors involved in the process, the tools, the methods and techniques used by them in their interventions. The difficulty of understanding the whole case management path and the difficulty of visualizing its stages is given by the following aspects:

- the involvement of an important number of specialists from different fields and institutions (DGASPC, SPAS, the Police, County School Inspectorates, Hospitals, Child Care Centres, etc.)
- spontaneous conduct of actions and procedures such as: completion of reports, approval of reports, obtaining agreements and signatures, keeping to deadlines, etc.
- knowledge of legislation regarding the loss of parental rights and the intervention of the Court, etc.
- knowledge of the institutions involved in child abandonment situations
- knowledge of the map with social services available in each County
- field related knowledge: protection measures for children in difficulty, steps taken in implementing the measures, parents' obligations in different situations, etc.

My experience in teaching this subject matter has made me face situations when students had difficulties in understanding the information and thus asking questions such as: where is the case manager? What steps need to be taken when the parent does not approve the child's placement in a foster family? How does the case responsible interfere? What is the relationship between the child and the case manager? When does the responsibility of the case responsible stop in cases of abuse? When does the responsibility of the case responsible stop in abuse prevention? When can the child be given for adoption? How are the meetings with the parents conducted?

A special situation is the understanding of working scheme in pluridisciplinary teams. Students need to understand the intervention of these specialists and the way the life of a child separated from his parents and surrounded by specialists looks like. Students understand only chunks of the process because they cannot see it as a whole from the lecture room. Thus, the study matter Case Management aims to understand and describe the whole path of the method with the same name, which involves besides the steps taken by specialists involved in this process, also certain specific tools, methods and techniques. All these elements have to keep to deadlines which are very important in case instrumentation. All these aspects are reflected in the table below.

I. Identification, initial assessment and case take over			
Case Identification			
Actors involved in Case Management	Tools	Methods and techniques	Deadlines
The social worker within SEI (Service of entries and Exits) (DGASPC) The social worker within SPAS	The register of new cases ¹	Phone conversations ¹	The case is registered immediately after it has been brought under the specialists` attention
Initial assessment			
The social worker within SPAS The mobile team/social worker/psychologist and police officer (for cases of abuse)	The initial file of the case Social enquiry Visit report Acceptance/rejection certificate of the beneficiary`s request	House call Meeting Observation Documentation	Initial assessment takes place within 72 hours since case registration. In case of emergency, initial assessment can be performed as soon as possible, but not more than an hour. An initial assessment report must be issued in 24 hours after the assessment.
Case takeover			
The DGASPC manager (with attribution on child care services) The coordinator of Case Management Department/CMC (Case Management Compartment) The case manager /DGASPC The person in charge with prevention /SPAS	Decision for the appointment of a case manager Decision for the appointment of a RCP Documents which record the clients` information regarding the content of the initial assessment report which and the decision taken.		The assessment report is sent directly to the hierarchical superior; based on this report the case take over by the DGASPC is confirmed or declined. The content of the initial assessment report is presented to the client within 3 days after release and a record of this session is made
COMPLEX ASSESSMENT			
Case manager Pluridisciplinary team (Service for complex assessment /DGASPC) Prevention responsible /SPAS Team of professionals	Tools used for psychological assessment Ecomapa Genograma meeting reports Social enquiry Meeting recordings Complex assessment	Documentation Observation Structural interview Exploration interview Phone conversation	The content of the house call reports is presented to the family and the child within 3 days after the visit /meeting, except for cases when it could alter the assessment process

	report Meeting minutes	Meetings Case Meetings	
ELABORATION OF AN INDIVIDUAL PROTECTION PLAN/SERVICE PLAN			
Case manager Pluridisciplinary team (Service for complex assessment /DGASPC) Prevention responsible /SPAS Team of professionals	Individual protection plan Service plan Special intervention plan		Within 30 days since case registration
MONITORING AND REASSESSMENT			
Case manager under the coordination of the CMC coordinator Prevention responsible /SPAS Under the guidance of SPAS manager	Observation, diagnosis interview, social counselling, phone conversation, individual meetings, support groups, house calls, monitoring files/reports, meeting files, visit reports, reassessment reports, PIS (Specialized Intervention Plan)		Reassessment is done every three months Post-service monitoring takes place at least 3 months after the PIP, PS implementation closure, namely at least 2 years for national adoptions.
CASE CLOSURE			
Case manager Prevention responsible /SPAS	Cessation disposition of PIP (Individual Protection Plan)/ PS (Service Plan) Visit reports Case meeting reports.	Observation Meeting Phone conversation House calls.	When the conditions which led to special protection measures have disappeared

Tabel no.2 *Aspects of the case investigation*

Conclusions

Case management approached as study matter involves besides the explanation of certain notions and procedures specific for this work also some questions on how contents should be taught and what methods should be used to enhance the development of professional competences in child care services. The blank space between knowledge and intervention needs to be filled in by means of analysis, documentation, and involvement. Child care as field of intervention requires good knowledge of case management method because it is a compulsory work method in case instrumentation. The complexity of this method assigns a level of high difficulty to this study matter, considering the amount of information which needs to be put into practice.

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THE IMPACT OF PERCEIVED PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON STUDENT SUCCESS

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Abstract: *This research focus on how the high school students perceive their families support, whether this perceived support from the mother, father or both influence their academic performance and their level of self-esteem and self-efficacy. There were investigated 140 high school students from Brasov County. The study's instruments are 3 questionnaires that measure the quality of parent-child relationship, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The results show that self-esteem and academic achievement are positively correlated with supportive behaviors of mothers toward their adolescents. The student's mothers support their children's educational needs in greater extent than their fathers do. More often the students' perception of their fathers support and involvement is far less perceived and felt by respondents, as against to the support perceived from their mother. A relationship was found between students' academic achievement at exact science (chemistry, physics) and supportive behaviors of mothers.*

Keywords: *parental support, parental involvement, self-esteem, self-efficacy, academic achievement*

1. Introduction

In today's educational psychology research there is a growing interest in the effects that family has on individual motivational beliefs (self-efficacy and self-esteem) of the child, adolescent behaviors that interact with learning and academic performance (Koballa & Glym, 2011; Baram- Tsabari & Yarden, 2009; Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008, Cheung & Pomerantz, 2012; Fan, Williams, & Wolters, 2012; Fortus & Vedder-Weiss, 2014).

A variety of motivational factors may influence the decision to engage in academic tasks as well as the results of that involvement (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007; Urdan, Solek, &

Schoenfelder, 2007), however from the scientific literature were selected (i) personal beliefs concerning their own abilities (self-efficacy), (ii) self-esteem and (iii) perception of the involvement and support provided by parents.

1.1. Self-efficacy

It has been shown that students' self-efficacy influences the engagement in learning, causing a certain level of achievement. Self-efficacy is based on personal beliefs concerning their abilities to organize and undertake, to guide actions in order to achieve their objectives. Beliefs about their capabilities influence individual choices and selection of activities in which adolescents will engage (Pajares, & Schunk, 2001). Beliefs about efficacy adjust the level of effort in an activity, the time involved to persevere when confronted with obstacles and resilience to challenging situations. Individuals who have low levels of self-efficacy in achieving a specific task will tend to avoid it, while individuals who are convinced of the high level of their capabilities are more likely to take action ((Farrington, Roderick, Allensworth, Nagaoka, Keyes, Johnson, & Beechum, 2012; Pajares, & Schunk, 2001).

Self-efficacy determines the level of stress and anxiety felt by individuals in the course of an activity (Galla, Wood, Tsukayama, Har, Chiu, Langer, 2014). An interesting aspect is that some psychological traits generally, are considered to be independent from cognitive skills (Farrington et. all, 2012), affecting the academic performance much more than cognitive skills (Duckworth, Seligman, 2005). One of the predictors of academic performance, along with cognitive abilities is the level of self-efficacy (Brown, Tramayne, Hoxha, Telander, Fan, & Lent, 2008; Dahl, Bals, & Turi, 2005; Salami & Ogundokun, 2009; De Caroli, Sagone, 2014). Chemers, Hu and Garcia (2001) studied the effects of self-efficacy in academic plan, using the grades obtained by the students, finding a significant correlation between the two variables (Mehjabeen, 2013; Komarraju, Nadler, 2013).

1.2. Self-esteem

One of the promoters of self-esteem concept was William James (1890). He described the concept as a sense of self that depends on how we strive to be and do. The author states that success and achievement of the actions we address depends on what we believe about ourselves (Pajares, Schunk, 2001). Recently researchers have made a proposal according to which self-esteem system works automatically in assessing the likelihood of acceptance versus exclusion by others.

Conclusions of the research conducted by Baccus, Baldwin and Packer (2004) show that self-esteem system stores this information as positive or

negative in association with the Self, and these associations can be modified by the acceptance procedure respectively conditioning. Self-esteem is based on information about own skills compared to others skills. This suggests that self-esteem is rooted in the bonds formed between representations about Self and expectations of positive or negative social feedback (Baccus, Baldwin, Packer, 2004). This is one of the reasons for which self-esteem is included in the social reasons category influencing implicitly academic performance (Baccus, Baldwin, Packer, 2004).

Research shows that there is a significant correlation, positive and moderate relationship between self-esteem and the average of grades (Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf, et al., 2010). Weak correlation is supported by research which postulates that the weak association between self-esteem and academic performance is determined at students with a well pronounced cognitive level, which experience academic success, but with a high level of self-requirement as well as the students with medium level academic skills, but which compensate for their lack through a high general level of self-esteem (Yanti, Hidayatulfathi, Ismarulyusda, Syarif, Nur, Baharudin, 2012).

1.3. Parents support and involvement

An intense pursued aspect recently is the contextual positioning of the individual performance. It is impossible to isolate the individual's ability, controlling environmental characteristics of origin or existence. It is well known that the family, as first social environment of the individual, leaves its mark on the individual self-efficacy through the expectation level and the manner of response to individual behaviors.

The study led by Yanti (2012) shows that the level of parents' education affects the stress levels of pupils / students. Thus, parents with high educational level can relate positively with their children, helping them to cope with stress, whereas students whose parents do not have higher education, have higher levels of stress (Yanti, et. all, 2012).

Likewise, the family environment is the one that provides the first incentives for the child. Gradually the child internalizes them and is encouraged to engage in activities for independent reasons which he sees as important or valuable, interesting and likes engaging fully, obtaining better results (Katz, Madjar, Harari, 2014).

Parental involvement includes numerous activities (Hornby, Lafaele, 2011) such as: listening to children while reading, allocation of special time for the child to discuss outside school matters, for their homework, asking questions

regarding the child's activity at school, conversations with the child's teachers about school work as well as the frequency with which parents express their intent to learn information about the activities the child. Among the benefits of parental involvement in children's lives can include: reducing the frequency of absenteeism unjustified, attitudes, behavior and mental health of children and increased parental confidence (Hornby, Lafaele, 2011).

Support from parents, how it is perceived by students, facilitates emotional and motivational beliefs, which in turn helps improve academic achievement. Students, who describe their parents as supportive, adapt easier in terms of motivational and emotional, feeling less anxiety (Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf, et al., 2010). Researchers also found that parental involvement and support is related with academic achievement to a greater extent than the students' intelligence (Topor, Keane, Shelton & Calkins, 2010).

2. Objective and hypotheses

2.1. Objective

The present research aims to study the effects of parental involvement in child's activity on the decisive variables in achieving success in school, namely the level of self-efficacy, self-esteem and school performance.

The research aims to investigate the existent differences between the level of involvement of both parents (father, mother) and parental support perceived by the child concerning the variables listed above.

2.1.1. Objective 1

To analyze the relationships between the level of parental support, self-efficacy, self-esteem and school performance.

2.1.2. Objective 2

Identifying existing differences between the levels of perceived parental involvement and parental support perceived by the child.

2.2. Hypotheses

1. We assume that there are statistically significant positive relationships between the individual studied variables (level of self-esteem, self-efficacy level, and performance level) and the level of parental involvement and support.
2. We assume that there are significant differences between students from rural and the urban areas in terms of level self-esteem, self-efficacy level and performance level.

3. We assume that there are significant differences in the level of self-esteem, self-efficacy, and performance depending on the involvement level of the mother, father, and perceived support from each parent.

3. Method

3.1. Participants / Subjects

The research was conducted with the participation of 140 students from 6 classes, which are part of three different high schools in Brasov. The lot contains 3 students aged 15 years, 117 students aged 16 years, 131 students aged 17 years, 25 students aged 18 years. Respondents in proportion of 59.2% (83) come from rural areas and 40.8% (57) participants from urban areas, 76.2% (106) are female respondents and 23.8% (34) of respondents are male.

3.2. Instruments

The respondents and their parents were informed regarding the questionnaire and informed consent was obtained from the students' parents. The academic achievement comprises the students' scores and GPA. Also high schools headmaster gave his consent to retrieve students' scores.

3.2.1. Self-esteem

The most used scale to measure self-esteem is Self-Esteem Scale developed by Rosemberg (1965). This indicates whether respondents believe that they possess qualities, are satisfied with themselves and their own achievements (ex. "I feel I am a valuable person, at least the same as other"). Items are scored on a 5-point Likert scale from: 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. Half of the items, 5 of them, are reverse scored (ex. "I wish to respect myself more"). Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained for this scale is .79.

3.2.2. Self - efficacy

It was used a scale containing 8 items (Judge, Bono, 2003), scoring from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Half of the items, 4 of them are scored reverse (ex. "Inside I am a weak person"). Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained for this scale is .83

3.2.3. Parent support and involvement

The questionnaire that measures students' perception regarding the support and involvement from parents is composed of 20 items. It is grouped into four scales, such as the involvement of mother, father involvement, maternal support and paternal support. Students had to choose, between four options, the one that best described their own parents.

There are two dimensions involved in designing the questionnaire: involvement and support. The involvement describes the resources allocated to children as: being available for them, concerned about what happens to them, to know what is going on in their lives, to spend time with their own children. The size of parents support can be described as to which extent parents encourage their children to engage and make their own choices, rather than applying pressure or incentives to control children's behavior (Grolnick, Ryan, So, 1991). Cronbach alpha coefficient obtained for this scale is .81

4. Results

Table 1 shows the relations found between fathers and mothers support, self-esteem and average scores for the compulsory subject averages (Romanian, English, French, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, Biology, History, Geography, Music and Logics) and GPA. The first positive strong correlation is found between fathers and mothers support ($r=0.28$, $p \leq 0.001$). This relation shows that fathers support the involvement and support of the mother, but do not contribute actively, and do not have an impact on their child's academic achievement seeing that there is no other correlation between fathers support and any other variable. As regards mothers support there is a strong and positive relation with self-esteem ($r=0.27$, $p \leq 0.001$). The higher the supportive behaviors of the mother are, the higher the level of self-esteem of the adolescent will have. Self-efficacy is also correlated with mothers supportive behaviors ($r=0.22$, $p \leq 0.001$), which indicates a higher level of self-efficacy of adolescent who have mothers with high supportive behaviors.

Table no. 1

	Mothers Support	Self esteem	Self-efficacy	GPA	Rom	Engl	Fr	Mat	Phy	Chem	Biol	Hist	Geog	Mus	Log
Fathers Support	.28**	.080	.076	.070	.036	.027	-.054	.056	.018	.029	.081	-.064	.067	.000	.121
Mothers Support	1,00	.27**	.22**	.23**	.082	.072	.029	.078	.22**	.18*	.23**	.031	.15*	.047	.17*
Self esteem		1,00	.74**	.053	-.029	.039	-.024	.027	.15*	.026	.023	-.031	.078	-.039	-.006

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Correlations can be found between mothers supportive behaviors and GPA ($r=0.23$, $p\leq 0.001$), Physics ($r=0.22$, $p\leq 0.001$), Chemistry ($r=0.18$, $p\leq 0.05$), Biology ($r=0.23$, $p\leq 0.001$), Geography ($r=0.15$, $p\leq 0.05$) and Logic ($r=0.17$, $p\leq 0.05$). This indicates that students with supportive mothers do better at science. Not the involvement from parents is what makes the difference but rather the support, the step beyond involvement, letting the teen to make his own mistakes, the mothers intuition regarding her child, she feels when something bothers him and knows what he will choose or what he wants.

There were identified significant differences in terms of environment of origin of participants. Thus in significant differences were found regarding overall average in such that the mean scores of respondents from rural areas ($M = 8.68$, $SD = 0.60$) were significantly higher ($t = -2.983$, $df = 138$, $p\leq 0.003$) than the average scores of the participants who reside in urban areas ($M = 8.45$, $SD = 0.69$). In terms of self-esteem, self-efficacy, mother and the father involvement as well as the support from the mother and father, there were not identified significant differences between respondents who reside in the urban areas and those in rural areas (Table No. 2).

Significant differences were found in terms of the disciplines averages of English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Geography. Therefore, in the case of the English Language course, the mean scores of the respondents originating from rural areas ($M = 8.29$, $SD = 1.08$) were significantly higher ($t = -2.448$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.015$) than the mean scores of the participants originating from urban areas ($M = 7.93$, $SD = 1.31$). In the case of the average scores at Mathematical discipline the respondents who come from rural ($M = 7.26$, $SD = 1.54$) have a significantly higher mean scores ($t = -2.795$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.006$) than the scores of participants who come from urban areas ($M = 6.75$, $SD = 1.43$).

Regarding discipline Chemistry the mean scores of the respondents originating from rural areas ($M = 7.54$, $SD = 1.25$) were significantly higher ($t = -2.794$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.006$) than the mean scores of the participants that come from urban areas ($M = 7.08$, $SD = 1.43$). Within the discipline Biology, the mean scores of the respondents originating from rural areas ($M = 9.07$, $SD = 1.01$) were significantly higher ($t = -2.947$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.004$) than the mean scores of participants who come from urban areas ($M = 8.65$, $SD = 1.28$). Regarding the Geography discipline the average scores of the respondents that come from rural areas ($M = 8.10$, $SD = 1.34$) were significantly higher ($t = -2.513$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.013$) than the mean scores of the participants that come from urban areas ($M = 7.67$, $SD = 1.47$). Therefore respondents who reside in rural areas have higher average overall average in

subjects that include English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Geography, than respondents from urban areas.

The level of maternal involvement in participants' lives cause significant differences in terms of self-esteem, Self-efficacy, and the average at Geography discipline. Regarding Self-esteem, the mean scores of the respondents who perceive a involvement above average from the mother ($M = 39.53$, $SD = 6.20$) were significantly higher ($t = 3.295$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.001$) than the mean scores of participants who perceive a below average maternal involvement ($M = 36.85$, $SD = 6.91$).

Regarding Self-efficacy, the mean scores of the respondents who perceive an involvement above average from the mother ($M = 24.66$, $SD = 3.84$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.701$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.008$) than the mean scores of participants who perceive a below average maternal involvement ($M = 23.09$, $SD = 4.95$). Therefore, respondents who perceive mothers as being involved in their lives have a level of self-esteem and self-efficacy significantly higher. Regarding the average scores of the respondents at the Geography discipline, the students who perceive an involvement from the mother above average ($M = 8.08$, $SD = 1.39$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.416$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.016$) than average scores of participants who perceive a below average maternal involvement ($M = 7.65$, $SD = 1.40$). Thus, respondents who perceive an above average maternal involvement have higher average at the Geography discipline.

Table no. 2

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		Environment	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error M
	F	Sig.						Lower	Upper				
	Self-esteem	.263						.608	.901				
										Rural	38.29	6.68	.52
Self-efficacy	.048	.826	.927	138	.355	.490	.528	-.550	1.530	Urban	24.40	4.42	.41
										Rural	23.91	4.25	.33
Mothers involvement	.045	.832	-.746	138	.456	-.221	.296	-.803	.362	Urban	16.76	2.28	.21
										Rural	16.98	2.50	.19

Mothers support	.605	.437	-.720	138	.472	-.238	.330	-.888	.412	Urban	11.82	2.55	.24
										Rural	12.06	2.80	.21
Father involvement	.106	.745	-.640	138	.523	-.324	.507	-1.322	.673	Urban	13.31	4.36	.41
										Rural	13.63	3.99	.31
Fathers support	.374	.542	-.019	138	.985	-.009	.452	-.898	.881	Urban	12.35	3.88	.36
										Rural	12.35	3.55	.27
GPA	2.272	.133	-2.983	138	.003	-.233	.078	-.3883	-.079	Urban	8.45	.69	.06
										Rural	8.68	.60	.04
Romanian	2.135	.145	-.518	138	.605	-.076	.148	-.368	.215	Urban	8.42	1.28	.12
										Rural	8.50	1.15	.09
English	6.542	.011	-2.448	138	.015	-.354	.144	-.639	-.069	Urban	7.93	1.31	.12
										Rural	8.29	1.08	.08
French	1.099	.295	-.321	138	.748	-.058	.183	-.420	.302	Urban	7.43	1.45	.13
										Rural	7.49	1.52	.11
Mathematics	1.882	.171	-2.795	138	.006	-.513	.183	-.874	-.151	Urban	6.75	1.43	.13
										Rural	7.26	1.54	.12
Physics	.769	.381	-.587	138	.558	-.080	.136	-.348	.188	Urban	7.25	1.15	.10
										Rural	7.33	1.09	.08
Chemistry	3.830	.051	-2.794	138	.006	-.454	.162	-.774	-.134	Urban	7.08	1.43	.13
										Rural	7.54	1.25	.09
Biology	12.800	.000	-2.947	138	.004	-.426	.144	-.711	-.141	Urban	8.65	1.28	.12
										Rural	9.07	1.01	.08
History	2.588	.109	-.953	138	.342	-5.909	6.202	-18.119	6.300	Urban	8.25	1.33	.12
										Rural	14.16	65.88	5.14
Geography	2.329	.128	-2.513	138	.013	-.429	.170	-.766	-.093	Urban	7.67	1.47	.139
										Rural	8.10	1.34	.104

The level of involvement from the father in participants' lives determines significant differences in terms of Self-esteem, in such the mean scores of the respondents who perceive a paternal involvement above average ($M = 39.28$, $SD = 6.80$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.013$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.045$) than the mean scores of participants who perceive a below average paternal

involvement ($M = 37.68$, $SD = 6.18$). Respondents who perceive their fathers as involved in their lives have a level of self-esteem significantly higher.

The level of support from the mother determines significant differences in terms of Self-esteem, Self-efficacy, GPA and the average scores at Physics, Chemistry, and Biology. Regarding Self-esteem the mean scores of the respondents who perceive a support above average from the mother ($M = 39.56$, $SD = 6.45$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.945$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.004$) than the mean scores of participants who perceive a below average maternal support ($M = 37.23$, $SD = 6.54$). Regarding Self-efficacy the mean scores of the respondents who perceive a support above average from the mother ($M = 24.70$, $SD = 4.15$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.755$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.006$) than the mean scores of participants who perceived support below average from the mother ($M = 23.27$, $SD = 4.42$). Therefore, respondents who perceive mothers as being supportive have a level of self-esteem and self-efficacy significantly higher.

Regarding GPA average scores of the respondents who perceive a support above average from the mother ($M = 8.68$, $SD = 0.59$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.964$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.003$) than the mean scores of participants who perceive a below average maternal support ($M = 8.45$, $SD = 0.70$). Thus, respondents who perceive their mothers as being supportive have above average overall GPA scores. Regarding the average scores at the Physics discipline the mean scores of the respondents who perceive a maternal support above average ($M = 7.44$, $SD = 1.06$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.533$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.012$) than average scores of the other participants ($M = 7.10$, $SD = 1.15$). In the case of the average scores at the Chemistry discipline the mean scores of the respondents who perceive a maternal support above average ($M = 7.49$, $SD = 1.28$) were significantly higher ($t = 2.059$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.040$) than the mean scores of the other group ($M = 7.16$, $SD = 1.41$). Regarding the average at the discipline Biology the mean scores of respondents who perceive a maternal support above average ($M = 9.11$, $SD = 0.99$) were significantly higher ($t = 3.593$, $df = 138$, $p = 0.000$) than average scores of the second group ($M = 8.60$, $SD = 1.28$). Therefore, respondents who perceive their mothers as being supportive have the average scores at Physics, Chemistry and Biology significantly higher than respondents who perceive their mothers as less supportive. The perceived level of support from the father experienced by the participants does not determine any significant difference.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationships between parental support and the level of self-efficacy, self-esteem and school performance, and to identify the existing differences between the levels of perceived parental involvement and parental support perceived by the child. The results indicate a link between the support of father and the involvement, the support provided by the mother. In other words, the father is not actively involved directly in supporting the child, but rather indirectly through support giving to the mother. Therefore, as the mother offers more support and involvement, the child level of self-esteem and self-efficacy will be higher. The father involvement in the participants' lives determines a higher level of self-esteem.

The involvement and support of parents do not cause significant differences in self-esteem and self-efficacy between students who come from urban areas and the rural. Instead significant differences were found between these two groups in the level performance in the subjects as: English, Mathematics, Chemistry, Biology and Geography. The level of maternal support determines a significant increase in terms of the level self-esteem, self-efficacy, general average, the averages in Physics, Chemistry and Biology to all participants, while support from the father does not cause any significant improvement. It is possible that a more detailed analysis will find factors that influence the motivation to engage in learning such as: material resources available, actions of parents with their children in non-formal and informal learning activities. This is why we consider necessary to continue this research with a broader spectrum of actions and family activities that can influence self-esteem, self-efficacy and academic achievement of students.

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COMPARATIVE LITERATURE CLASSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION. A CASE STUDY

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Abstract. *The study of comparative literature is a major component of the Philology curriculum in higher education in Romania. As the main objectives of the comparative courses and seminars are cross-cultural and interdisciplinary aspects of literature, students may have difficulty in dealing with comparative literature issues. The article aims to investigate Philology students' perceptions of comparative literature classes from various angles, such as syllabus content, teaching methods and strategies used during courses and seminars, and learners' awareness of the role of comparative literature in developing their cultural knowledge and critical thinking. The analysis of these perceptions may serve as a good starting point for designing effective comparative literature classes, helping instructors in their endeavour to give students a better understanding and appreciation of this academic subject.*

Keywords: *comparative literature, students' perceptions, active learning, motivation, higher education*

1. Paper Rationale

Given the fact that the study of comparative literature is an important component of the Philology curriculum in higher education, the paper tries to assess the impact of comparative literature classes on Philology students. Considering that learners' perceptions are a good barometer of the teaching and learning process, the goal of the research is to identify problem areas and provide suggestions for improving the quality of the instructional process and for stimulating students' interest in comparative literature classes.

2. Theoretical foundation and related literature

Being an intercultural and transnational academic field which explores relations between literatures, or the dialogue of literature with other disciplines, arts and cultural forms, comparative literature exposes students to the "broadest possible picture of human response to perennial issues" (Scollon R. and Scollon S., 2002, p. 1). In other words, the main goal of

comparative literature classes is to acquaint students with broad intertextual perspectives and develop their skills to make comparisons and connections across literatures and cultures in all periods of history.

According to Carter and Long, literature teaching “embraces a particular set of learning objectives for the student of literature”, objectives which they define as “the cultural model, the language model and the personal growth model” (1991, p. 2-3). As far as the teaching of comparative literature is concerned, all the three models are applicable to the instructional process to different degrees. In the light of the cultural model, the study of comparative literature proves to be invaluable to students from many points of view. Thus, it provides them with knowledge about the literatures and cultures of the world, especially about the circulation of themes, motifs, symbols, myths and movements from one country to another in different time periods. Moreover, comparative literature studies enable learners to investigate the interconnectedness of literary works and the historical, social and cultural contexts in which they were created, helping them to understand how ideas are generated and how they are artistically shaped. Due to the fact that comparative literature is cross-disciplinary, students have a great opportunity to deepen their knowledge by exploring topics across different areas of study in a meaningful learning experience.

As regards the language model, it should be noted that the purpose of comparative literature does not overlap with the one of the second language acquisition classes where literature serves as an instrument for teaching grammar and vocabulary skills (Carter and Long, 1991; Lazar, 1993; Carter and McRae, 1996). However, language awareness and even stylistic analysis may be beneficial to students’ learning, especially because the comparative approach requires the use of original texts in at least two distinct languages. In order to recognize the linguistic features of a text, grasp its hidden meanings and make valid interpretations, students need solid knowledge of foreign languages which they have to put into practice during the comparative process. Apart from that, translation itself may become an object of study if students are interested in comparing, for instance, published translations of literary works, or in examining theoretical problems related to translation.

And finally, it is the specificity of this discipline that favours students’ personal growth and fulfilment. By introducing learners to a wide range of texts, ideas and art forms, the study of comparative literature enriches their aesthetic and cultural experiences, and expands their knowledge of the world contributing to the development of their intellectual, emotional, social and behavioural competencies. Furthermore, if students’ interaction with the texts is supported by their interaction with other fellow students in classes carefully designed by the teacher, their motivation for learning increases

because, as Retallack and Spahr emphasize, “the collaborative making of meaning that is possible in a classroom is at its most productive and enlivening in an intertextual, conversational milieu” (2006, p. 7) which may lead to the formation of durable learning habits.

It should be added that in the case of comparative literature the three approaches discussed above operate convergently within an integrated learning model whose major purpose is to “connect learning across subjects, between contexts, and over time” (Huber, 2015, p. 15). As the students of comparative literature have to assimilate and process complex information from different literatures, cultures and disciplines, they need to have a wide variety of skills that range from literary to interdisciplinary and cross-cultural abilities. Taking into consideration Galik’s concept of interliterariness defined as “the basic and essential quality of literature in an international and inter-ethnic context” (2003, p. 34), it can be said that interliterary or intercultural skills and knowledge represent the kinds of competencies needed by the student of comparative literature who, in brief, is expected to:

- trace and compare the evolution of literary themes, genres and movements across time and space;
- relate literary and artistic works to their historical and cultural context;
- examine the influence of arts and other cultural expressions on literary works;
- analyse the response of literature to theories and ideas from other fields (philosophy, anthropology, history, gender studies, etc.);
- compare literary texts from different cultural contexts and historical periods;
- perform comparative analyses of texts from various media;
- examine an issue from a multitude of perspectives;
- synthesize concepts and ideas from different sources;
- have knowledge of various theoretical approaches and apply them to the texts;
- perform critical reading, using critical terminology appropriately;
- apply the conceptual tools of the comparative method to the texts;
- construct valuable comparative arguments.
- appreciate cultural differences and diversity;

The fact that comparative literature attaches great attention to cross-cultural issues does not mean that it incorporates the object of study of other cultural disciplines that are part of the philology curriculum. In spite of its openness to other fields, comparative literature places emphasis on “literariness”, that is, the specific features of literary works, but works which are culturally determined. As Tomo Virk argues, the comparative approach means “the investigation of specific, immanent literariness and

connectedness of literature with culture and society” (2003, p. 14). Consequently, a crucial step of the instructional process is to develop specific literary skills that students need in order to understand and critically analyse a literary text before identifying and investigating its relations with other cultural discourses. As Domínguez et al. state, “The teaching of literature has to partake of a constant effort to recuperate the phenomenological basis of the literary fact, that is to say, the relation of the reader to the text. From the moment such a relation weakens, or even disappears, any teaching of literature will become absurd.” (2015, p. 177) As the comparative analysis is not possible in the absence of the personal experience with the text, learners are expected to demonstrate complex literary skills, such as the ability to recognize the formal and structural elements of the text, to comprehend and interpret implied meanings, to contextualize the text from a cultural and historical point of view, to understand how literary texts respond to various theories and artistic expressions, etc. In other words, the act of reading literature is a complex process involving a cognitive and emotional relationship between the student and the text, or, to cite Brumfit and Carter, it is “a process of meaning-creation by integrating one’s own needs, understanding, and expectations with a written text” (1986, p. 23).

Nevertheless, the focus on the text with a view to highlighting the intrinsic qualities of literary works does not automatically imply the use of a comparative approach, which normally requires supplementary skills to the literary ones. As a matter of fact, what the learner need is to be guided by “the comparative reflex”, which means “a comparative way of thinking” (Saussy, 2006, p. 5) based on the concepts and methodologies specific to the field. Concretely, the student of comparative literature should be able to:

- identify and analyse attested relations such as sources and influences, which Galik calls “relations in the genetic-contact field” (2003, p. 37);
- find and describe analogies, defined as “structural-typological affinities” or parallel studies (Galik, 2003, p. 38), which do not necessarily imply evidence of influences;
 - compare and contrast multicultural aspects;
 - process and interpret concepts and ideas from interdisciplinary perspectives.

According to Shunqing Cao (2013), cross-civilisation studies are directly connected with what he calls the variation theory. If the study of influences and analogies deals with “transnational and interdisciplinary comparisons” whose major purpose is to “seek commonness”, the variation theory proposed by the Chinese scholar favours heterogeneity or variation as a source of the comparative approach. In this context, the act of comparing signifies “to discover the differences out of similarities and the similarities

out of the differences of various literatures” (Cao, 2013, p. xxi). As the two approaches constitute the specific objectives of comparative literature, students should be familiar with exploring not only the common features of the investigated phenomena, but also with the differences between literature and other disciplines or cultural forms.

3. Methodology

The purpose of the research: to assess Philology students’ perceptions of comparative literature classes in order to improve teaching strategies and stimulate their motivation for comparative literature courses and seminars.

The objectives of the research:

O1: identifying students’ opinions about the comparative literature syllabus;

O2: identifying students’ views on the effectiveness of the teaching methods and strategies used in courses and seminars.

The hypothesis of the research: as the study of comparative literature classes requires a wide range of skills, learners may perceive such classes as discouraging, unappealing and even useless. The analysis of students’ perceptions may help the instructor to improve his course design and seminar activities in order to enhance learner motivation for studying comparative literature.

Description of the instruments

The research was based on a questionnaire that included 10 items, out of which 8 were a mixture of semi-open and closed questions, and 2 were closed. These questions were meant to investigate Philology students’ opinions about the effectiveness of comparative literature courses and seminars, and their awareness of the role of the discipline in the development of their cultural knowledge.

Target group

The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 75 respondents specializing in Philology at the Faculty of Letters and Sciences within the Petroleum – Gas University of Ploiesti. All participants in the research attended the Comparative Literature courses and seminars in the second year of study.

4. Results and discussion

The survey questions refer to both components of the instructional process, courses and seminars. Thus, as seen in table no. 1, the majority of the respondents (69.33%) have a favourable opinion about the comparative literature courses, their arguments showing that they are aware of the formative role of this academic discipline. What they appreciate most of all is that such courses offer them the opportunity to broaden and deepen their

knowledge by getting them acquainted with the great works of world literature and the major issues of the Humanities. They also believe that discussing literature in broad contexts across time periods and geographical areas may enrich their way of seeing the world. On the other hand, only 30.67% of the respondents dislike comparative literature courses. Their reasons are various but the most significant one is that they consider the subjects representing their specialty (Romanian and English) more important than the other subjects of the curriculum. Moreover, the study of the relation between literature and spheres of knowledge with which they are completely unfamiliar is perceived as unattractive and difficult to understand. In their opinion, sophisticated information beyond their capacity of comprehension will be of no help in the future.

Table no. 1

Q1. How do you find the information presented during your comparative literature courses? Justify your answer.	
Interesting	69.33%
Not interesting	30.67%

As regards the respondents' opinions about the comparative literature seminars, the percentages shown in table no. 2 do not differ significantly from the ones in table no. 1. Nevertheless, the percentage of the students (74.66%) who prefer the comparative literature seminars is slightly higher than the one corresponding to the learners who appreciate the courses (69.33%). This may be explained by the interactive nature of the seminars and the fact that the frontal teaching style characteristic of most lecture courses is rarely used. As students' answers testify, seminars are appreciated because they have the opportunity to discuss the readings and solve certain tasks, which are designed to facilitate the understanding of the material required by the syllabus. One activity that they particularly enjoy is the oral presentation of topics either imposed by the teacher or chosen by students, their preference for such a task being justified by their tendency to read less than required ("in this way you can learn useful things about varied authors without having to read them").

Table no. 2

Q2. Do you find your comparative literature seminars interesting? Justify your answer.	
Yes	74.66%
No	25.34%

The percentages shown in tables no. 3 and 4 reinforce the findings discussed above. Comparing students' involvement in the learning process during courses and seminars, the results reveal that 50.67% of the students believe that courses do not encourage their participation in the class, whereas 52.00% of them consider that seminars provide them with such an opportunity. Nevertheless, the proportion of learners (49.33%) who admit that active learning techniques are "often" and "sometimes" used during courses is also significant because it demonstrates that lectures are not always perceived as a one-sided process during which students have to pay attention to the instructor's authoritative figure and take notes almost mechanically, without processing the information presented in the classroom.

Table no. 3

Q3. How frequently do your teachers use active learning strategies in comparative literature courses?	
Often	12.00%
Sometimes	37.33%
Never	50.67%

Table no. 4

Q4. How frequently do your teachers use active learning strategies in comparative literature seminars?	
Often	52.00%
Sometimes	38.67%
Never	9.33%

Further details about students' perceptions of comparative literature classes were provided by question five: *What do you most dislike about your comparative literature courses and seminars?* The majority of their answers converge on the idea that the syllabus is overloaded and the time allocated for the readings is not sufficient. In addition, some learners are of the opinion that lectures are sometimes fast-paced making their note-taking difficult while others believe that some of the texts discussed during seminars are too complicated for them to understand. It should also be noted that some learners dislike frequent interruptions to the lecture, especially when their classmates ask the teacher to explain simple issues or initiate discussions as a pretext to enjoy "a short break". They consider that paying attention to the teachers' speech and scrupulous note-taking will spare them from searching for a lot of material in the future.

Question six was meant to reveal students' awareness of effective teaching in both cases, courses and seminars: *What teaching strategies should be*

adopted by instructors to stimulate your interest in comparative literature courses and seminars? Justify your point of view. Except for a small number of learners who suggested general ideas about how classes should be (“the teacher should conceive an interesting lecture”, “the course should be based on important information”, “the content of the course should be useful”), the majority of the respondents provided specific answers which prove that they have clear ideas about the effectiveness of comparative literature classes. The responses referring to courses are summarized as follows: the teacher should use handouts, slides and audio-visual aids on a regular basis to facilitate the understanding of the presentation, the teacher should allow time for students to complete their notes, the teacher should ask questions throughout the lecture to check whether learners have understood the most difficult points, class discussions should be initiated more often because they stimulate students’ reflection on the information presented by the teacher, complex issues should be simplified into understandable ideas, etc. As far as seminar classes are concerned, most respondents admit that they have a high degree of interest in their classes if they are participatory. In their opinion, seminars based on interactive activities, such as debates or any kind of collaborative work, lead to a deeper understanding of the texts proposed for analysis, particularly the difficult ones, as they increase the opportunities in which students can consult each other to clarify ideas and learn from each other. The use of reading comprehension strategies is also seen as beneficial because they help learners to develop their ability to deal with literary texts.

Students’ opinions about the tasks required for comparative literature classes were highlighted by question seven: *Which assignments do you find useful for improving your creative skills? Justify your answer.* Most respondents believe that the assignments involving self-study, such as the oral presentation of the readings in a seminar and writing essays on cross-cultural topics, are very useful because they have the opportunity to put their learning into practice and evaluate the skills gained from the comparative study. Other students argue that the projects required for both seminars and courses are challenging because they have to apply information to context, discover the connections of literature with other forms of art and culture, and demonstrate their ability to critically analyse texts from different literatures.

With respect to the respondents’ attitude towards reading, table no. 5 shows that the books required for courses and seminars are not read in a satisfactory proportion. Significant percentages of students (42.67% and 41.33%) read fewer books than required, invoking various reasons, such as an overloaded timetable that does not allow extra time for reading, a great number of authors that have to be studied, and even the fact that students cannot cope with multiple tasks and priorities (*i.e.*, they have to read for other disciplines, too).

Table no. 5

Q8. To what extent do you read the bibliography required for comparative literature classes? Justify your answer.	
I read it all	13.33%
I read it partially	41.33%
I read a few books	42.67%
I don't read anything	2,67%

According to table no. 6, a high percentage of the respondents (70.67%) view comparative literature as a foundation for other literary and cultural studies. They consider that the knowledge and skills acquired during their comparative literature classes can help them better understand the works of the Romanian and English writers, particularly because they may study themes and ideas common to these literatures and because the comparative perspective may deepen their understanding of the literary works. At the same time, only 29.33% of the students have an opposite opinion motivating that they do not find it necessary to apply the information about the literatures of the world to the study of other academic subjects.

Table no. 6

Q9. Do comparative literature classes help you with the study of other subject areas of the curriculum? Justify your answer.	
Yes	70.67%
No	29.33%

As seen in table no. 7, a large proportion of respondents (74.67%) maintain that the study of world literature and culture is essential for their future career. In their opinion, being a good teacher of Romanian or English requires not only solid knowledge of these disciplines but also a broad cultural horizon and the ability to make connections between literature and other fields in order to make students better understand the linguistic and literary issues that are taught to them. In addition, they believe that an interdisciplinary approach to teaching languages can meet the requirements of today's society in a globalized context. On the other hand, 25.33% of the respondents believe that the knowledge and skills gained through the study of comparative literature will not help them in careers that do not involve classroom teaching or education in general. As a result, they prefer narrow specialized studies to the global perspectives of comparative literature.

Table no. 7

Q10. Do you find comparative literature classes useful for your future career? Justify your answer.	
Yes	74.67%
No	25.33%

All in all, it can be said that the high percentages shown in table no. 2, 6 and 7 represent the dominant tendency of the respondents' perceptions, reflecting their favourable opinions on comparative literature as a discipline of the Philology curriculum.

5. Conclusion

The findings contradict the research hypothesis and lead to the conclusion that the large majority of the respondents have a consistently positive attitude towards comparative literature classes. They are fully aware of the educational role of the discipline in broadening their cultural horizons and appreciate its contribution to their intellectual formation as future teachers. Only a small percentage of learners consider that the study of comparative literature is not necessarily useful, their conviction being explained by the fact that they intend to pursue other career paths which, in their opinion, do not require the knowledge and skills acquired through such studies.

It is also worth mentioning that, irrespective of the learners' attitude towards comparative literature, most of them tend to perceive lecturing as a traditional teaching method and the seminars, which mainly focus on student interaction and debate, as more attractive than courses. Given this fact, instructors should adopt a series of effective teaching strategies to improve the quality of the lecture-based courses. First, using active learning strategies on a regular basis may better motivate students to engage in the learning process. Second, as learners feel uncomfortable when they are exposed to dense information, which sometimes seems to be well beyond their capacities, restructuring the syllabus content according to the principles of clarity and accessibility may enhance the effectiveness of lectures. Furthermore, reducing the list of themes and authors in order to favour in-depth studies can be a solution to motivating students to learning. Third, relating the content to students' knowledge and experience as well as encouraging their participation in the selection of the readings can be fruitful ways to stimulate their enthusiasm about comparative literature.

Many other strategies could be added to the list, but the central idea is that a teaching style based on active learning and students' involvement in the instructional process is the key to teaching comparative literature effectively and making them fully aware of the fact that the knowledge and skills gained through these studies will be of great help not only in the teaching profession

but also in any other field that requires the ability to understand cultural diversity.

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QUALITATIVE STUDY REGARDING THE PERCEPTION OF DIRECT PARTICIPANTS IN LEARNING ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT IN THE CONTEXT OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS ERASMUS

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Abstract. *The effort to update educational standards and learning outcomes is in the heart of EU's policies for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Erasmus + programme for education is an effective instrument for promoting the celebrated principle of lifelong learning through non-formal experiential activities that fall under the pattern of project-based learning and enhance the skills and competences of young people through synergies and cooperation in a multicultural setting. The present study is based on focus-group interviews, as a means of qualitative data collection, and explores the first hand experience of teachers and students from seven different countries who have participated in an Erasmus+ strategic partnership. The study navigates through the personal experiences of the participants and offers full view of their perception of their involvement in the project.*

Keywords: ERASMUS +, project-based learning, non-formal education

1.Introduction-The architecture of project-based pedagogy

The context against which young people today are called upon to build a career for themselves, fulfill their potentials and lead a satisfying life has irrevocably changed and is constantly reshaping. In the context of globalization the knowledge, skills and aptitudes of the European workforce

are a major factor in the European Union's innovation, productivity and competitiveness. The rapid pace of change and the continuous development of new technologies mean that Europeans must not only keep their specific job-related skills up-to-date, but also possess the generic competences that will enable them to manage change (Education and training, 2010; Work programme, 2008). Modern, knowledge-based economies require people with higher and more relevant skills.

Students are faced with a future that demands their coping with a complex, competitive working environment where skills are tested and constantly updated. Today's rapidly changing world needs to employ individuals who are able to collaborate, research ideas, collect, synthesize and analyze information. New, competitive products will need to be developed, new ideas tested and prior knowledge will need to be applied on new problems and challenges (Barron, Darling-Hammond, 2008). Information and communication technology is transforming the nature of work and social relationships. In all forms of career, success lies in effective communication, problem solving, adaptability, innovation and most importantly team work (Binkley et al., 2010). The demand for these twenty-first century skills call for their development as early as school age. Since their future lies in their ability to work within a team demonstrating high order thinking, reasoning, collaboration and accountability (P.Griffinet al, 2010), students need to be "pedagogized" in developing these skills along with content knowledge.

Most importantly, students need to be taught that learning is a lifelong process and even if they can be explicitly taught skills and knowledge at school, they will benefit from learning opportunities only if they grow a disposition for consciously initiating the learning process and then regulate it themselves. Self-directed learners are more likely to succeed academically and view their futures optimistically (Zimmerman, 2002). According to Fullan and Langworthy (2014), the ultimate goal is interdependent learners who have the abilities, dispositions and experiences to truly make the most of the extraordinary world of information, ideas, creativity and connection that digital access opens up. To develop the higher-order skills they now need, individuals must engage in meaningful enquiry-based learning that has genuine value and relevance for them personally and their communities (Scott, 2015).

Project-based learning, a pedagogy that has evolved from the influence of such people in history as Aristotle, Socrates, Confucius, Dewey, Montessori, Piaget or Vygotsky, emerges as an inquiry-based approach to learning centered on the idea that knowledge and comprehension are formed by the learner, and grows out of previous experience (Loyens&Rikers, 2011). It is a pedagogy that teaches a multiple of skills and strategies and

harvests the benefits of inquiry-based and cooperative learning to help students develop the knowledge and twenty-first century skills necessary to be successful in a rapidly changing world (Bell, 2010).

PBL increases long-term retention of content, leads to equivalent or superior performance than traditional learners in high-stakes tests, improves problem-solving and collaboration skills, and improves students' attitudes towards learning (Strobel & van Barneveld, 2009; Walker & Leary, 2009).

Reviewing their research on Inquiry-Based and Cooperative Learning, Barron and Darling-Hammond (2008) report that:

- ✚ Students learn more deeply when they can apply classroom-gathered knowledge to real-world problems, and when they to take part in projects that require sustained engagement and collaboration;

- ✚ There is a positive impact on learning when students participate in lessons that require them to construct and organize knowledge, consider alternatives, engage in detailed research, inquiry, writing, and analysis, and to communicate effectively to audiences;

- ✚ Active learning practices have a more significant impact on student performance than any other variable, including student background and prior achievement;

- ✚ Students who may struggle in traditional instructional settings have often been found to excel when they work in a PBL context;

- ✚ Students are most successful when they are taught how to learn as well as what to learn.

The benefits of Project-based learning and its merit as a lifelong learning instrument cannot be ignored. Nor can the need for innovative, informed and well-orchestrated mediation in the schooling of the future democratic, European citizens. In the midst of socio-economic crisis affecting European countries, meeting challenges like population growth, unemployment, early school leaving and inactivity has become a key concern of European policy.

Erasmus + programmes for education is an effective instrument for promoting the principle of lifelong learning through non-formal experiential activities that fall well under the pattern of Project-based learning as they motivate them and make learning meaningful and enhance the skills and competences of young people through synergies and cooperation in a multicultural setting. It is exactly this multicultural setting that dispenses a European added value to the Erasmus+ projects. It reflects a broader European relevance and significance of the experience and consolidates knowledge, skills and attitudes aligned to the profile of the participatory, democratic European citizen. What's more, it renews the students' appreciation for the learning process and contributes to the increase of effectiveness and attractiveness of education provided in European schools.

II. Perception of teachers and students participating in learning activities of strategic partnerships ERASMUS +

This study was conducted between November 2015 and February 2016, in the context of the ERASMUS +, KA2 “UNESCO Heritage”2014-2016 project, code number: 2014-1-RO01-KA201-002437 involving public schools of secondary education from seven partner countries: National College "Liviu Rebreanu", Bistrița, Romania, Hasan Şadoğlu Mesleki ve Teknik Anadolu Lisesi, Istanbul, Turkey, 6th Gymnasio of Heraklion , Greece, Turističko – Ugoditeljska škola, Split, Croatia, Instituto Istruzione Superiore Castelnuovo Ne Monti, Italy, Základní škola Ostrava, Czeck Republic, Agrupamento de Escolas Dr.Mário Sacramento, Aveiro, Portugal.

The interviews were managed by teachers from the project implementation teams and were addressed to 93 persons, direct beneficiaries of learning-teaching-training activities in partner countries.

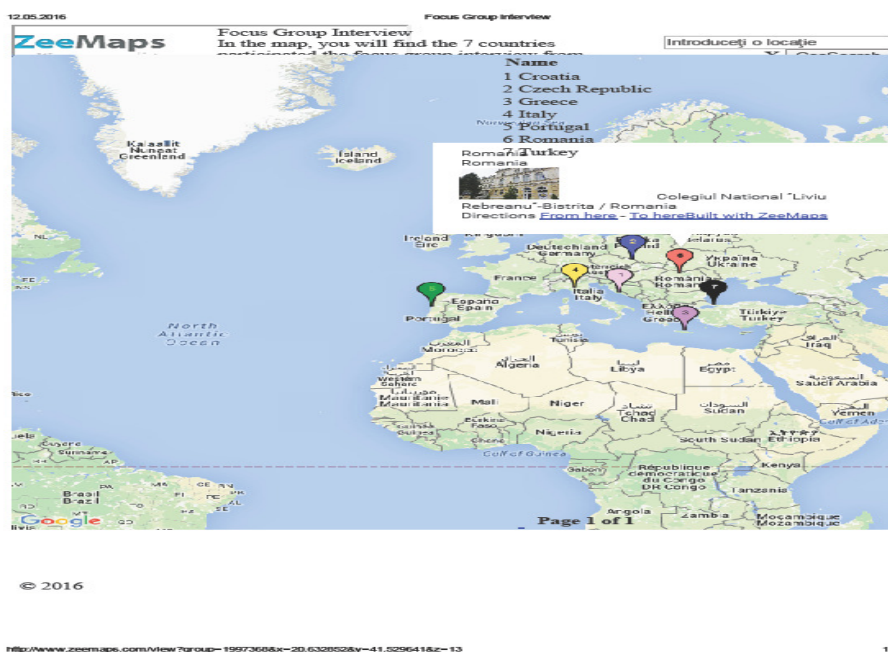


Figure 1-Distribution of participants at focus-group interviews by the independent variable: geographical location

The first focus group interview was applied to a total of 53 students aged between 13-18 years with 36 female students, 17 male students and 8 students from single-parent families; the second one was applied to a total of 40 teachers aged between 25-63 years with 27 female teachers and 13 male teachers.

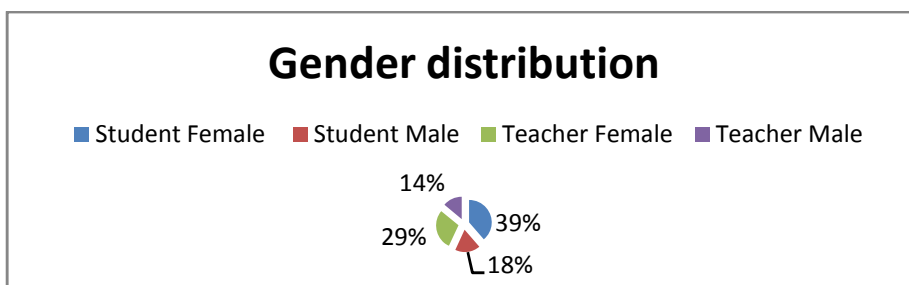


Figure 2-Gender distribution

11 key questions were addressed to all respondents, students and teachers in a joint interview, in every partner country. The analysis of their answers focuses on two categories, teachers and students, and presents the following results, in a comparative way:

At first question "What needs, worries and expectations did you have when you started this Erasmus + project?" the majority of teachers highlighted the following key needs: new cognitive experiences, lifelong learning, contact and collaboration with people from different cultures and civilizations. They have considered such a project to be an opportunity to learn how to respond to new challenges, but it was also perceived as a personal and professional challenge. On the other hand, students' expectations focused more on meeting new people, exploring new traditions and cultures and improving their grasp of the English language: *"First I expected that this would be a great experience, that we would meet people from all over the world"* (HR-S1), *"I wanted to learn about other countries, their traditions and culture, meet new children and make friends."* (GR-S3).

The main concerns of teachers have been:

- Difficulties regarding communicating in the English language;
- Fear of not meeting the project demands and failing to rise to the expectations of the project partners;
 - Fears related to organization, collaboration, and the challenge of balancing cultural elements from 7 different countries;
 - Fears concerning students' participation in mobilities;
 - Loss of personal free time and social life..

For students their main doubts have been:

- *Their level of proficiency in the English language;
- *Adapting at a new life and culture, because for some of them it was first time that had ever been abroad- *"it was the first time that I went abroad and I was worried about being able to feel comfortable in a family with different culture, language and habits."* (IT-S4);

*The host families, their traditions and food habits.

Main and common expectations of the project have been:

- ✚ To acquire a better understanding of educational system from other countries;
- ✚ To improve intercultural dialogue and relations;
- ✚ To know and understand more about the life and culture of partner countries;
- ✚ To deepen their knowledge about heritage of own country and partner countries;
- ✚ To open new life horizons for students;
- ✚ Personal and professional development;
- ✚ Socialisation and new friendships.

Data analysis showed that not just many students, but also many teachers had never been involved in a European project before and a part of them had never been in a foreign country: *"I have never been a part of such a project before and it was the greatest teaching experience in my teaching life."* (T3-TR), *"It was one of the most enjoyable and unforgettable experiences in my teaching career"* (T2-TR).

At second question "In which way has the experience of such a project influenced you, what changes has it brought into your life and on what level?", many respondents, teachers and students, mentioned that it was an extraordinary experience both on a professional and a personal level. Students, especially, regarded the experience as *"one of the best in their lives"* or *"the most unforgettable one"* because it has generated many positive changes as:

- Becoming more organised, more confident, more patient and tolerant;
- Level of communication in English and teaching skills and competences have been considerably renewed and improved;
- Many prejudices, misconceptions and stereotypes have been removed- *"I had some prejudgements. But now, these prejudgements were broken."* (T6-TR);
- Becoming more sensitive to heritage conservation issues, more receptive to new things and changes, more cooperative, communicative and extrovert;
- Improved competences such as risk taking, assuming roles and responsibilities, accountability and making good use of resources and help available;
- Becoming more receptive to new educational methods and strategies;
- Eliminated issues that were previously considered a problem, like the fear of airplane travel.

The strong points of using project-based learning in school and out-of-school during the project have been:

- extending comfort borders and reaching beyond comfort area;
- developing and exercising ability for positive thinking, ability to identify, to accept and manage fears and challenges;
- developing positive attitudes for working in interdisciplinary and intercultural teams;
- providing an opportunity to lead students to learn how to cope with real life situations while establishing good rapport with them in a semi-formal or informal context where teachers and students can change roles. The establishment of positive climate was highlighted.

“It has been a meaningful experience for a lot of reasons: it has deepened the relationship with my students as we spent time together in a context that was cultural but not too formal; it has given me the chance to observe my students in a different and unusual context and to see how they managed the situation” (T1-IT)

Also, the respondents identified two points of weakness:

- ✚ complex and concentrated activities;
- ✚ demanding and strenuous activities.

Regarding question number 3 *“Which were the most appreciated and the most useful activities, proposals and moments regarding your personal life as well as your professional orientation and development?”* both categories of respondents found that the most important activities and opportunities, in terms of utility, have been:

- “Creation of Logo“project and interactive maps because these motivated students to work together;
- Workshops because their context involved both students and teachers in the learning process *“...it's nice to see that teachers know how to approach by ludic”* (T3-RO);
- Visiting UNESCO monuments in different countries and **in-situ learning**-*“...visiting impressive places leaves a print in the mind and enriches it with something that they will not forget, because learning is not through the words written in a book but through the eyes.”* (T1-IT);
- Presentation of UNESCO monuments. *“Presenting tangible heritages were the most interesting moments I had ever experienced before”* (T6-TR);
- Meeting new people and intercultural activities. *“In terms of personal life was the most useful insight into another culture from another perspective than as a tourist”* (T2-CZ);
- Communication in English language-*“For me, now English has become a must in my life.”* (T6-TR);

• Learning sessions as mobility in partner countries, especially as **hosting** students and teachers-*"The most striking experience was being the host country!"* (T2-TR).

For question number 4 *"What are the main capabilities, abilities and knowledge you have developed and improved during your learning experiences in this project?"* respondents have considered that learning experiences of the ERASMUS + project have generated improvement and development of:

- Communication in English language;
- ICT skills;
- Cultural awareness, tolerance and respect for diversity;
- Team working and attention to details;
- Time management and respect for deadlines and project requirements;
- Adapting and responding to new situations;
- Planning and managing learning activities;
- Knowledge about UNESCO heritage and legal framework for national heritage;
- Social entrepreneurship skills;
- Project writing and implementation;
- Changing of personal perspectives.

For question number 5 *"What difficulties, unpleasant or unwanted aspects have you encountered during the implementation of this project, at school or during the learning sessions in the partner countries?"* "the main difficulties identified by teachers were found to be:

- Communication in English language and writing articles in English language;
- Identification of members for implementation teams at national level and their motivation-*"In my school I found a big difficulty: the small number of members of my team"* (T2-IT);
- Preparing mobilities that take a lot of time out of compulsory working time in school;
- Finding a balance between personal life, time and effort that have been necessary for project implementation-*"I had difficulties in conciliating my professional life with the required time to accomplish all the tasks concerning the project."* (T2-PR);
- Excessive bureaucracy-*"Bureaucracy is a very big part of the unwanted aspects of this project. Starting from writing the application to implementing it, there should be less complex procedures."* (T4-GR);

▪ Management of fear and insecurity of parents-*“What may need closer attention is the management of the fears and insecurities of the parents regarding their children’s stay in a foreign family.”* (T6-GR).

Most of the students stated that they had barely or almost no problems or difficulties. They were “quite pleased with everything”. Similar to teachers, they had difficulties in using the English language for communication *“It was difficult to speak English all the time to be part of the group.”* (IT-S6), and admittedly, the **age gap** between the students was a challenge for some of them, when hosting *“The age difference was also made more apparent during that time. It worked fine though with some effort”* (GR-S4);

For question number 6 *“If the whole experience of this project was to be repeated, what would you change, what else would you have done but did not do?”*, a big part of the respondent teachers mentioned that they would not change anything, but a part of them pointed that they would change the demands of bureaucracy *“the bureaucratic schedules decreased”* (T3-PR), *“I would change the bureaucracy, the formalism, the rigidity of the budget management.”* (T3-GR) and own preparation *“I wouldn’t change anything about the project. I would only prepare myself better.”* (T4-HR). The majority of the students complained about the “long travelling”, “traffic”, “boring” trips. They stated that they preferred spending more time with their new friends to visiting historical places *“ I would only change the time lost in traffic jams during the mobilities.”* (GR-S1). The general stance is however positive and the project was appreciated as an altogether positive experience, they wouldn’t want to change.

Regarding question number 7 *“How do you understand innovation in education?”* most of teachers understand innovation in education as possibility to transfer knowledge in practice, learning by doing, learning by travelling, learning by discovering. They view the Erasmus + project as a way of innovation, as a learning opportunity which brings together all learning possibilities for students and teachers, alike. (*“Programmes like Erasmus + can be considered an application of innovation in practice”* T6-GR). This project is also seen as a challenge for personal and professional development because innovation is a force which impels you to step out the box and your proximal comfort zone. Innovation is paralleled to a well-built road: *“ I imagine innovation as a driving force of educational and therefore social activity, characterized by flexibility and continuous redefinition of its aims.”* (T3-GR).

Innovation is seen as an instrument for change, but is a demanding process: *“ a change in the traditional teaching approaches, and therefore also requires a different mentality, willing to take new challenges. It is all possible and desirable, but not easy.”* (T6-IT).

Students report that learning by doing via workshops, gaining first hand experience via travelling, exploring via in-situ visits are all more motivating and effective than learning within the walls of a classroom. They also admit that in this way, information is transformed into experience and theory into practise. Some regarded innovation as the “*Project, itself*” (GR-S2).

At question number 8 “What is your opinion on proposing an optional course which would bring forward the European identity in nowadays society?” two directions of answers have been observed. A big part of teachers-respondents, especially from Portugal, Croatia, Turkey and Czech Republic, have considered that elements about European identity are already embedded in and covered by compulsory curriculum in schools and it is not necessary to have an optional course that focuses on European identity because it is more important to learn about national identity. They consider it a complex concept and society is not ready for a “European Identity” (T2-TR). *“I think that teacher are ready, but student not. First students should reinforce national identity.”* (T3-HR). In contrast, other teachers consider that Europe is changing and it is very necessary to learn what it means to be a European, what are the common points for all European countries, what is linking them in unity while preserving their national identity-*“There is an urgent need for fostering people’s sensitivity towards a constantly reshaping multicultural present. It is also important to create a common conscience and common understanding that all European citizens belong to the same community and share the same common history within the broader European civilization.”*(T1-GR);

Regarding students perception, with the exception of the students from Turkey, which is not a member of European Union, all of the student responders strongly agree that it would be effective and useful to have an optional course about European Identity. They also underlined that it is important to build a bond between European countries *“I do believe such a course would be very useful to students of my age because it is about self-development and self-image and this is important to teenagers. I guess it should be optional”*(GR-S4). On the other hand, Turkish students seemed to misinterpret the term “European identity” and feel reserved towards it since their country is not an official member of the European Union; they strongly stated that they would not prefer an optional course like that *“I think that is a great idea and it would be very useful however I don’t think Turkey is ready for something like this right now”* (TR-S8).

For question number 9 “What is your opinion on promoting learning at school based on projects of this type?”, most part of the respondent-teachers found learning based on projects of this type to be a very useful and innovative way to break the monotony of formal educational act, to improve knowledge, skills and attitudes, especially communicative skills in foreign

language. They mention that hosting students is an excellent way to increase self esteem, self-confidence, tolerance and understanding of cultural diversity and heritage. Project-based learning makes students and teachers more active, alert and *“attentive to what surrounds them.”* (T2-PR) and it is *“a beneficial influence on school activities because stimulates the students’ curiosity and meets their needs to collaborate with other students of their age to learn together, in a multicultural context”* (T3-IT).

Respondents consider that school of the future will be re-built on a pedagogy based on projects that *“actively promote transversal, cross-cultural skills like open-mindedness, flexibility, capacity to understand other’s points of view or beliefs, willingness to find shared solution to controversies.”* (T6-IT). Some teachers expressed their objection to the feasibility of engaging the entire school in these innovative teaching approaches: *“My reserve is only that in my opinion promoting learning at school through such projects cannot possibly involve the whole school”*(T4-GR) and are concerned that *“Only as an indirect beneficiary could the school as a whole benefit and I am not certain whether this would be sufficient”*, however a way around that was mentioned: *“the teacher directly involved can disseminate the benefits of the program to his other students”*(T2-GR).

Students were in favour of any Erasmus projects and were very positive about participating in one again. They stated that projects like these deepen their knowledge of other countries, improve their use of the English language and strengthen their interest in learning other foreign languages- *“These projects help to deepen the knowledge of the foreign languages, and not only English, and they encourage curiosity and desire to know and accept culture of foreign countries”* (IT-S3). They also highlighted that they prefer the experiential learning and the multicultural background of the Erasmus+ project to the typical learning/teaching environment of formal education- *“Projects like this lead to knowledge acquisition in a way that no other traditional method can. We learnt by seeing, hearing, doing and that was very effective. There were of course things we had to research in order to prepare a presentation, but that too had a purpose. I like learning like that. It is how it should always be.”* (GR-S4).

Vulnerabilities of the project have been identified in the answers of respondents at question number 10 *“What vulnerabilities do you presently identify in the educational system of your country regarding the writing, implementing and monitoring Erasmus+ European educational projects?”*.

Teachers from all partner countries highlighted the challenge of bureaucracy, formalism and paperwork which is necessary for every step of the implementation of the project activities, in schools and out of schools – *“Much of the energy of the participating teachers is spent on bureaucratic procedures which hardly benefit the students themselves.”* (T6-GR). Also,

teachers mention that Erasmus + requirements were not yet very well known at the time of the application and teachers were not adequately trained for implementing projects, so they find it a challenge to maintain a balance between their private life and the extra working hours that in most of cases are not paid for “*teachers need to do during their free time and working in project requires a lot of time. That is the main problem.*” (T1-HR).

Students failed to give a proper answer to the question because they considered that they do not have knowledge or experience in designing and implementing educational projects. Most of them complained about the education systems in their countries and stated that the education systems should not be based on just memorization and consumption of unnecessary information. They stated the belief that practice should be more important than theory. “*The education system is bad, you learn to be a campaign. We do not learn logical. We have plenty classes, which are very similar and it seems like they keep reiterating*” (HR-S3).

The experience of Erasmus + project has been concluded in the answers of last question on interview “How would you summarize in one sentence the experiences you have had in the UNESCO Heritage project?”. Teachers and students gave highly positive feedbacks as a summary of their Erasmus + experience and all of them opted for positive sentences to describe their experience. The most memorable answers were:

- ✚ “Invaluable experience” (T1-HR);
- ✚ “Learn living” (T3-IT);
- ✚ “Magical” (T5-GR);
- ✚ “A lesson in life and for life” (T2-PR);
- ✚ “You leave as a child, come back a grown up” (IT-S3);
- ✚ “Unforgettable experience and memories that last a lifetime” (GR-S4);
- ✚ “This was one of my best adventures in my life” (TR-S3).

III. Conclusions

The launching of the European project found all participants excited and expectant of the new experiences and cultural exchanges to come but also worried about meeting the project’s demands. Both their expectations and their worries were on a personal and professional level focusing mainly on their handling of the experience while gaining from it, the command of the English language, adapting to foreign cultures and coping with the demanding activities.

On both these levels (personal and professional) the project was found to have contributed greatly to their confidence, openness, receptiveness, cultural awareness, tolerance and respect for cultural and linguistic diversity. The activities within the framework of the project, especially the workshops

and the in-situ visits but also the competitions, presentations and the intercultural activities were appreciated as having contributed to their cognitive capital while boosting their self-esteem and enhancing skills and attitudes. The benefit reaches beyond the notable advancement of practical knowledge and skills such as using the English language or ICT or even awareness of cultural heritages and the workings of UNESCO; the experiential nature of the activities and the active learning practices that were the framework of the activities had a largely positive impact on the participants' development of "twenty-first century skills" such as time management, adaptability, team work and accountability.

The Erasmus+ programmes were regarded as an excellent example of experiential non-formal education and the participants recognized the usefulness if not necessity for them to be implemented more widely. They did however point to the vulnerabilities of the exam-based educational systems of their countries and the demanding management and implementation of the projects as weaknesses to be addressed.

The issue of national and European identity and the suggestion of a course within the school curriculum that aims to promote the idea of a shared European identity was an issue for debate, finding the majority in agreement about its usefulness, if only in a non-compulsory level since enhancement of national identity was considered by some as more important. A big part of the participants however recognized the need to shape a common conscience and a common understanding of the cultural elements that make up the European civilization. The factors that are reshaping the face of Europe today into a multicultural common ground have not gone unnoticed by the participants; both teachers and students recognize the urgent need to focus on the unifying rather than the divisive elements that will help students of various nationalities thrive in the same classroom or colleagues from different countries pursue a rewarding career within the same working environment.

This realization, either conscious or in the process of shaping itself, may have been a driving force behind the formation of what can be called their "Erasmus+ experience", but the excitement and energy generated by this experience is what made the participants use words like "unforgettable", "magical", "invaluable", "enrichment", "lasting a lifetime" to describe it.

Aknowlegment:

We would like to thank all the participants of the European Educational project ERASMUS +, KA2-UNESCO Heritage, 2014-2016, Code: 2014-1-RO01- KA201-002437_6.

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REPORTING CRITERIA OF THE EVALUATIVE REALITY. THE TRADITIONAL VERSUS THE MODERN ASSESSMENT

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Abstract. *The present study analyzes the directions of teaching methodology's modernizing emphasizing in the theoretical level the need to move from traditional methods of assessment to the complementary ones. The research project has targeted as objectives: studying the option of secondary education teachers to use complementary or traditional methods of assessment in comparison with the seniority in teaching and learning environment. The research sample involved teachers in secondary education, both urban and rural areas, being a nationally stratified sampling. The results of the research get the adhesion of the teachers to use complementary methods of assessment.*

Keywords: *complementary methods of assessment, traditional methods of assessment, traditional assessment, modern assessment, perceptions and opinions of the teachers.*

1. Introduction

This study presents in reflexive theoretical plan the scientific substantiation of directions for modernizing of the alternative and complementary assessment methods and their formative valences by systematizing and outlining their epistemological, theoretical premises in the literature of specialty.

In practical-use plan realizes a project of empirical research that contributes to the development of a reference framework in the application of complementary methods field.

In this way, the present study analyzes the perceptions, opinions, views of the teachers on the need of using the alternative and complementary methods of assessment with reference to: the degree of using of traditional methods

based on seniority criterion in the teaching activity - sample of teaching teachers; variable correlation between "the degree of using of the traditional methods" and the variable "educational environment" - sample teaching teachers.

„Traditional education system consist of one way communication system by the gurus to the pupils, which consist of imparting education to the pupil in best possible way. In this student require to attend the classes in person.” (Upasana, 2014, p. 149).

Current trends on modernizing education process have diversified the issue of the school assessment registering the shift from valuing and certifying the acquisition of the knowledge to the acquired skills and capacities.

In order to highlight the directions for modernization of school assessment, we present the most important aspects of the evolution field of school assessment.

Since the nineteenth century there are used more and more the so-called objective or intuitive methods based on the principle of intuition, developed by Comenius and Pestalozzi, the didactics' classics and towards the early twentieth century there are gradually introduced some methods of applying the knowledge. It gains importance the exercises after model or after before given instructions, as well as the practical activities focused on imitation, however. In schools, learning discipline is provided generally by coercion, by applying severe methods, authoritarian, based on the use of penalties.

Today, the theoretical and practical pedagogy propose a variety of approaches to school assessment, whose analysis highlights important changes of conception and implementation of this approach by increased interest in cognitive or social referent.

The cognitive reviewer represents the triumph of cognitivism on behaviorism, promoting the interest in competence, for an integrated assessment for learning, formative and forming-metacognitive assessment.

The social reviewer determines the assessment approach in relation to social, interrelation aspects between educational partners promoted to actors.

Making a foray into the issue of assessment at present, Jean Vogler concludes quite categorical: its universe is neither coherent, nor homogeneous, nor consensual.

"It is not homogeneous and coherent because of the various trends crossing it. Today, two systems of assessment coexist. The first is traditional, secular and therefore rooted in the mentality of his players. Next to this, and

somehow against it, there has been developed in the late 60s, a different assessment, which we could call it as modern "(Vogler, 2000, p. 82).

Going along the same lines of analysis of the modernizing assessment in the current stage, Constantin Cucos also insists on distancing and fundamental distinguishing of this process from the classical controlling of knowledge or from the traditional measurement, with values of objectivity and design of assessment as a way to improve, which involves a global training strategy: "In the modern acceptance, the assessment must not be understood as a supra-added or superimposed stage of learning, but it is an integrated act to the pedagogical activity." (Cucos, 2008).

The assessment does matter less and less in terms of measurements and results and more and more in terms of its evolution. This concept has rebuilt its dimensions moving from knowledge to processes, cognitive mechanisms, attitudes, motivations, values. The assessment becomes a tool of assessment for "the processes involved in the achievement, the development and the correction of learning." (Bruner)

Miron Ionescu affirms that „ the dichotomy classical (traditional) and modern methods is wrong and even harmful. Those from the first group should be reconsidered and used in a new form, combining them with the latest” (Ionescu, M., 2003). Siebert draws the attention on the necessity of a combined use of traditional strategies with those based on modern technologies, as „concomitantly with emphasizing the advantages of new technologies, the exigencies of their adequate use increased towards efficiency, in order to avoid the well-known errors of the educational means or to avoid the exaggerations as regards their possibilities of instruction.” (Siebert, 2001, în Tudor, 2012).

In the research project, we proposed as objective:

The option's study of teachers in secondary education to use complementary or traditional methods in accordance with the length in the teaching and learning environment.

We have identified as general hypothesis of the research project:

If the identification of level of use of the traditional methods of assessment, then the secondary school teachers with experience in teaching and the ones in rural areas will opt for the complementary methods in the future evaluative practices.

For operationalization, we have used the following variables:

- 1) the correlation between the use of complementary and traditional assessment methods with the seniority in teaching;
- 2) the correlation between the use of complementary and traditional assessment methods and the educational environment.

2. The methodology

2.1. The sample

The sampling of the research was stratified by type, comprising 328 teachers. The stratification had as coordinates the educational environment and length of teaching. In this study we will analyze the correlation between variables and urban and rural environment, representing the primary, secondary and high-school education, ie seniority in teaching.

2.2. Environmental variable analysis (sample teachers)

All the interviewed subjects have answered the question to identify the environment. Thus, we find absolute frequency on the categories of the environmental scale: 171 people in urban areas and 157 in rural areas (see Figure 1).

In Table 1, the subjects in urban areas represent a relative frequency of 52.1%, the subjects in rural areas representing 47.9%, the cumulative frequencies being of 100% for the environment variable.

Table 1. Frequency's identification for the categories of environmental scale

The environment		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	urban	171	52,1	52,1	52,1
	rural	157	47,9	47,9	100,0
	total	328	100,0	100,0	



Figure 1. Representation of the environmental variable values

2.3. Methods

We have used as research methods the based on questionnaire analysis method, applying one questionnaire to secondary education teachers.

We have proposed that the investigation method based on the questionnaire for teachers to grasp the ways by which the school assessment in institutions of secondary education both in urban and in rural areas is done.

Questionnaires objective are centered on:

- The study of perceptions of target groups on the application of traditional or alternative and complementary methods of assessment.

We have made a preliminary analysis of the obtained data following the application of the research tools through which we discovered distribution characteristics, the quality of data, in order to define the indicators that will be used for statistical analysis.

2.4. Tools

The questionnaire, being the basic instrument of our research. In order to check the hypothesis referred to the study of teachers' perceptions on the traditional methods of assessment, we have applied the questionnaire addressed to the teachers.

We have made a preliminary analysis of the obtained data following the application of the research tools through which we discovered distribution characteristics, the quality of data, in order to define the indicators that will be used for statistical analysis.

2.4.1. The calculation of Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the questionnaire applied to teachers

We propose a study of fidelity by the internal consistency calculating the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the questionnaire applied to teachers. The test informs us that all 328 subjects have responded to the questionnaire questions.

We got for the questionnaire applied to the teachers a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient in raw form having a value of 0.856, and in a standardized form (form based on correlations) having as result 0,954.

Another important information the application of the Cronbach's Alpha test offers us is the one related to the statistical interpretation of the items,

establishing the media of the items, their variation, the co-variations between items and the correlations between them as shown Table 2.

From the presented results we can identify an average of 2,850 items, located between the minimum values of 0.348 and maximum values of 8,835, which shows that there are significant differences between subjects' answers to these questions, fact which provides the variability.

Table 2. Questionnaire's Items Statistic Representation

	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Maximum / Minimum	Variation	No.of Items
Item Means	,850	348	,835	,488	25,421	,977	63
Item Variations	,635	229	13,118	12,889	493,375	8,308	63
Inter-Item Co-variation	7	8,809	,200	4,009	-,590	065	
Inter-Item Correlations	09	,720	856	,576	-1,189	035	63

3. Results

Within the statistical analysis we have processed the obtained data in order to verify the research hypothesis establishing a relationship between different variables of the questionnaire and hypothesis, for which it provides ascertained guide marks, setting their co-variation.

3.1. The study of teachers' perceptions on traditional assessment methods

To check the first hypothesis we studied the co-variation between the using ranks of traditional methods related to the seniority criterion in teaching – sample teachers.

Teachers in primary, secondary and high school believe they approach the traditional methods for assessing pupils performance.

We can see (Figure 2) following this comparative analysis, that a rate of 1.8% of the sample, the teachers with less seniority in education (6-10 years) and (20-30) express disagreement with the use of traditional methods of assessment in school practice; the next stage representing total agreement with a percentage of 7.6% is highlighted by those with a teaching experience between (15-20 years), the third step is determined by the moderate agreement with a percentage of 11,0%, being represented by those with a

seniority of (30-40 years) and the fifth stage expressing the agreement stage is represented by a part of those with a seniority of (20-30 years) with a percentage of 13.1%.

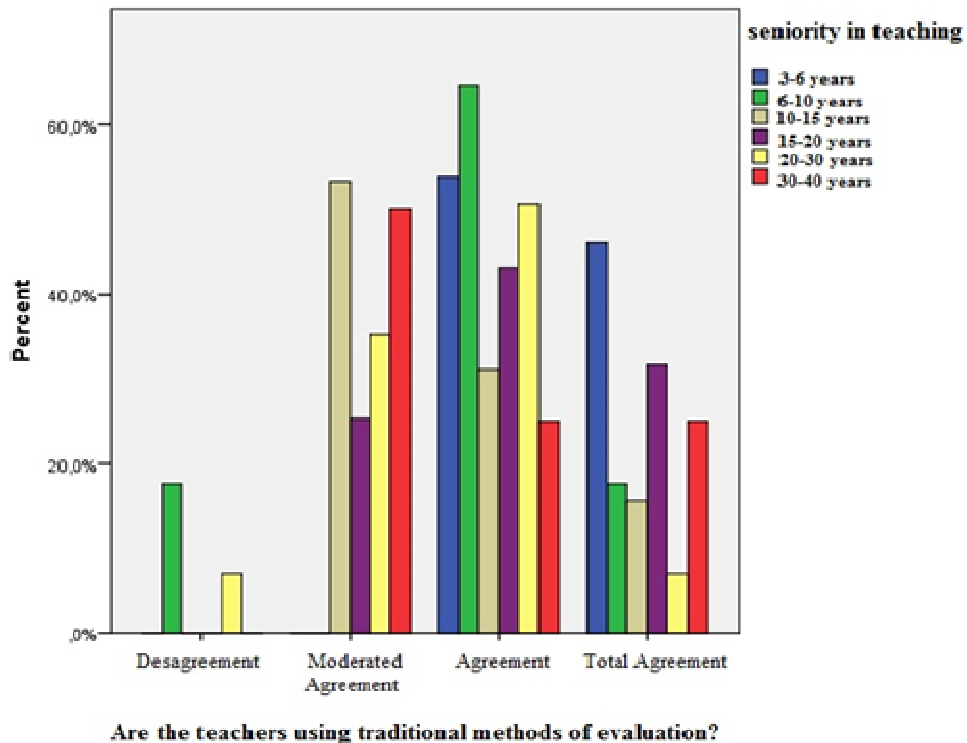


Figure 2. Correlation's representation between the variables: the using of traditional methods - the teaching seniority

Also to check the first hypothesis we will study the correlation between the "rank of utilization of traditional methods" variable and the "educational environment" variable - sample of teachers.

In order to know the general opinion of teachers regarding the landing of the traditional methods of assessment, we can make the correlation between this variable and the one specific to the school environment: urban and rural.

Thus, in order to relate to the percentage criteria compared to the variable value, we can identify the fact that the ones in rural areas were opposed to using traditional methods (100%), those in urban areas showed a moderate agreement (50.9%), also those in urban areas recorded the highest percentage for expressing the agreement (55.8%) and of the total agreement (55.9%) -

the differences being caused by the unequal distribution of the sample of respondents (171-urban; 157- rural), (see Figure 3).

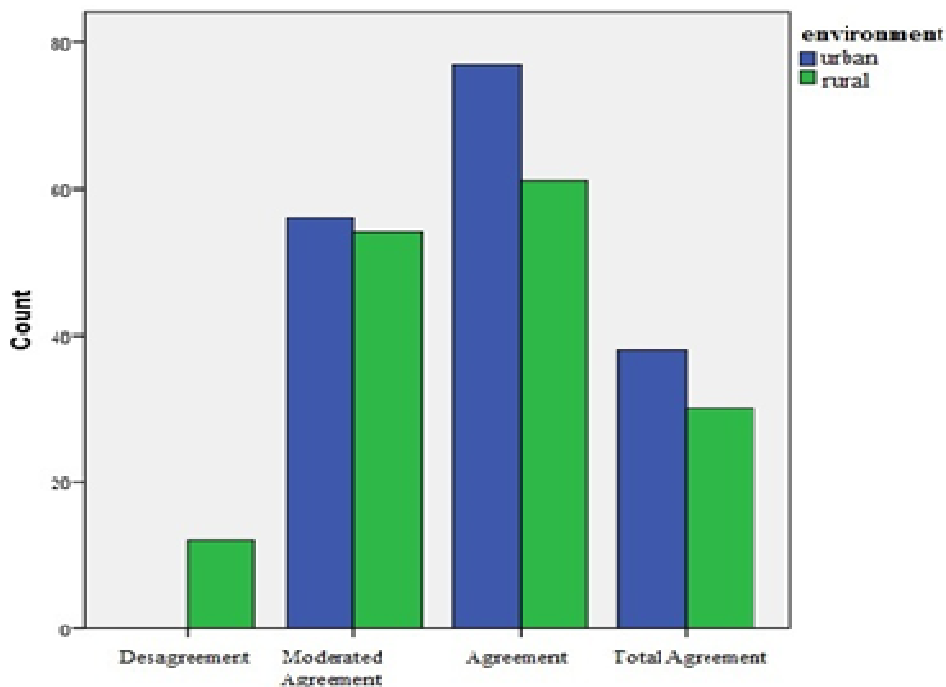


Figure 3. *The corresponding relation between the variables: using of traditional methods – educational environment*

4. Discussions

Analyzing the registered results for checking the first variable regarding the correlation between the utilization of the complementary and traditional methods of assessment with the seniority in teaching, we find that teachers who have experience in teaching for no more than 10 years reject the use of traditional methods of assessment, on the same position with them standing those having a seniority of 20-30 years.

We consider that these two categories of teachers have a large opening for complementary methods for assessment, opining that these are the ones effectively evaluating the pupils' skills. The teachers with a seniority of 15-20 years are those who do not reject the traditional methods of assessment, expressing their frequent use, the ones with a seniority of 30-40 years are using them moderately, result that leads us to say that this category of teachers is also using complementary methods, but to a lesser extent.

We consider that the last category alternates the use of traditional methods of assessment with the complementary ones. We plan for a future study to identify the factors underlying the preponderant use of traditional assessment methods, development of some training programs for this group of teachers.

The statistics data obtained for checking the variable regarding the correlation between the use of complementary and traditional assessment methods and the learning environment gives us a solid basis to identify the fact that the respondents of the two media are agree with the use of traditional methods of assessment, recording the highest percentage at this value of the variable (45.0% - urban; 38.9% - rural). Thus, we can find a compatible vision of teachers in the two areas.

The first item of the questionnaire, with which we have asked teachers to reflect on the share of using the traditional methods in the educational practice, has produced a significant change in terms of their design, achieving teachers' adhesion to use complementary methods of assessment.

5. Conclusions

The undertaken research study has obtained the adherence of teachers to the proposed model.

Summarizing, we can state the following issues:

The study presents personal contribution: the approaching of the complementary/ alternative assessment methods field and the identification of their interdependence with the classic ones;

The main opened issues are: a profound study of the themes debated in the study; the extension of the research in the field of complementary/ alternative methods.

The study presents limits of the research determined by the following factors: the reticence of some teachers to correctly answer the questions in the questionnaire.

„We can say that traditional education system is the system which provides the education to the pupils in the manner that provides the overall benefit to the pupils. Purpose of the education is to acquire knowledge and skills and make them fruitful in life for one's own welfare and the other people. Thus traditional education is providing these all benefits to the society as whole as also it is affordable by any class of people.” (Upasana, 2014, p. 149).

A traditional assessment is intended to classify one class' pupils, “it is used either to classify the subjects or to place them in relation to the Gaussian type distribution - in relation to the famous Gaussian curve” (Cerghit, 2008). In contrast with these ones, “the modern methods assume a reporting to the

content standards which corresponds to assessment criteria, through educational objective” (Manolescu, 2010).

„We recommend combining traditional assessment strategies with multimedia and interactive assessment group strategies for improving efficiency in terms of ability to understand and interpret students and increase interest in school activities” (Tudor, 2012, p.989).

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POSSIBILITIES OF USING CERTAIN SOCIAL NETWORKS IN EDUCATION

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Abstract. *Internet and other digital networks have created an exciting new world of information and communication for anyone with access to the network. They provide young people immeasurable opportunities for learning, communication, and development of their own view of the world. New technologies provide children and adolescents levels of access to information, culture, communication and entertainment that was impossible to imagine only 20 years ago. One of the most widespread and most interesting phenomenon of today are social networks on the Internet. Social networks are an interactive social media that provide users the ability to create personal web pages, themes, groups, photo galleries and to make online friends. The use of social media has changed not only the way of spending leisure time, communications and business, but also the ways of organizing learning and teaching process. The tendency of people to use the possibilities offered by social networks are increasingly being used in education, in order to adapt the learning process to the needs of students and to make it more interesting and attractive for them. It was noted that a number of pupils began creating groups on social networks, in order to connect and share information about the teaching contents and their obligations. This has led teachers to modernize themselves and start using social networks in order to make the material for learning more accessible to students and to encourage discussion among students.*

Keywords: *internet, social networks, teaching, learning, communication*

1. Introduction

The results of survey about usage of information and communication technologies in Serbia in 2016 (Republic Statistical Office of the Republic of

Serbia), show that 97.8% of households have a TV a 90.2% mobile phone. Laptop owns 39.2% of households, an increase of 0.2% compared to 2015. Significant increases are when it comes to owning a computer (65.8% in 2016).

Over 3.07 million individuals use a computer every day or almost every day, also 3 600 000 people used the Internet in the last three months, as compared to 2015 it shows the increase of 60 000 users. Even 90.3% of the Internet population from 16 to 24 have an account on social networks.

Internet and other digital networks have created an exciting new information and communication world for everyone with access to the network and enable young people immeasurable opportunities for learning, communication, and develop their own view of the world. On Earth there are 7,017,846,922 people, while almost 35% of the population use the Internet. Social network Facebook actively is being used by 1.11 billion, which means that Facebook country, would be the third largest country in the world, behind China and India, and everything points to the Internet and social networks governance, and the impossibility of avoiding the use and Internet exploitation.

In the Republic of Serbia in November 2012, Popadić and Kuzmanović (2013) carried out a research on a sample of 3786 primary and secondary schools in order to determine how many children use digital technology, where the risks are and how we can protect them from the risks of digital violence. According to this survey, over 90% of students use computers, and 60% of students have their own computer. 95% of older elementary pupils and high school students use the Internet. Internet is not only used by minority of 6.5% older pupils and 3% of high school students.

2. Social Networking

New technologies offer to the children and adolescents, different levels of access to information, culture, communication and entertainment that was impossible to imagine only 20 years ago (Resources and strategies in the prevention of digital violence against children, 2013).

Nowadays, one of the most widespread and most interesting phenomenon are social networks on the Internet. It is a free online service that allows users a variety of communication forms and the possibility of their own presentation, free video clips, photos, writing blogs, playing games and for various useful and less useful activities through these networks.

Social networking refers to building online communities who share common interests and activities or who are occupied by interests and activities of various individuals or communities. Online community is a term that is very common characteristic of various Web 2.0 pages, but has become almost synonymous with Web 2.0. Students/pupils other than the basic, everyday

communication, use social networks and talk about educational issues, discuss the tasks and educational activities. This means that students/pupils should be provided an environment that is highly interactive and appealing to them to become more motivated to learn.

Survey data, conducted by Popadić and Kuzmanović (2013) indicate that learners usually use internet daily for visiting social networks (69%), watching videos, movies (50%), playing games (49%) or conversations through chat option (41%).

3. Social Networks

Social networks having an enormous role in education, and are defined as tools that enable cooperation, knowledge sharing, interaction and communication between users in different locations that have common interests, needs or goals. A social network is a type of Internet service, which usually takes place in the form of platforms, window or Web page. Research in an academic environment has shown that social networks operate on many levels, from the family to the level of the nation, and play a critical role in determining the way of solving problems, how organizations work, and the degree to which an individual will succeed in achieving individual goals. Certainly the best-known Internet networks are Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn, where the most popular is Facebook with the largest number of users, but LinkedIn has recently been struggling and becoming more and more popular.

Blog AdriaTalk.com has made research on the use of social networks in Serbia. The most widely used social network in Serbia is Facebook with 1.2 million unique visitors per month. MySpace has seen a considerable drop in popularity among fans of online socializing in Serbia, but it is still at a high second place with 290 thousand monthly visitors. It is followed by Flickr, a popular location for photo sharing and storage, that in Serbia has 180 thousand visitors per month. Social network Hi5 monthly records of over 140 thousand visits from Serbia. Survey results show that 92% of interviewees involved in a social network, have a profile on a social network (Popadić and Kuzmanović, 2013). By far, the most students use the Internet for visiting social networks, then to watch videos, series and movies and surf the Internet.

Concerning the transparency level, we can distinguish networks of open and closed type. The open social networks, as the name suggests, are dynamic and open set of members gathered around a common theme or issue, supporting the expansion of their own resources in terms of number of communicators.

Unlike them, the closed social network type, deal with specific subjects limited by their own membership, usually by reference. Therefore, for

example, to get an access to an university network, approval is required- an administrator's permission.

The use of social networks in education can have a number of advantages, which relate to: the independence of time and location, the individualisation of learning, providing prompt feedback, the possibility of returning to the old facilities, the possibility of introducing more multimedia elements, load other applications such as virtual laboratories or animations, options of encouraging a voluntary student research, easily monitoring the progress of students, encouraging, both teachers and students, to achieve, evaluate and use knowledge or similar. Different schools/ faculties use social networks on different manner. Some of them use it to communicate with parents and pupils/students, or to improve learning process (Papić and Aleksić, 2012).

3.1. Facebook

Facebook is a social network for informal personal presentation, connecting with friends, sharing photos and other publications. It was established in 2004 by Marc Zuckerberg, and its original purpose was to connect Harvard students. It soon gained great popularity among all American Universities, secondary schools, and today operates as a global social network with over a billion active users per day. Facebook is free for all users.

Benefits of Facebook are:

- Free access and unlimited connectivity options with others;
- Creating a user profile, not only to acquire new friends, but they interact with those whom they lost contact with;
- Exchange of information, ideas, and opportunities in the private and professional world;

The disadvantages are reflected in following:

- The dangers of abuse, identity theft,
- Reduced possibility of privacy, because the company Facebook retains our personal data, and can be passed on to agencies and organizations that some of them may be interested in.

Given the fact that it represents one of the most popular social network in the world, educational institutions have begun to use it for the purposes of education. Realizing that most of the students spend their free time on the Internet, they decided to modernize and bring closer learning material in an interesting fashion. Numerous of applications are created, profiles, fan pages, groups, through which the students can communicate with each other or to their teachers, to share ideas, opinions, experiences, etc.

Papić et al (2016) have come to the result that 96% of students (117 respondents) are members of a group whose members are their counterparts on the same course where they exchange information and learning material.

One example of a Facebook-learning is Edmodo, which is a "learning network" that connects teachers, students and schools. Edmodo also represents an efficient way to organize the process of training of teachers, but also to modernize the teaching process and links pupils/students outside the classroom. Usage mode is very similar to the method of use of Facebook, except that an additional option allows the creation of tasks, tests, surveys, calendars, blogs that are especially useful for the educational processes. This similarity with the aforementioned social network is applied to facilitate the use of all parties involved within the process, the ones who knows how to use Facebook, that is enormous majority of teachers and pupils/students, will know how to use and Edmodo as well.

3.2. Twitter

Twitter is, after Facebook, the most representative social network in the world. In 2016 it was announced that Twitter has over 300 million users, which makes it a very popular social network that shows constant growth in the number of users. Twitter is a free of charge social networking and micro-blog tool that allows its users to read other people's and send their own micro-text entries, known as tweets. Twitter provides a stunning and still underutilised opportunities for all users, especially those who work in education. It is an excellent foundation for lifelong learning and an inexhaustible source of material that we can enrich the daily work in the classroom, modernize it, or improve it. Pupils / students and teachers are able to ask questions and send their answers, which means that in a real-time two-way communication can be established. Twitter has proven to be an excellent tool for professional development and collaboration with pupils / students. There are many options for teaching and learning that can be used in educational purposes. One of the aspects that is undervalued, however very useful as an option for creating the list, which can be useful to teachers in higher education in order to help students to develop their own professional skills and abilities.

3.3. Google+

In June 2011 the company Google launched its social network - Google +. Initially it functioned as new users can be only connected by invitation of an existing user. However, due to the huge interest this practice was soon changed and Google + has become open to all interested users. From the start, it has been recorded an amazing increase of number of users on a monthly basis. So, for a year and a half of existence, in December 2012 has already gained 500 million users, which means that from mid-2012 until the end of the same year the number of users has doubled. Google+ has over 6.7 million users and over 230 million views. It is relatively similar to Facebook

and offers similar features, however it introduced some new features to the world of social networks. Circles help to organize people according to a fact how you relate them in real life. Hangouts allow up to 10 people to join video conferencing for free. Hangouts along with Extras let you share documents, while with the help of a Stream- it is possible to chat with people in your circles and share information with them. The function is used to search Google Plus posts, people and the web. Profile is the way for a person presents to all numerous Google products. Messenger can be used for group chat via mobile phone, while Google+ Pages allows you to create a website for the organization. For example, by help of these options, video lessons can be easily shared that can help someone who missed a lecture (video chat), files can be easily shared via Google Drive-a, or similar. because all of Google's products are mutually linked.

3.4. YouTube

Designed and launched at the begining 2005 by Chad Hurley, Steve Chen and Jawed Karim, former employees of the company PayPal, and by the end of 2006, bought by Google for \$ 1.65 billion. With time, many other services are created that copy YouTube concept, but none of them ever became at least nearly as popular. On this enormous online video platform every minute is published up to 300 hours of video materials of all kinds, from music and entertainment to news, advice, television shows, personal experiences. There is hardly to type a word, and have as number of results zero. If someone wants to learn to play the guitar, or to do proper make-up or hook up computers, it is enough to type in on YouTube, and will find exact instructions for this.

Using YouTube is so widespread that it is considered not only an integral part of our free time, our business development opportunities, but also a full ally in the process of learning, whether it is formal or informal form of education.

YouTube has a special section of its website primarily oriented to education and content that will be in line with education in the widest meaning of the word. On page <http://www.youtube.com/education> visitors can find video clips from known and less known, universities around the world. It is possible to find video clips of lectures from all Universities. On YouTube EDU section, video contents of higher education institutions are provided, the presentations can be already found the site, that are related to education and learning.

As good sources of educational content, the Edutopia and Teaching Channel must mentioned. Also, as a very useful source of content for educators who are interested in developing the idea of project-based learning (PBL - Project

Based Learning) video material can be used, available on the BIE (Buck Institute for Education).

3.5. LinkedIn

This social network was launched in 2003. With over 300 million users LinkedIn is, in terms of frequency, the fourth social network. Even though, relatively large number of those, due to lack of casual correspondence, sharing of different contents and other characteristics, who doesn't consider LinkedIn as a social network, there is no dilemma that it certainly is. Primarily as a business social network. The world's largest social network that brings together job seekers and companies looking for employees. One of the main reasons for joining the social network LinkedIn is to manage the one's own career. By creating a profile on the LinkedIn network, set up an online resource with all the accomplishments and education.

There are two types of profiles, such as a personal profile which the user himself fills and profiles of companies that are constructed by themselves in order to search for future employees. At the profile it can be specified last working position and the current working position, education, as well as additional contact information. It is also possible to join different groups and pages, where companies can find information for possible future employment.

In addition, LinkedIn has launched a new type of service that focuses on education (www.linkedin.com/edu). The central idea is to create pages for various universities, which should attract prospective students, current students and employers and so they all connect through the LinkedIn network. The advantages of this are: participation in discussions, research of worldwide universities, access to information on the prominent graduates, the possibility of expanding opportunities, as well as building its own network.

3.6. Instagram

Instagram was created in 2010 and is a service for photo sharing and social networking. With assistance of Instagram students can follow publications of others and give feedback and edit photos so that it can be cut or modified with the help of a special program for image processing [11]. Within Instagram short video clips can be published. Teachers may ask pupils/students that images display symmetry, to upload photos related to the different scientific areas that are being processed, favorite books, authors, etc. In this way, the teacher can monitor the interests of pupils/students and encourage motivation during learning, and students' mutual cooperation and communication.

4. Conclusion

Usage of social networks has changed not only the way of free time fulfilment, communication and business, but also in ways of learning and teaching process. Increasingly are used possibilities offered by social networks in education, in order to adapt learning processes to the needs of pupils/students and make it more interesting and appealing. Pupils/students by themselves have begun to set up a group on social networks in order to connect and share information about the contents of learning and their obligations. This is sufficient reason which led the teachers to begin with the increasing use of social networks, in order make more accessible facilities for learning to the pupils / students, encourage discussion among pupil /students and make it more accessible to a variety of content, useful examples and video materials to help them to review the material in a new and interesting fashion.

We shouldn't be surprised if in ten years time, even 70% of future generations willing to be taught in virtual schools, where the lecturing will take place on the Web (Papić and Aleksić, 2012).

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OPTIMIZING THE ABILITY OF PREADOLESCENTS TO ADAPT TO THE SCHOOL GROUP

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Abstract. *The optimal integration in the group generates psychological comfort, high self-esteem, and rise in the level of aspirations, cooperation and collaboration relations with the other students. On the other hand, the isolation from the group and the absence of a harmonious relationship with the classmates contribute to low self-esteem, psychological discomfort, manifestation of hostility towards school and the other students, anxiety. In order to develop the ability to accommodate to the school group, to communicate and relate to the classmates and the teachers, we have designed and implemented a syllabus within the curricular area of 'School Counselling and Guidance', including specific, appropriate activities, which would meet the actual requirements of the preadolescents of the 5th grade, requirements established during our investigations.*

Keywords: *preadolescence, relationships within the group of students, normative adaptation, relational adaptation*

1. Paper Rationale

One of the periods with frequent difficulties in school adaptation is the beginning of preadolescence, a period which coincides in students with the transition from the elementary to the lower secondary school cycle. In this period, based upon a background of a frail emotional and psychological balance and of a developing personality, numerous adaptive behaviors are acquired and durable behavioral patterns are created, patterns which will be transferred to numerous later activities.

Preadolescence, as a stage in the ontogenetic development, ranging between the ages of 10-11 to 14-15, also known as the middle school period, marks the ending of childhood and the beginning of the maturity stages, the beginning of integration in the adult society, its main characteristic being the intense development of personality.

The first ingression into a collective group, situation frequently encountered in the preadolescent students of the 5th grade, may raise numerous issues, including ignorance of the reactions the pupils can expect

from their peers. For the optimal acceptance and integration of the preadolescent in the school group, he must know the rules, norms and standards of behavior specific to that group. When entering a new collective, the student wishes to integrate himself, to be accepted and appreciated by the group, matters which are only possible through the assimilation of the group's norms. The optimal interrelation with the other students, as well as learning and respecting the norms which govern the behaviors and activities within the group are factors which condition both the integration of the students in the group, as well as their academic performance.

2. Theoretical foundation and related literature

During this period, changes at the level of preadolescents' social relationships also occur, namely in the sense of the expansion and diversification of the roles and statuses acquired based on the regulations and system of requirements expressed by the adults. An increase in the attraction towards the group can be noticed, as well as the diversification of interrelationships and the development of the group's cohesion, these factors contributing to the growth of social expansion, favoring the social integration of the student in the next stages as well. At the basis of the preadolescent's attraction towards spending time with his group of friends are the feelings of independence, freedom and emotional security he experiences, all the while manifesting initiative, the group being an opportune environment for affirmation, free manifestation, sharing experiences, and identification with people of the same age (T. Crețu, 2001). If the group is oriented towards promoting nonconformist or even socially undesirable behaviors, the family and school should discretely supervise or even intervene in the situation.

Regarding the relationships within the group of students, a consolidation of these can be noticed, a solidarity in their reactions towards the teachers' requests being established. Emotional experiences are beginning to get complicated and nuanced during the school activities as well, through the emergence of intellectual emotions owed to the satisfaction of the epistemic curiosity, as well as through promoting competition within the school group, which can generate feelings of frustration, anxiety, envy, or conversely, self-satisfaction, gratification, admiration. The students with a low tolerance to frustration have a hard time accepting criticism or suggestions, are dominated by their egocentric tendencies, and will often resort to satisfying their needs by other means than those provided for by the norms and regulations of the school environment. The interactions within the classroom collective generate feelings of friendship, fellowship, solidarity, and even pride in belonging to that group (A. Neculau, 2007).

In its broad acceptance, a collective represents a group of people who take part in a common activity. In a more restricted sense, a collective

signifies a group of people who perform the same activity in the purpose of reaching well-determined goals and who bear responsibility for this activity, submitting to a discipline freely consented to and to a single leadership (E. Truță, S. Mardar, 2005, p. 15).

At the beginning of the 5th grade, we have a collective group in its broad meaning, which will become a collective of students in the more restricted sense, as the students interact to achieve common goals and the group acquires educational functions, becoming an educational-formative factor. Within the classroom, the educational influences of the teachers are being exerted on the emerging personality of the students. By becoming an educational-formative factor, the collective group will act upon the personality of the students, being at the same time a subject of education, as well as an object of education, the instructive influences of the teachers being reflected upon the collective's members. The formation of the collective of students at the beginning of the 5th grade is thus subordinated to its acquirement of certain educational-formative functions.

The classroom system evolves from a system in development towards a developed system, more precisely, from a purely administrative collective towards a cohesive collective. Within the dynamics of the classroom system, a series of occurrences specific to a system in development are manifested, occurrences that evolve, transforming into ones specific to an established system. E.Truță and S.Mardar (2005, p. 12) summarize the following phenomena specific to the two stages of group dynamics:

- Group phenomena specific to a system in formation:
 - o Outlining the statuses and roles of the classroom members;
 - o The gradual shift from organization to self-organization;
 - o The development of collaboration and cooperation between the pupils;
- Group phenomena specific to an established system:
 - o The stabilization of statuses and roles;
 - o The relatively autonomous functioning of the class as a social group;
 - o The collaboration and cooperation between pupils;
 - o The increase of productivity of the classroom collective;

In the initial phase (the first days or weeks) of the formation of a classroom of students, a phenomenon also present in the case of preadolescents of the 5th grade, we cannot speak of the existence of a collective of students. Generally, within the 5th grade, even if the collective of the 4th grade is kept as a foundation, new students from other classes are included, which favors the formation of subgroups. Thus, at the beginning of the lower secondary education cycle, in the 5th grade the existence of the following can be observed:

- *a dominant subgroup*, representing the majority, constituted of students coming from the same school and class;
- *a secondary subgroup*, including a smaller number of students coming from a different school and that have the tendency to oppose the dominant group;
- *other unstable subgroups*, smaller than the first two, containing students from different schools, who know less of one another and desire to establish relationships with the members of the other subgroups (D. Sălăvăștru, 2004)).

Under these circumstances, occurrences such as the reorganization of interpersonal relations, confrontations between leaders, and attempts to impose certain behavioral patterns will appear. As a harmony in goals is achieved, and behavioral patterns are established and assumed by the pupils, the group will become a collective. The collective group of students does not just represent a sum of the interpersonal relations established in the initial phase, it is the result of a long formative process in which informal aspects present within the group must also be known and managed. The role of the form teacher is to organize activities which foster the mutual acquaintance among all the students in the class, activities which will require them to work together in order to achieve common goals (C. Langa, F. Dumitru, 2016).

Studies on groups have emphasized a mechanism which proves that the group exerts pressure on the individual, thus favoring his integration. There are studies in this direction which indicate the existence of several stages of group integration, in our case, the integration of the preadolescent pupil within the school collective: investigation, socialization, maintenance, resocialization, remembrance (G. Fischer, 1997).

Investigation is the first stage, which implies activities through which each potential member examines the group of students and evaluates the situation with the intention of becoming a part of the group.

Socialization is the stage during which an internalization of the norms and values of the group is accomplished, which permits the individual to accommodate to the new group. Obeying the group's norms represents a conscious act of adhesion.

Maintenance is the stage in which the student becomes a full member of the group, by being accepted by the others. It is the stabilization stage, in which the individual and the group negotiate their positions and the roles to be assumed, with the purpose of achieving the objectives of the group. Sometimes there are differences in opinion between the individual and the group concerning the fulfillment of roles, and the way to the next stage, resocialization, is opened.

Resocialization appears as a consequence of the student manifesting disagreement towards the norms of the group, the student's objectives not

being accomplished at a satisfactory level by the group, or because of differences of opinion in the fulfillment of tasks. The group will try to redirect the student's behavior towards respecting the norms and the assumed roles, trying to obtain a new form of adaptation from the student. In this situation, the student becomes a marginal member. If the resocialization process is not successful, then the individual must leave the group.

Remembrance is the stage which appears as a result of the gradual departure of the student from the group, prior to the transition to a new stage of development. In this situation, he will remember the experiences from the group.

3. Methodology

The purpose of the research

In a recent study, which aimed at identifying the adaptation difficulties of preadolescent pupils of the 5th grade and the implementation of socio-educational intervention programs and educational activities which would contribute to the prevention and amelioration of the identified difficulties, one of the objectives was: the development of the preadolescents' ability to accommodate to the school group, their ability to communicate and to relate to colleagues and teachers.

Starting from the definition of the concept of school adaptation, and attempting a first step in operationalizing it, we established that, at the minimum, the following two dimensions can be defined: the pedagogical (instructional) adaptation and the normative and relational adaptation, with its subdimensions of normative adaptation and relational adaptation, aspects which are in accordance with the delimitations made by other specialists in the field (A. Cosmovici, L. Iacob, 1998). Relational adaptation indicates the student's ability to accommodate to the school group, namely to communicate and relate to his classmates and teachers.

The objectives of the research:

- Optimizing cooperation and collaboration behaviors through the assumption of roles and responsibilities within the group effort;
- Applying the principles of an efficient interpersonal communication;
- Demonstrating the appropriate expression of preadolescents in their relationships with their colleagues and teachers.

The hypothesis of the research: the designed educational activities, including specific, appropriate activities within the curricular area of 'Counselling and Guidance', which will satisfy the real requirements of the preadolescents of the 5th grade, will contribute to the improvement of the ability to communicate and relate between pupils-pupils and pupils-teachers and to the adoption of individual behaviors that are in accordance with the groups' expectations.

Description of the instruments

In order to quantify these objectives, to be able to quantify the degree to which students possess the ability to relate and communicate with teachers and classmates, we have used the following research instruments: the observation sheet regarding the activity and conduct of the student within the collective and a questionnaire addressed to the students.

Target group: The aforementioned instruments have been administered to a sample of 100 pupils of the 5th grade.

4. Results and discussion

Following the administration of these instruments, during the observational stage, we have gathered the following results:

Table 1.*The activity and conduct of the student within the collective (Observation sheet)*

	Frequency	%
Communicative, sociable, shows initiative	51	51
Passive, indifferent, does not show initiative	40	40
Isolated, uncooperative	9	9
Total	100	100,0

Table 2.*Generally, when you wish to discuss something with a classmate, how easy is it for you to communicate with him? (Questionnaire addressed to the students)*

	Frequency	%
Very easy	37	37
Easy	58	58
Fairly difficult	3	3
Very difficult	2	2
Total	100	100,0

Table 3.*Generally, when you want to ask your teachers something, to communicate something to them, how easy is it for you to start a conversation with them? (Questionnaire addressed to the students)*

	Frequency	%
Very easy	28	28
Easy	37	37
Fairly difficult	32	32
Very Difficult	3	3
Total	100	100,0

As a result of the analysis of the students' ability to communicate with classmates and teachers, we conclude that even if almost half of the students do not encounter difficulties in communicating with their classmates, a higher level of difficulty being reported at the level of their communication with their teachers, the design and conduct of educational activities that would contribute to the formation and development of the ability to relate between students-students and students-teachers are necessary, as well as the adoption of certain individual behaviors that would be in agreement with the collective's expectations.

In order to develop the ability to accommodate to the school group, to communicate and relate to the classmates and the teachers, we have designed and implemented a syllabus within the curricular area of 'School Counselling and Guidance', including specific, appropriate activities, which would meet the actual requirements of the preadolescents of the 5th grade, requirements established during our investigations.

Among the units suggested, we mention: *Classroom Management*, *Self-knowledge and Personal Development*, and *Communication*. For each of these we have detailed: the educational activities conducted, their respective stages, the resources required (methods, teaching aids, and forms of organization), and manners of evaluating the activity. From the activities conducted, we mention (L. Tăușan, 2012):

- For the *Classroom Management* module: *The Rules of Group Interrelation, Let's Meet Our Classmates. Identifying Their Behaviors and Attitudes, The Group and I, Class Rules, The Ideal 5th Grade, Difficulties and Expectations, Effective Conflict Solving*;

- For the *Self-knowledge and Personal Development* module: *Who am I?, Me – in the Eyes of Those Around Me, My Achievements, My Qualities*;

- For the *Communication* module: *Effective Listening, How Do I communicate?, Assertive, Passive or Aggressive?, Barriers in Communication*.

For the manner of conduct of the activities, we chose one based on the interaction with the students, the students having the opportunity to express what they know, and to learn through discovering what interests them. Furthermore, we started from the premises that the success of the 'Counselling and Guidance' classes is guaranteed by the active and responsible involvement of both the form teacher (counsellor) and of the students, by the accomplishment of a student-student and teacher-student interaction based on mutual respect and trust. For this purpose, we have used active methods, especially group methods, of which we mention: brainstorming, Phillips 6/6, debate, problem solving, group work, role-play, exercise, 'Gallery Walk', 'One Stay, the Others Stray', SWOT analysis,

clustering, pair work, ‘I Know – I Want to Know – I Have Learned’, the SINELG method (the interactive system of note-taking for the streamlining of reading and thinking), etc.

After proceeding with these activities (for the duration of one semester), we readministered the same instruments used during the observational stage and came to the following results:

Table 4.*The activity and conduct of the student within the collective (Observation sheet)*

	Frequency	%
Communicative, sociable, shows initiative	65	65
Passive, indifferent, does not show initiative	35	35
Isolated, uncooperative	0	0
Total	100	100,0

Table 5.*Generally, when you wish to discuss something with a classmate, how easy is it for you to communicate with him? (Questionnaire addressed to the students)*

	Frequency	%
Very easy	64	64
Easy	35	35
Fairly difficult	1	1
Very difficult	0	0
Total	100	100,0

Table 6.*Generally, when you want to ask your teachers something, to communicate something to them, how easy is it for you to start a conversation with them? (Questionnaire addressed to the students)*

	Frequency	%
Very easy	35	35
Easy	50	50
Fairly difficult	13	13
Very difficult	2	2,0
Total	100	100,0

The percentages registered in the final stage indicate a development in the ability to accommodate to the school group, to communicate and relate to classmates and teachers when compared to the initial stage, which validates the importance of the activities conducted by us during the ‘Counselling and

Guidance' classes, especially those in the 'Communication', 'Self-knowledge and Personal Development' and 'Classroom Management' units.

On the degree of cohesion of the preadolescent students' group relies its ability to regulate interindividual relationships, through positive and negative sanctions of the members' behavior. In school groups characterized by high level of cohesion, deviating from the norms is immediately sanctioned through a series of measures which can go as far as excluding the student from the group if he does not return to following the rules. The desire of the student to belong to the group, to be accepted by the others is reflected in the compliance with the common norms and the avoidance of manifestations of deviant behavior. If the group is characterized by a weaker cohesion, with several subgroups, the group may ignore a lack of conformation to the norms in certain students or may have weaker reactions, due to the lack of a consensus regarding the interpretation of behaviors (C. Neamțu, 2003).

Within the classroom, seen as a socio-educational group, the form teacher is the one who fulfills an important role in the planning, organization, directing and control of educational activities, ensuring the compliance with the rules of conduct stipulated in the school regulations. Through these activities, the manager of educational activities within the classroom contributes to the development of the preadolescents' personalities, helping them achieve the required accomplishments in order to integrate themselves into the school collective and, subsequently, into the socio-economic life.

As a manager of educational activities, the form teacher fulfills several roles (M. Stoica, 2005, pp.240-241), among which we mention: organizing the classroom as a socio-educational group, ensuring its cohesion and dynamic; mediating and solving conflicts with pedagogical tact; preventing and combating behavioral deviations and school adaptation difficulties; using intervention strategies adapted to the particularities of the situations that arise.

In the purpose of fulfilling these roles, the form teacher can use the following educational strategies: differentiated instruction strategies, intervention strategies for the prevention or resolution of individual or group conflicts, intervention strategies for addressing dysfunctions (M. Stoica, 2005, pp.241-242).

The strategy for the differentiated instruction of the students – involves the use of instructive-educational methods that are appropriate to the abilities and interests of each student. The intervention strategy for the prevention or resolution of individual or group conflicts involves: the active listening to the parties involved in the conflict; identifying the causes of the conflict; the analysis of the conflict; the confrontation and mediation of the parties; suggesting neutral, correct solutions for the resolution of the conflict;

evaluating the solutions and reaching the final decision; implementing the solution and evaluating its effectiveness.

The intervention strategy for the elimination of certain dysfunctions within the group involves: the intervention to obtain information on the socio-educational group; the intervention to sensitize the members of the group to certain actions or problems they are not aware of; the intervention for the removal from leadership of a leader who is not efficient in the organization of the group, generating conflicts; the intervention for the removal of certain inadequate attitudes, beliefs, or opinions.

With the help of systematic observation and the sociometric techniques developed by J. Moreno, the teacher can be aware of the network of affective relationships within the class (attraction, repulsion, indifference), with the intention of adopting certain measures and strategies that would aim at the optimal integration within the group of the isolated pupils.

5. Conclusions

The formation and development of the collective group of students in the 5th grade implies a series of changes within it, a group dynamic which influences the development of each student's personality. The dynamic character of the collective of preadolescent students is reflected in the structural changes which take place within it and which are aimed at the interpersonal relations between the students. As all students are integrated within the system of interpersonal relationships, the transition from a predominantly formal structure to a predominantly informal structure of the group of students is achieved. The integration of the preadolescent students in the system of interindividual relations is accomplished through the gradual compliance with the requirements of the classroom group, through the transformation of the members' behavior in agreement to the groups' expectations. To ameliorate the difficulties that can accompany the group integration process of the 5th grade pupils, the teaching staff, particularly the form teacher, must act in accordance to the group's syntality, to the age-level characteristics of the preadolescents and their individual particularities by: engaging the students in the analysis and development of school rules; establishing, from their very first meetings, certain rules that would be aimed at all aspects of their coexistence; encouraging students to express their opinions in what concerns the normative character of the group. The similarity between their personal opinions and that of the group will increase the attraction of the pupil towards the group, contributing to the cohesion of the collective.

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THE IMPACT OF TRAINING OF TYPICAL STUDENTS: KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS STUDENTS WITH BLINDNESS AND VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS

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Abstract.*The purpose of this study was to evaluate the knowledge and attitudes of typical students towards students with blindness and visual impairment (BVI) and if the 4-day training for blindness and visual impairment will result in more positive attitudes about students with BVI. Attitudes of 30 participants (18 females, 12 males) were assessed by questionnaire. Effects of 4-day course were tested by comparing pre-training and post-training answer of typical students. After the course, students showed a significant increase in their knowledge about students with BVI ($t = -5.794$; $p < .05$). Median response at initial questionnaire was 15.5 (± 8.46) and at finally questionnaire were 25.8 (± 3.26). This finding is consistent with the increase in correct answers on the pre-post testing. We can conclude that many of the problems of inclusion of children with BVI can be avoided or reduced if the typical development children have prior information about visual impairment and blindness.*

Key words:*students with blindness and visual impairments, typical development students, knowing, attitudes*

Introduction

In view of the trend towards increased inclusion, the placement of children with blindness and visual impairments (BVI) into inclusive educational settings is likely to increase in Republic of Macedonia. Inclusive education provides opportunities for the development of appropriate knowledge and attitudes towards students with BVI. Blindness and visual impairment should not limit the child's ability to compete with her/his peers. Full inclusion

occurs when a child with BVI is accepted by her/his peers as a member of the regular class. To this end, regular classrooms should be provided with adequate support to effectively enhance inclusion (Dakwa, 2009; Stainback & Stainback, 2004). Dakwa (2009) discusses factors necessary for successful inclusion of the children with BVI: An acceptable and flexible general education classroom teacher; Peer acceptance and interaction; Available personal support; and Adequate supplies of equipment for the child who is blind and for the one with low vision.

Research has long established that changing attitudes towards students with disabilities requires, both, information about these disabilities and experience with people with disabilities (Bandy & Boyer 1994; Carroll et al., 2003; Cook et al., 2000; Lombard et al., 1998; Trump & Hange 1996; Westwood & Graham 2003; Wishart & Manning 1996). Inclusion facilitates both of these requirements.

Positive attitudes of typically developing students may lead to accepting students with BVI. As stated by Nowicki and Sandieson (2002), negative attitudes of peers are a barrier to making inclusive education happen. According to Gall, Borg and Gall (1996, p. 273): “an attitude is an individual’s viewpoint or disposition toward a particular ‘object’ (a person, a thing, an idea, etc.)”. Attitudes are furthermore considered to consist of three components: 1) cognitive, 2) affective and 3) behavioral (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993; Triandis, 1971). The cognitive component consists of an individual’s beliefs or knowledge about the ‘object’. Feelings about the ‘object’ refer to the affective component. With regard to the behavioral component, this reflects someone’s predisposition to act towards the ‘object’ in a particular way (De Boer, 2012, p.). Beliefs, whether good or bad, appropriate or not, reflect the cognitive component of attitudes.

Previous research on typically developing students’ attitudes did examine variables like gender, age, and experience with inclusive education (Nowicki & Sandieson, 2002). We can note that are not enough research about influence of training of typical students on positive attitudes towards students with BVI. Considering this, we defined two research questions: what are typical students' general knowledge and attitudes towards students with BVI, and can we change it with implementation of informative general course about students with BVI.

Methodology

Participants

The sample consisted of thirty (n = 30) typically developing students (randomly selected) who participated in the study of which 60% were females and 40% male, aged eleven to twelve years. Regarding the level of parents ‘education, 17 (56.7%) students had parents with a High School

Diploma, and 13 (43.3%) had a Bachelor's degree. When asked if they had previous contact with a student with a BVI, 22 participants responded yes, while 8 participants answered no.

Settings

The sessions of the 6-hour course were held in the one regular classroom (V grade) at the Primary school “Kiril Pejcinovic” in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. The participants had attended a 1.5-hour lecture every day (4 days a week). Each session consisted of a power point presentation and videos. In order to complete the research without disturbing the ethical issues, the school principal provides confirmation from the parents of their pupils for the participation in the study. Data were collected during the first (pre) and last (post) sessions of the 4-day course, with time allocated during these sessions to complete the questionnaire.

Instrument

Students were asked to complete a modified version of the Questionnaire from Hineck (1981) and 4 demographic items pertaining to personal details (age, gender, level of education of parents, contact with persons with BVI). The modified version of the Questionnaire was used as it was designed to measure level of students' knowledge about educations of BVI students and possible negative attitudes associated with discomfort that some students experience when interacting with a person with a BVI. The modified questionnaire was consisted of 16 items with *close ended questions*, requiring respondents to questions about: some characteristics, way of educations of students with blindness and interaction with those students (1-11 items); and way of educations of students with visual impairments (12-16 items).

Procedures

The 4-day training involved a one-hour lecture. The training content of the 4-day general course was divided into four themes: a) Overview of Eye Conditions, b) Literacy, c) Orientation and Mobility (O&M), and d) Methods and Tools. In the first theme, the major topics covered the different types of visual impairment, way of seeing of students with visual impairments (e.g. glaucoma, cataract, etc.), reasons of BVI, and the way how the students with BVI are getting information from their environment (tactile, auditive, olfactory, etc.). The second lecture was focused on the Braille alphabet, and a reading and writing with this letters. In the third lecture, a few O&M techniques and devices were provided (e.g. white cane, human guide, etc.). Last one was focused on specific characteristics in education of students with visual impairment (large print, optical device, additional light, etc.).

Data Analysis

Gained data were presented in table and figures. Descriptive analysis, chi-square test, frequencies and percentages were used. A paired samples t-test

compares the mean difference was used to identify any significant differences between the pre- and post- testing by determining the 95% confidence intervals for the differences in the means.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The pre- and post- test results on thirteen items from questioner are presented in Table 1. On those questions, student could choose “yes-no” responses.

Table 1. Correct answer Pre- and Post-Training

Items	Pre-testing		Post-testing	
	N	%	N	%
1. Students with blindness do not hear better	1	3.3	22	73.3
2. Students with blindness can read and write	24	80	30	100
3. Students with blindness use letter with dots	17	56.7	30	100
4. Louis Braille invited letter for blind	2	6.7	26	86.7
5. Person with blindness can move independently by using a different devices	14	46.7	25	83.3
8. Students with blindness can achieve same school results as their sighted peers	7	23.3	21	70
9. I will fill comfortable when I meet students with BVI	19	63.3	25	83.3
10. I want to have a friend with BVI	26	86.7	28	93.3
12 Students with VI can achieve same school results as their sighted peers	15	50	24	80
13 Most of students with VI use books with large print	24	80	28	93.3
14 Most of students with VI read better with additional light	25	83.3	30	100
15 The picture in books for most of students with VI must be enlarged with more contrast	17	56.7	26	86.7
16 Most of students with VI use optical device	10	33.3	21	70

After the training of the study, students showed a significant increase in their knowledge and positive attitudes about students with BVI ($t = -5.794$; $df=11$; $p < .05$). Median response at initial questionnaire was 15.5 (± 8.46) and at finally questionnaire were 25.8 (± 3.26). This finding is consistent with the increase in correct answers that was indicated in the pre-post testing.

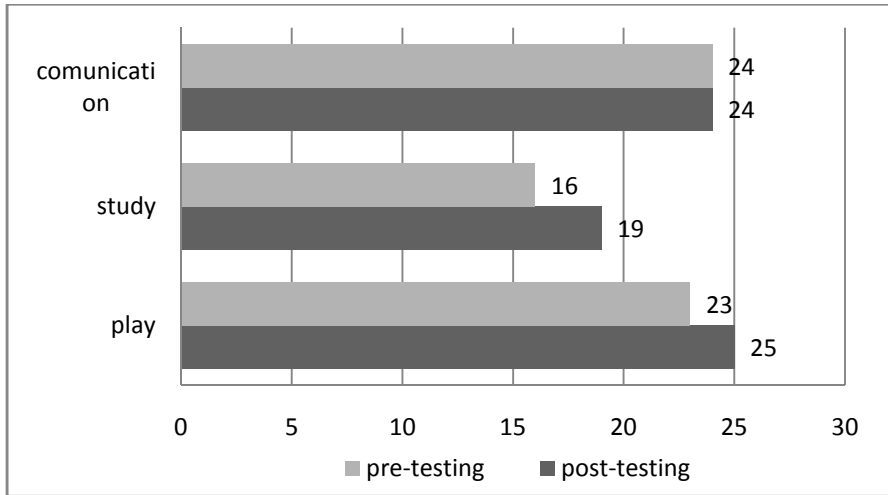


Figure 1. Interaction with students with blindness

Many students want to play together with students with blindness (pre- 76.6%; post- 83.3%), study (pre- 53.3%; post- 63.3%) and communicate (pre- and post- testing 80%). From Figure 1 we can conclude that results on item 11 at pre- and post-training are not significantly changed. Namely, typical students have positive attitudes towards children with blindness.

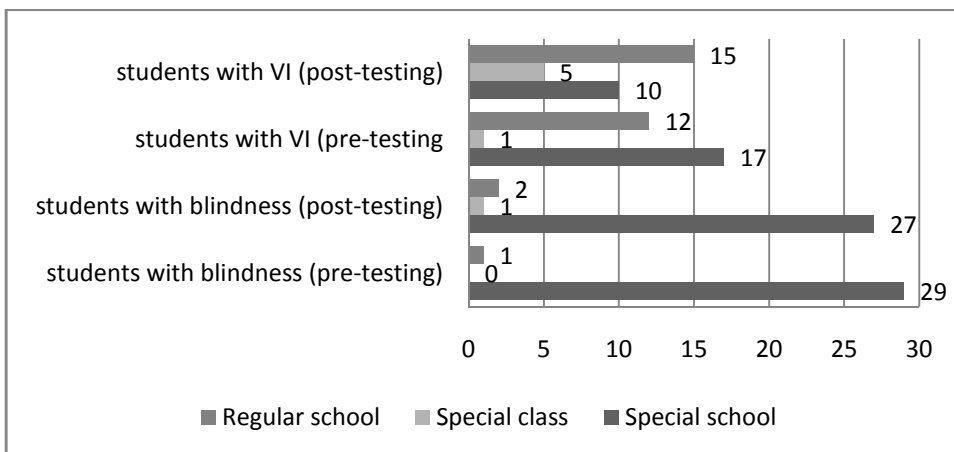


Figure 2. Pre- and Post-Training place of education of students with BVI

On the 6 and 7 items, students were asked to answer where the students with BVI should be educated: special school, special class at regular school, or regular class. The results are presented in Figure 2. There was no significant difference in regard to students' opinion about the place of education of students with blindness ($\chi^2=1.404$; $df=2$; $p>.05$) and students with visual impairments (VI) ($\chi^2=4.814$; $df=2$; $p>.05$) from the pre- and post- training. It was also noted that the typically students in pre- and post- testing show

greater willingness to accept the students with VI in regular classes than students with blindness.

Conclusion

In total, the data presented above show a very clear trend—typically students included in the 4-day training showed a significant improvement in knowledge about students with BVI.

Compared to typically developing peers, students with special educational needs (SEN) experience significant more difficulty in being accepted (Frederickson, Simmonds, Evans & Soulsby, 2007; Nowicki, 2003; Pijl, Frostad & Flem, 2008) and have significant fewer friendships (Koster, Pijl, Nakken & Van Houten, 2010). Pijl et al. (2008) reported that 30% of students with SEN are rejected by their peer-group in class. Similarly, BVI children have been found to have fewer friends than their sighted peers (Keff, 1997). But, results in our research show that largest number of typically students will like to have friends with blindness (pre-testing 86.7%; post-testing 93.3%).

One of the personal factors that might influence a person's attitude is whether students have any previous or ongoing contact with a student with a SEN. In our sample, 73% of students have had contact with person with BVI. Maybe this is one of the reasons of their positive attitudes.

General, we can conclude that many of the problems of social inclusion of children with BVI can be avoided or reduced if the typical development children have prior training about visual impairment and blindness. Also, exposure to students of all types of visual impairment, on a daily basis allows typical students to see that, just like themselves, students with BVI have strengths and weakness. More fundamentally, participants in such training will need to be given structured opportunities to experience inclusive education in reality. It is our opinion that inclusion and previous general informing the school staff and peers about general characteristic of students with BVI is one of the essential components in the process of eliminating barriers and building positive attitudes.

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND OPTIMIZATION OF BEHAVIOURAL FEATURES THROUGH THERAPEUTIC STORIES

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Abstract. *This article is presenting a very important aspect of nowadays education. Teachers had always been concerned in using proper teaching- learning strategies and instruments so they can get where they should: the child. Therapeutic stories are used in a modern education especially to develop and optimize interested features. These stories help children to face real life problems but not by confronting with them directly. They offer positive circumstance for a better development of their behavior. This is also a great means for teachers to create closer relationship with children through these stories. In this article there is also a study case presented, on how the therapeutic story help improving the behavior of an aggressive child. The result shows that there are indeed improvements in the behavior of children and this should be a great example together with others of how to use this method in kindergartens and also in primary schools.*

Key words: *education,behaviour, stories, development, therapy*

1. Introduction

The world of stories is a world in which the characters are big or small, good or evil, friends or enemies, a world where everything is possible. This land of fairy tales is high in richness but also has a healing force. A story represents conflicts and their possible solutions focusing on emotions. It conveys through the narrative a life experience, a problematic situation, a layout, each of them competing to find a solution through the involvement of the author with his entire personality. It tries to maintain the unity and harmony between as many elements as possible. The story appeals to intuition and fantasy not reason or logic. Through the therapeutic message the most bitter life lessons are affectively sweetened.

2. Theoretical foundation

Stories hide a world full of mysteries, they transmit values from generation to generation, they carry you in a world where no other vehicle could take you, and they are a guide on an unsecure road. Through stories important lessons were transmitted. There are many kinds of stories and an important category of stories is the one of **therapeutic stories**. Yes, any story could be transformed but some were written especially for this purpose: healing, helping, developing abilities, solving problems and helping the ones who listen to make decisions. If art, music and games are involved, they become even more efficient. Can stories really “heal”? Do they have these miraculous powers? Remember the childhood stories told by our parents or grandparents in front of the fireplace. What were they like? Do you remember how they used to calm you, fill your mind with ideas, hopes and dreams? The stories used to work even during the night and dreaming, and in the morning you woke up happier. Stories always had a healing role; maybe that is the reason they were so endeared by the children and adults too. Because, consciously or unconsciously, in the end we all felt better and less burdened. Through a story we can have more confidence, we can solve many of our children’s fears or we can even defuse a conflict. The stories can be either written by famous authors or we can even create them ourselves.

Therapeutic stories are not only stories. They always transmit a well defined message and have a precise purpose. A therapeutic story must be well chosen, depending on the problem that should be solved by the therapist, story teller or the parent. The therapeutic story has as its characters people, animals or even objects. For example, it does not matter for a child if the character is a person or an object; he will identify himself with that character because he “sees” himself in the same situation. Such stories, used in therapy, can get to the center of the problem easier than any other therapeutic techniques and they reach a deep level. The child does not feel as he is evaluated, he does not feel broken. The world of tales is a magical one especially for children and this world is filled with imagination, color and beautiful events. (Cotici, M., *Dezvoltarea-optimizarea eoþională și comportamentală la preșcolari prin intermediul poveștilor terapeutice*). The child will know exactly what he needs to take out from the therapeutic story. The role of the therapeutic stories is to put the child in touch with his needs, wishes and problems. In the moment when this happens, the child identifies himself with the character in the story and finds possible solutions to his problems. Of course, this doesn’t happen at the first contact of the child with the story, but after he reflects on it and processes the information. The therapeutic story represents gaining an experience for the children, because they learn through experiences. The therapeutic story can also be called healing story. This is because its final purpose is to bring healing to the child

regardless of his problem. It does not criticize him, does not force him to change but opens the way for the child to identify with some of the characters and the transposition of the solution in the story to his own situation. However, this type of story cannot be explained, it does not give solutions, or verdicts but it lets itself understood by the one who understands it. The therapeutic stories have various subjects. They focus, generally, on negative aspects such as aggressiveness, fury, sadness, death, separation, loss, but also have subjects and beautiful events from the life of the child, but ones that can create anxiety: adoption, beginning of school, the birth of a sibling. Not any story is therapeutic. First of all, these stories are chosen depending on the situation of the child in the respective moment. It is the story that fits the problem of the listener, but uses other characters to tell it. This way, the child does not feel directly involved, does not feel the need to resist because "it is not about him". Also the child can realize that he is not alone in having negative experiences and that there are others who also go through similar situations and find solutions to their problems. It is necessary to give a special attention to choosing these stories. It is difficult to identify therapeutic stories that can be read to a group of children. It is possible that one story affect negatively a child, while the rest of the group understands it positively. Stories give a sense of security to children. They offer the possibility of a projection, a fantasy where the child feels protected, and this differing from the reality he lives in. therapeutic stories comfort the child more effectively than rational motivations. The reasons of the stories are experienced by the child as being wonderful; his deepest fears, needs and wishes are reflected as a response. (Goicea, D., *De ce povestea terapeutică*). Stories answer eternal questions: "How is the world in reality? How can I live in it? How can I find my real self? What will I become? What is the purpose of life?" The answers of the stories are not direct. They say important things about the world and the human nature, but it depends on the child's imagination and needs to understand what is said. It depends on the child what he chooses to apply to his own situation. The therapeutic story has three functions. The first function is the "mirror" function, projected by the emotional needs of the subject. This activates a richness of images making possible the shaping of the message according to the subject's structure and this is the first favorable reaction of the therapeutic process. The second favorable step is due to the fact that the image in the mirror separates the subject from his life experience. The second function is the function of "models". It reveals the possible solutions leaving space for the personal options. The third function is the "mediator" function. The hero is the subject and not the actual patient. It is very important and necessary the creative ability of the therapist towards every story which he should change according to each subject's needs.

3. Directions and causes of the problem

In the case of therapeutic stories, the domains in which the problems appear have no importance. Regardless if it is about the social, the professional or the familial domain, the therapeutic stories have the same role: the identification of the solutions or the change of perspective. The possible causes for appealing to this type of stories are when we realize that a child has moments of sadness or anxiety and we don't identify their cause, or when the child fears darkness, when he doesn't want to eat a certain type of food, to convince the child to relax and fall asleep, to identify the cause of a certain aggressive behavior. These are just a few examples of situations that lead to the appearance of the therapeutic stories. The therapeutic stories for children are apparently simple, with humans or animals as characters that live common, everyday life events. The therapeutic stories for adults, on the other hand are filled with metaphors and the language used is more loaded. These stories are the ones through which a person understands or defines his own situation and finds his solution. By telling someone about your experience or personal situation you can find the solution or you can ease the emotional load and this is the immediate therapeutic effect. Children talk even more through stories. The characters of the stories and the events help the very much to understand and clarify their own dilemmas and kneading. The transposition in story does not change the exterior situation in reality but the child's perception and his ability to cope with a situation is clarified and improved. Sometimes, sharing the story with the parent even helps to change the real situation.

The stories created by children also have therapeutic roles beyond imagination, creativity, logic and language. The word has a magical power, it can heal if is said when, where and by who is needed. It acts like a force. The therapeutic story is told and not read. It has to be the connection between body and soul, thought and gesture, living and expression. It cannot be told by anyone, anywhere and anyhow. Starting from a real or fantastical case, this story acts like a mediator of pain and sufferance, bringing the suffering one closer to a world where he can defeat fear, insecurities, loneliness and where he can discover hope and chance. This is when the therapeutic story reaches its goal.

4. Recent perspectives

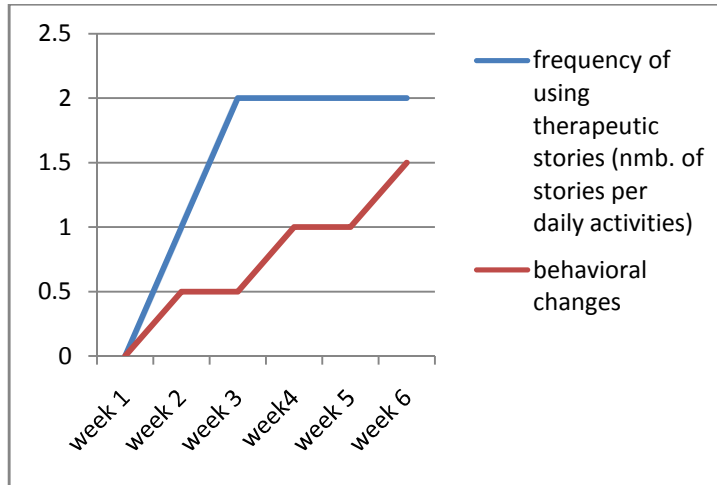
Recent perspectives on therapeutic stories include creating our own stories or allowing the children to create them. This way are created new ideas and examples on how can we deal with challenges. There are stories that use the child as character or stories where the characters are other children, animals or objects. When creating a therapeutic story we should try

to deal with only one main problem, the character that faces the problem should be similar to the child who has a certain issue. The story should offer the solution to the problem and end positively, with the character managing to deal with the problem. We should be creative and illustrate the character with the help of the children. Another feature concerns the fact that we should make it funny but also responsibly and tactfully. While telling the story, which is interactive, we should adapt because the involvement of the child is the most important in order to reach the aim of the therapeutic story.

5. Study case

For example, in the case of the preschooler T.T. who is 5 years old, he does not accept anyone around him; he is marginalized and aggressive towards the other children in his group whether it is during activities or playing. He is a single child, he lives in an apartment and the relations between the subject and his parents are ones of love, care and protection. At preschool he was violent from the first time he was introduced to the group and tried to gain everyone's attention by any means. He has a hard time concentrating on certain activities but he also distracts the other children's attention by inappropriate attitudes. The other children avoid him continuously accusing the fact that he is abusive. His behavior was due firstly to his parents who by the time he was 4, gave him everything in return for nothing and did not ask him to obey any rule. After talking to his parents he was put under observation because of his behavior hoping that with the help of therapeutic stories positive changes will be made in his behavior making him conscious of the impact that he has on others when he is aggressive but also the consequences of such a behavior.

The program in which he was included started with the observation of his behavior for several days in different moments of a day. The research process started from the **hypothesis** that if therapeutic stories were introduced in his daily activity, there will be positive progress in his behavior. There were 2 **variables** included. First, the independent one, which was the use of therapeutic stories, but only ones that were similar to the issues he was confronting. There were used different stories, based on images also. At the end, there was a time to ask questions or to make comments on the listened story. The second one, was the dependent variable, the changes in his behavior. The main **instrument** used to gradually check the results was the observation. There is also a chart that presents the gradual improvement of the stage in which changes were made in the behavior of the subject but also the range in which the use of therapeutic stories made improvements on the behavior of the subject.



6. Intervention

The first step of the methodology of intervention is the approach of the study, by analyzing the actual situation of the subject, his abilities, his behavior, his strengths and faults. Another step is referring to the psychological observations. He is intelligent, his language is rich, has a logical memory, rich imagination, little focusing, egocentric, external motivation, lack of balance in affectivity. Regarding the social relations and his sociability the relation between his parents is in harmony, based on love, respect, trust and mutual support. The father is very permissive, letting the subject to do whatever he wants. He has an important role in the education of the subject; he takes him to preschool and any other extracurricular activities. The mother's parenting style is a democratic one; she is balanced affectively and does not overwhelm the subject with protection. His friends are all older than him and in his group he has only two children whom he has sympathy for. The relations with the children who are his age are tensed, everyone avoiding him because of his aggressive and boring behavior. The pedagogical data show us that he used to be moved from one preschool to another until the age of 4. His learning style is visual, he learns rapidly everything he sees, and likes to touch and observe the materials he comes in connection with. His favorite activities are the ones belonging to the scientific area especially the ones concerning nature and mathematics. He does not like languages and communication and neither aesthetic nor creative activities. He likes competitions, but most of the time he is not honest, he cheats and when he is eliminated from the game he cries and becomes aggressive. He does not accomplish his duties during activities, he gets bored easily. He does not cooperate; he either wants to solve it by himself or does not solve anything at all. The next step is the elaboration of strategies of action. At personal level: stimulation of motivation for cooperation and

helping; modification of the attitude of the child through group work; the modification of his attitude towards the group and the relations in the group. At the level of the group: the creation of more situations in which they should work in groups, a higher level of solicitations in the group, making the child responsible during activities, especially group activities. The level of all factors concerns the parents, colleagues and friends.

The last step is taking the decision of improving the behavior. This step includes elaborating a personalized intervention plan by using specific strategies and therapeutic stories. (Burns, W. G., *101 Healing stories for kids and teens*). Its aim is to intensify the relations and the involvement in every kind of activities and to favor sociability. The subject's problem is that his relation to those who are his age is problematic but with the help of this plan it is aimed to intensify his attitude towards other children's problems, the optimization of his focusing abilities and minimization of negative behavior as well as sharing duties with those who are in his group. The observations and the experiment took place in the course room, periodically, based on certain criteria. The objectives of the experiment are: the identification of the role of therapeutic stories in the children's behavior, the level of communication, level of involvement in activities and the relations between the children; the analysis of the relation between socio metric indicators and the level of communication of preschoolers; the analysis of the relation between socio metric indicators and the level of communication between children.

7. Analyses of the results

The results after the intervention include a progress regarding his involvement in didactic activities as well as modification of his attitude towards his colleagues through creating relations in the group. With the help of therapeutic stories and the organization of activities in a manner of cooperation, a progress is noticed. After the therapeutic stories being read during activities, the subject is capable at the end of the experiment to argument any choice or decision made. If at the beginning of the experiment he only talked to others when strictly necessary, at the end of the experiment he improved his negative behaviors and often communicated with others even initiating discussions. It is not a problem for him anymore if the colleagues do not offer him their help. During the experiment, it was noticed a high level of independence and assuming responsibility. We can conclude that the therapeutic stories did not have an immediate effect on the subject, the progress being obvious only after a while. When there is a blocking in expressing the feelings and emotions of a child the therapeutic story can determine him to reevaluate the situation, determining him to open his soul, offering him a state of wealth both physically and emotionally. The

therapeutic story determines the violent child to reflect over his behavior, to correct it when necessary and offer him behavioral models that can be followed. The one who is introvert, quiet and lonely can find a gate towards word, towards communication. Lack of self confidence makes a child who is always a spectator, never an actor.

8. Discussion

The therapeutic story offers variants; problems and emotions can be described. At the end of the story it is useful and necessary to have a period of questions because they have the goal of identifying problems, obstacles, but also solutions. After this it is advised to ask the children to embody, if they want, the fact that had a special impact on them by drawing, painting this leading to a better interpretation on the teacher's behalf of what changes did the therapeutic story bring in their lives. Parents or teachers have surely noticed at least once the reaction of a sad child when a sad story is read to him. He enters that world and lives, finds himself, makes comparisons with the real world, he wants to interact with the characters of the story. This is the task of every story but especially of the therapeutic one. The characters can be from the world of the child. He can "make" it they way he wants it. He can either modify it or accept the listened one. The children's reactions after the story reading are extraordinary. They go from sadness to exuberance, from tears to shouts of joy, from quietness to the continuous wish of communicating impressions and even from physical violence to the wish for protection. Through the stories the children can meet different situations: emotional, familial and social ones. These are about themes from the reality, using a known and simple language; it helps them to live different events in a secure circumstance, supporting them in their development both physically and emotionally. The plus of fantasy in this kind of stories and intuition allows the revealing and finding a solution to conflicts due to the fact that the story which has a therapeutic message is a proper vehicle for behavioral models and ethical values. The therapeutic message is absorbed by the subject and incorporated to his own thoughts while the knowledge is fed by the verbal image and the narration itself. The message is not imposed by a final ethic conclusion but it ends up by being identified by the subject. The therapeutic story brings totally unexpected solutions with a positive emotional effect. It can be used in any combination with any techniques and at any level of the therapeutic process. Beside the attractive images, art, role play and dramatizations this story has a positive impact on children and leads to a balanced development both emotionally and on the level of the behavior. The stories don't have side effects unless they are used without a precise goal. As it was said before some stories may not be proper for every child in a group. The therapist should cooperate with the parent in using the

therapeutic stories. It is advisable to create the stories together with the parent, stories that concern the existing problem, stories that can be read by parents before bedtime or in quiet family moments. It is recommended to use these stories when the child faces minor problems. For greater problems it is necessary to consult a professional therapist. We notice especially the fact that the utility of the therapeutic stories is indicated to all categories of subjects regardless of age or level of education. Even if some might see the psychotherapy with the help of stories as a way of manipulation, at a better look they can notice the contrary, due to the fact that the subconscious has its own way of protecting itself and it does not let itself easily manipulated as some might think. In this context, the action of the stories is manifested through a constructive reaction of knowledge at the level of personal beliefs and not through a simple manipulation.

9. Conclusions

The story, common or not, included in a book or not, can become a starting point in approaching the child when he doesn't feel like talking about his feelings and emotions. The child looks for nothing else in the story than himself, trying to find his ego, this way the therapeutic story must be a source of energy and joy, offering the child a warm, luminous and pleasant perspective over the events in his life. Through the power of the word the world of the suffering one moves differently, giving uniqueness to every moment. Every one of us have our own story, some of us a happy one, some a sad one...and some a personal one. Some of us are willing to make our story known by others and some of us choose silence. It is the same for children. It is very important that when we choose a story to know the difficulties encountered by the children but also the types of stories, their characteristics and the therapeutic function they can have.

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HOW TO STIMULATE FUTURE TEACHER-STUDENTS TO PARTICIPATE IN SPECIFIC INSTRUCTIVE-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITIES

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Abstract. *Teacher training is one of the concerns of the educational policy which is more and more required in its pragmatics, as related to the development of the social environment. As initial teacher training is the first step in professionalizing the teaching career, we consider stimulating the participation of future teacher-students in specific activities to be important. Therefore, starting from the clarification of the conceptual framework, we intend to verify to what extent the use of certain models and teaching strategies encourage the opportunities of active learning by stimulating students to get involved. There was observed an improvement in the results obtained by the students in the groups we worked with, as a result of the amending research we had unfolded. The findings are based on results obtained from implementing the independent variable and it also emphasizes the practical aspects of strategies that can optimize active participation achieved by cooperation and by being computer aided. It follows that modern information technology can be successfully used in the initial training of future teachers whereas collaborative learning stimulates the active involvement of students.*

Keywords: *initial training, students, group, collaborative learning, informational technologies*

1. Introduction

The theoretical framework of this theme is generous and enters the area of research on optimizing teaching activities specific to the training of future teachers. The efficiency and effectiveness of teacher education systems depend on the substance of the concept it underlies on, its parts generating a specific strategy for teacher training. Initial and continuous training of teachers has become one of the concerns of contemporary society. This

process relates to the educational policies and programs designed to shape in the future teachers skills that are necessary to perform specific tasks and roles resulting from their statute.

In the mid 1980s, some states have adopted “alternative routes to teacher training” that were created in order to attract people with bachelor's degree who want to teach in schools. Feistritz E. (2005), founder of the “National Center for Education Information”, collected and analyzed data on alternative routes to teacher training [1]. We can assert that political cooperation at EU level has led to a broad description of the types of attributes that teachers in Member States have to possess.

The resources available on the Internet are increasingly used to support teacher training, the effectiveness of teacher training policy depending mainly on the quality of the structures and mechanisms designed to support it and on the available resources to achieve its objectives. We believe that fostering the participation of students-future teachers derives from their trainers' option for methodological alternation.

The paradigm of alternatives is essential in the formation and activity of the educator and the cognitive, methodological and organizational alternation (understood as a sign of flexibility and creative adaptation to different situations) contributes to creating a formative style in action. The concept of experience achieves, thus, a higher meaning, based on reflection, perception and problem solving, critical self-analysis, communication and collaboration.

2. Conceptual framework

2.1. Aspects of initial teacher training

The initial training is the construction of a set of skills that enable the individual to act creatively and flexibly in the field he trains himself. The experience of many countries in professionalization proves positive; they can therefore be used as a source of inspiration in the process of readjustment and restructuring of the teaching profession in Romania.

In Anglo-Saxon countries, teacher training focused on the idea of professionalism and in specifically Latin countries they have focused on the intellectual training of teachers. Ph. Perrenoud (2001) has a number of studies on teacher training. He suggests three steps that must be taken in the initial training: identification and construction of cognitive resources (including knowledge), mobilization, implementation of practical internship situations (simulation exercises, role playing, problem solving) and their registration in a reflective register to activate the student to become its own engine in the professionalisation process [2].

In the Unites States, one third of the new teachers come from alternative routes of teacher certification [3]. H.R. Milner talks about de-professionalization in American political reforms. From this angle of

responsibility and increase of the quality of teachers, training models take into account the ways that lead to increased performance in standardized tests. It can be considered that this approach is the added value of the professionalisation endeavour of teachers. Comparing professionalization and de-professionalization according to the added value, there is stress on the importance of the standardized assessment system and the subjects taught, but it also highlights the pressure on teachers to give tests, the reference to the added value mentioned and the responses to the pressures of the added value – teachers cheating to increase student test scores [4].

In Romania, there were performed investigations in the problem of teacher training, the research directions including: developing models and initial and continuing training programs (Mitrofan N., E. Păun, Niculescu R.M, Iucu R., Joița E., Maciuc I.), the analysis of the skills taxonomy of an ideal teacher and the development of occupational standards for a teaching career (Cristea S., Călin M., Potolea D. Toma S.), the identification of training and professional development needs (Păun E., Ionescu M., Pânișoară I., Gligor L., Jinga I.), the teacher's personality (Mitrofan N., Neacșu I., Dragu A.). According to the results of a recently completed research, initial teacher training corresponds to the needs of the teaching profession in terms of scientific content and, to a lesser extent, in terms of teaching and managerial skills. One of the work premises (partially confirmed) refers to the main causes contributing to the lack of adequate quality of initial teaching training.

These are the low motivation of students who are preparing to become teachers and the specific national legislation [5]. Moreover, in Romania the attitude of students (motivation) – as well as the teaching methods –is a compulsory indicator in the external evaluation of initial teacher training in the general educational system [6].

The strategies used in teaching indirectly influence the initial and/or continuous training, but they must take into account the specific of the training model, the general concept underlying the specific activities. From this point of view, the psycho-pedagogical literature of the 1980s was dominated by the cognitive psychology. As M.H. Dembo stated, “a new *ism* – constructivism – dominates the scene, and again many psychologists are convinced that they finally found the perspective. The buzzwords are now mental models, authentic tasks, and metaphors” [7]. It is estimated that “a (learning) situation should be a challenge that would engage students, would arouse their interest and would actively introduce them in understanding the tasks in order to achieve goals (...). A situation should present a real-life situation, in relation to the conditions that the learning unit allows” [8].

If passive learning is based on avoiding learning failure, on obtaining grades and external rewards (the most common strategies are memorizing,

minimizing the effort of studying and anticipating assessment exams), active learning is based on intrinsic reasons such as personal development and the desire to form specific competencies [9, 10, 11, 12].

2.2. The characteristic of group/team activity

Human beings have a social nature. They learn by interacting and depend on their interaction with other human beings. Creators of groups and shaped by these groups, each of us interlace personal life with social life. Groups are important for individuals as they achieve goals that are unaccomplishable for us as ordinary individuals, they meet specific psycho-social needs, they represent an antidote to anonymity and solitude, they are therapeutic by reducing the effects of stress by means of the social support offered, they provide security, ensure social identity (the more important the group is, the more group identity matters in concept and self-image).

Organizing students into groups aims at providing opportunities, including that of showing others what they know, how they documented, how they reported to objectives, how they approached their task or homework. Used in working with students, it capitalizes interpersonal relationships in solving learning tasks.

Working in homogeneous groups involves differentiation of tasks by level of cognitive development, of acquiring knowledge and training skills. The activity in heterogeneous groups involves a closer relation to the social reality we live in.

From this perspective, the teacher must start from the following questions:

- How can he group students to better solve tasks?
- What grouping shall I use (randomized or on a specific criterion, intentionally)?
- What kind of group do I intend to work with (more sophisticated, including students with personality, with academic knowledge or students chosen according to certain criteria)?
- Why is it important to know the leaders in a group and how will I refer to them?
- How should I plan training group situation so that each group member to make sense of personal experience and contribute to achieving the objectives?

There are *formal* and *informal groups*. The first are set by an organization in order to achieve organizational goals and they are classified in groups of control (specified by the chart), work groups (temporary, formed to carry out a project, to solve a task) and functional groups (created by the organization to achieve specific objectives in an unspecified period).

The configuration of groups varies as there is no single recipe for a group size.

The small, limited or initial group has some distinct features: it implies direct association and cooperation, face to face, it perceives membership in a certain way and the mutual influence is greater. In common language, a small group is also known by the term “team”. According to J.F. Leroy, the team is “an entity known by an organization, formed by a permanent or long-term group, made of interdependent individuals pursuing one or more common goals in a constraining context” [13]. Another operational collective configuration is *the self-directed team*, “a working group that has the chance to accomplish the stimulating task under reduced supervision” [14].

A valuable model is also that of *multifunctional teams*, supported by individuals with different specializations that contribute to accomplishing a project. Worth knowing is the term “performative team” which refers to that “group of individuals working together to stage a certain routine” [15].

From the perspective of the subject approached in this study the important part is *the training group (T-group)* because it is considered one of the most effective means for activating the group, encouraging cooperative learning. In building itself around the idea of “mutual learning”, of acquisition by appealing to the experience of others, *the T-group* has the following roles [16]:

- It encourages the spirit of research and experimentation in social relations, promoting the idea of self-information, by articulating the social context;
- It increases sensitivity to the expectations of others (enlarged interpersonal awareness);
- It provides greater authenticity in interpersonal relationships;
- It develops the ability to diagnose social situations (interpersonal, intergroup) to employ collaborative behavior and resolve conflict situations by engaging in problem solving.

The studies on the role of group dynamics and group/team work are numerous and they highlight the major impact that interaction has on human activities. The areas of interest include: developing a sense of responsibility within the group (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975), strategies on group dynamics in classrooms (Glasser, 1992; Stevens, 1998), conflicts specific to teamwork and negotiation inside the team (Shah & Jehn, 1993; Jehn, 1995, 1997; Amasonia, 1996; Thompson & De Harpport, 1998; Edmondson, Bohmer & Pissano, 2000) [17, 18]. A very good summary of articles published in scientific journals on this subject, is made by LR Frey, University of Colorado Boulder [19].

D. Harrington-Mackin mentions the following *advantages* of teamwork: a highly encouraging work environment, fast response to technological

change, proactive approach to problems, the development of staff skills. It also asserts the superiority of collective decisions as opposed to the individual ones [20].

We add, to the already mentioned positive aspects, other benefits on organizing groups, group or team work: the possibility of cooperation and mutual control, the stimulation of intellectual education in intensive and creative situations, the internalization of the social reasons of learning, the stimulation of moral education, with impact on social communication.

In terms of limits, especially if we talk as teachers, sometimes there are *difficulties* in working with small groups of students, related to their behaviour (students' behaviour may be too challenging, disruptive or unfocused on the purpose of the activity) [21].

It can be said that every team is a group (work group), but not every group is a team. Unlike the group, the *team* is defined by the following *main features*:

- The objectives are chosen, and their achievement is assumed;
- The leader is informal, and leadership may be taken by any of the team members, depending on the context;
- Responsibility is first of all common and then individual;
- Both interdisciplinary approach and changing roles are preferred;
- There are strict but unwritten rules;
- In case of success, the rewards are collective, development is achieved by spontaneous and effective actions (team building).

The research carried on by M. Deutsch lead to the idea that “constructive processes of conflict resolution are similar to cooperative processes of problem solving, and destructive processes of conflict resolution are similar to competitive processes” [22].

Competition brings poor interaction between mates, lack of communication and mutual trust. Instead, cooperation means a gain in terms of interaction, encouraging prosocial behaviour, facilitating other people's success and bringing understanding.

2.3. The importance of collaborative learning

Teaching is valuable only when it leads to learning. It states that “effective teaching must consider all of the students' characteristics in order to build novel learning experiences in the classroom; otherwise, students will find ways to access the required information from home, a library, or the mall” [23]. Therefore, it is recommended to encourage interactions in the classroom or seminar/ laboratory, “the teacher being a human agent whose main function is to initiate the acceleration of the changing rate of concepts and accomplish this characteristic” [24]. The best way to cause generative

learning and collaborative learning supports the understanding of different points of view, especially when it is facilitated by the computer.

Starting from the question “is collaborative learning a teaching method or a psychological process?” P. Dillenbourg believes that “the pedagogical sense is prescriptive: one asks two or more people to collaborate because it is expected that they will thereby learn efficiently. The psychological sense is descriptive: one observes that two or more people have learned and collaboration is viewed as the mechanism which caused learning” [25]. He argues that it is neither a mechanism nor a method.

Both the viability of the previously accomplished individual understanding and the outlining of some common aspects are seen in cooperation, which is an opportunity to find out how many construction alternatives may arise, what interpretations can be made and from what perspective [26]. The constructivist perspective can take two forms: cognitive perspective (does not deny the possibility of learning in groups) and social approach (does not infirm the value of working independently of the others).

Analyzing training from a constructivist perspective, E. Joița summarizes the contributions that highlight the role of group collaboration (Tinzmann, 1990; Gaines & Shaw, 1995; Murphy, 1997; Ouellet & Guilbert, 1997; Cicognani, 2000; Novak, 2000; Carter & Ching, 2001) in terms of social constructivism, stating that this was firstly promoted by the active school [27].

It is stated that “cooperative learning is a phrase used to describe small group strategies where each student is helped by others in learning. In fact, the success of each member is the success of the other members of the group” [28] and “cooperation is not levelled behaviour, but it is meant to create a space completed with a task that requires players to establish a functional interdependence which needs minimal cognitive conflicts” [29].

Collaborative learning provides general, organizational conditions for the exchange of ideas originally obtained at an individual and independent level, and subsequently at the front (*collaboration*). *The collaborative and cooperative learning model*, also called “mutual learning” [30] is relevant to the present research as it provides dynamic activation of each group member.

Reflecting a way of relating with others, collaboration becomes a condition of learning. Approached as a model that integrates external conditions of learning, collaborative learning may be associated to *the model of learning through problem solving*. It is observed that “some research (Poirer, 1997) advocates the affirmation of cooperation in small groups, even in pairs, to demonstrate the role of continuing involvement in discussions, in argumentation, in negotiation, in deepening meanings. Especially for pairs or a group of 3-4 students it is easier to shift from the subjective to the objective

knowledge through confrontation, correction, completion, re-structuring, eliminating confusion, reconstruction, internalization of new data, forming mental representations” [27].

In 1982, A. Whimbely and J. Lochhead described this strategy that involves thinking and learning in pairs, by rotating roles. Students are more involved and become more active [31]. *Using pairs in the problem solving method* is among the most effective teaching strategies, and when it is accompanied by information technologies, the active participation of students increases and leads to superior results on an emotional and cognitive level as well as on a social, relational and attitudinal level.

In an experimental study, S.D. Johnson and S.-P.Chung observed the effectiveness of a training strategy called “*Thinking Aloud Pair Problem Solving*” (TAPPS). Following a dyadic-learning procedure, two students work as a team and take turns playing the role of the problem solver. The non-solving student assumes the role of monitor, observes, critiques and evaluates the problem-solving performance. The goal is to make the problem solvers aware of what they know, what they can do, whether they are doing it correctly, and whether the process is reasonable [32]. *The strategy of thinking aloud in solving problems in pairs* has been used in other curricular contents (eg. Chemistry), as it is shown in a study by L.K.W. Lee in 1998 [33].

These models and strategies encourage the active learning opportunities, providing real-life examples, integrating new information technologies and multimedia. In recent years there has been more emphasis on the use of information technology in teaching: “Educational software packages, the World Wide Web, course web pages, email, discussion groups, bulletin boards and applications of audio, video, or computer-based multimedia, have changed teaching in all disciplines and at all levels” [34].

There is a number of “methods that integrate technology in classes or laboratories and seminars: Videos Explaining Concepts and Solutions to Problems, Screen-Capture Movies for Software Demonstrations and Tutorials, Animations Explaining Course Concepts, Group Web Sites, Electronic Forums, Web-Based Feedback, Virtual Office Hours, Real-Time Collaborative Computing” [35].

Roschelle (1995) proposed the term “collaborative technology” which was aimed at building common ways to perceive, react and know. He argues that technology can be a means by which the company builds common practice. We also believe that the implementation of new information and communication technologies in school has a number of *advantages*: it facilitates the individualization of instruction, its relatively low cost, the relative ease of access, a dynamic activity group, etc. Recent technical

progress has made the new services (multimedia services) together with the new infrastructure (information highways) become a reality.

The optimization approach of student-teacher participation in specific activities of their initial training is based on studies which emphasize the positive impact that technology has in a collaborative learning context. The most recent are: Wasson, Ludvigsen & Hoppe, 2003; Andriessen, Baker & Suthers, 2003; Strijbos, Kirschner & Martens, 2004; Bromma Hesse & Spada, 2005 [36], Resta & Laferriere, 2007; Tsue, 2009; Stahl, Lao, & Hesse, 2013; Burns, 2013 [37].

Reasons for using computer-supported collaborative learning include [38]:

- To prepare students for the knowledge society (collaboration skills and knowledge creation);
- To enhance student cognitive performance or foster deep understanding;
- To add flexibility of time and space for cooperative/collaborative learning;
- To foster student engagement and keep track of student cooperative/collaborative work (online written discourse).

Computer-supported collaborative learning is a pedagogical approach in which learning occurs through social interaction using a computer or the Internet. This type of learning is characterized by sharing and building knowledge among the participants who use technology as a primary means of communication or as shared resource.

Being approached as interaction, effect of the interaction, coordinated and synchronous activity, situation, mechanism, method, tool, social contract, principle, integrating concept, collaborative learning is, for us, *a social construct*, an effect of interaction which emphasizes the meaning that each participant is given by personal experience from the perspective of achieving the joint aims (goals and objectives).

3. The purpose and objectives of the research

The action-research presented in this study lasted for two years (2013-2014 and 2014-2015), at the University of Craiova, as part of *the psychopedagogical training module*.

The purpose of this research is to encourage students-future teachers' participation, in specific educational and instructive activities, in the context of using certain teaching and learning strategies based on interaction and implementation of the information technology.

The research objectives relate to:

- Shaping the framework of the initial training of teachers;

- Highlighting the role of group activity in initial teacher training;
- Identifying models and optimization strategies of students-future teachers' participation in specific educational activities;
- Valorizing the advantages during a semester, during specific activities, in pedagogy classes.

In our research, we started from the following *general hypothesis*: The use of teaching strategies based on interaction and implementation of information technology facilitates and promotes the students-future teachers' participation in educational activities.

Derived from the general hypothesis, the *particular hypotheses* that have particularly interested us are:

- *Hypothesis 1*: Collaborative learning leads to increased student activism
- *Hypothesis 2*: The call to new information and communication technologies positively influence students' participation in educational activities.

The results were the basis for the conclusions of this study which shows the importance of group work and the need to stimulate students to participate in their professional training, during the initial training stage.

4. The Research Methodology

The research sample includes 118 students attending the courses of *the psycho-pedagogical training module*, students of the Faculty of Natural Sciences, Mathematics and Informatics, Chemistry and Physics specializations.

Being an ameliorative pedagogic research, we started from an initial position where we found the students' lack of involvement in the applied activities and we designed a teaching approach that would stimulate and motivate them more. The research lasted for over two semesters (the 2nd semester in the academic year 2013-2014 and the 1st semester in 2014-2015).

In order to test the hypotheses and to achieve the purpose and objectives, we used the following *methods and research tools*: the systematic observation (through an observation grid), the psycho-pedagogical experiment, the table, the graphical representation.

The stages that we followed during the investigation are:

1. Stage 1 (the second semester of the academic year 2013-2014):

- *Step 1*. Identify the students with a high level of involvement in teaching activities as well as the very good ones (based on the results in the partial evaluations and in the final evaluation at the end of the 1st academic year)

- *Step 2.* Detect “satellites”, students who feel comfortable around those in the first category (during applied activities in the seminar)
- 2. *Stage 2* (the first semester of the academic year 2014-2015):
 - *Step 3.* Organize activities in group sessions, involving those who integrate harder or have relationship difficulties, gaps in content, poor attendance at the educational activities (lectures and seminars)
 - *Step 4.* Implement strategies to optimize student participation in instructive and educational activities by using the computer
 - *Step 5.* Compare the training situations (the one designed during stage II and the one in stage I) based on reporting to some indicators that express the activism of the participants.

The indicators expressing activism include the number of interventions made by the students during the seminar activities. Aiming to know the level of participation in educational activities specific for *the psycho-pedagogical training module*, we registered the number of times each student intervened, during the 2nd semester of the first year (2013-2014), in the pedagogy course and seminar (“Fundamentals of Pedagogy” and “Curriculum Theory”).

Having as a reference point the interventions of students during specific activities we have registered in a table, at what extent students got involved, expressed in percentage level.

Table 1. *Level of student participation in activities specific to the pedagogy course*

Specialization	Level of participation							
	Unsatisfactory		Satisfactory		Good		Very good	
	No. of participants	Percentage	No. of participants	Percentage	No. of participants	Percentage	No. of participants	Percentage
Mathematics and Informatics (75 students)	23	30.67 %	19	25.33 %	22	29.33 %	11	14.67 %
Physics and Chemistry (43 students)	14	32.56 %	16	37.21 %	8	18.60 %	5	11.63 %

From the initial data can be observed that the number of students who are actively involved in seminars is low, they do not have the skills required to support dialogue, to initiate interpersonal relationships, to solve learning tasks by using a computer, to take responsibility in the interventions they made. The results in the final evaluation were themselves reference points

for the conscious and active involvement of students-future teachers and helped us in establishing a hierarchy on their psycho-pedagogical education.

In the second stage of the research, we insisted on implementing certain strategies to stimulate student involvement in the group of the two groups (*Mathematics and Informatics, Physics and Chemistry*), in educational activities. We put stress on *group work and pair work* (as we wanted to valorize interpersonal preferences, too) and on *computer use* in preparing applications and in organizing and presenting themes based on solving certain teaching tasks that were specific to the learning process (in accordance with the curriculum frameworks and the curricula appropriate for the training of future teachers).

The strategy that was thought and considered the *independent variable* of the research was implemented during the first semester of the academic year II (2014-2015) in the course of “The Theory and Methodology of Education” and “The Theory and Methodology of Evaluation”.

To determine whether the research hypotheses are confirmed, we compared, at the end of the intervention period, both the degree of involvement of students in the two groups in seminar activities and the final exam results.

That way we graduated the difficulty and the number of the requirements according to the training time given in the curriculum of the discipline mentioned.

After implementing the independent variable, we compared (at the end of the first semester of academic year II) the students’ level of involvement, using the following *observational indicators* (which we translated into items – I₁, I₂, I₃ and I₄):

1. *Solving problematical training tasks in small groups* (I₁ total: 42 – Group G₁; 35 – Group G₂);
2. *Systematic interventions (through verbal communication – oral and written) resulting from cooperative learning* (total I₂: 53 – Group G₁, 38 – Group G₂);
3. *Power Point Presentation of practical assignments (with a practical side) made in pairs* (total I₃: 37 – Group G₁; 24 – Group G₂);
4. *Prezi Presentations made in small groups* (total I₄: 31 – Group G₁; 12 – Group G₂).

After summarizing the data associated with each item, we registered the number of interventions for each grade and obtained the following results:

Table 2. *Percentage achieved by the students of the two groups in the indicators expressing active involvement*

Groups of	Interventions of students – level of participation			
	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Good</i>	<i>Very good</i>

students	Item	No.	%	Item	No.	%	Item	No.	%	Item	No.	%
G1 (Mathematics and Informatics)	I_1	2	4.76	I_1	3	7.14	I_1	13	30.96	I_1	24	57.14
	I_2	7	13.21	I_2	11	20.76	I_2	18	33.96	I_2	17	32.07
	I_3	1	2.70	I_3	7	18.92	I_3	10	27.03	I_3	19	51.35
	I_4	3	9.68	I_4	4	12.90	I_4	15	48.39	I_4	9	29.03
G2 (Physics and Chemistry)	I_1	4	11.43	I_1	6	17.14	I_1	12	34.29	I_1	13	37.14
	I_2	5	13.16	I_2	8	21.05	I_2	11	28.95	I_2	14	36.84
	I_3	7	12.50	I_3	6	29.17	I_3	3	25.00	I_3	8	33.33
	I_4	2	16.67	I_4	3	25.00	I_4	3	25.00	I_4	4	33.33

5. Results

By analyzing the percentages obtained at the end of stage I we notice that in both groups there is a percentage of over 50% indicating satisfactory and unsatisfactory student involvement. There is a small difference (about 15%) – in favor of group G1 – between good and very good involvement of the students with Mathematics and Informatics specialization and good and very good involvement of the students in Physics and Chemistry.

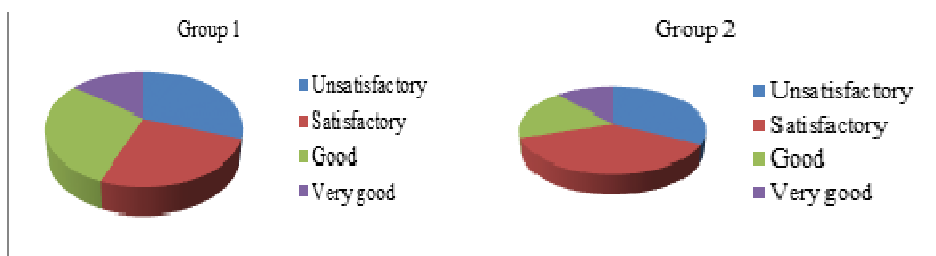


Figure 1. The level of involvement Figure 2. The level of involvement of G1 group students of G2 group students

After entering the independent variable (during the second stage of the research) we found that the percentages corresponding to good and very good involvement of students increased.

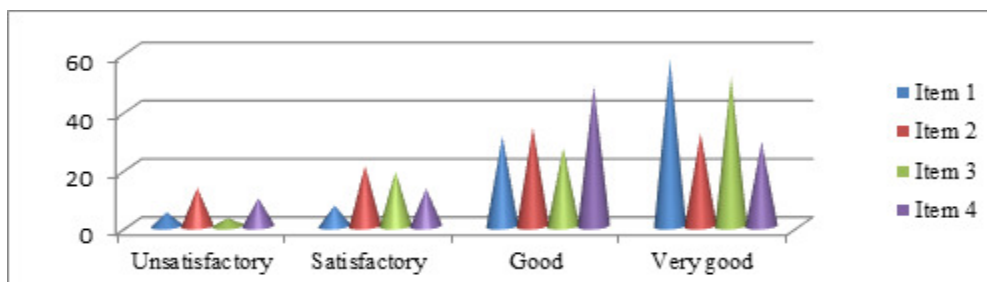


Figure 3. The results of the G_1 group students related to the four indicators

G_1 group students obtained very good results in items I1 and I3, being actively involved in solving the problematical learning tasks (57.14%) and in the PowerPoint presentations (51.35%). The number (and quality) of the students' interventions increased during stage II, in comparison to the first stage interventions, for each indicator getting a percentage that exceeds the percentage of interventions / responses from the initial stage of research.

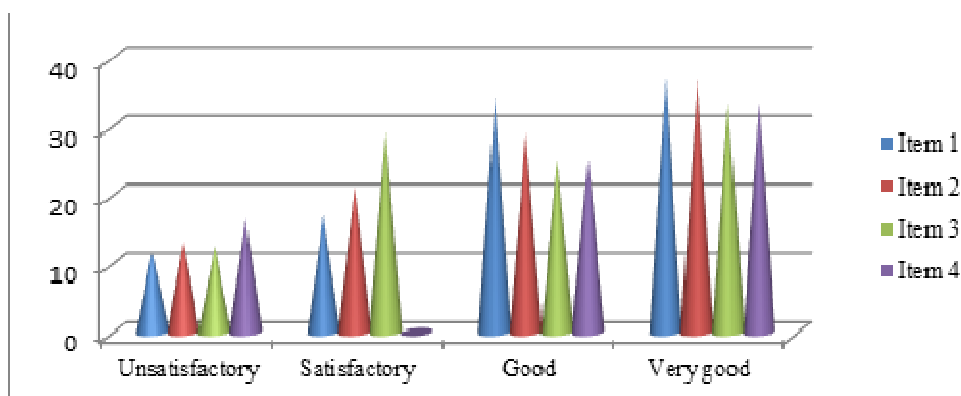


Figure 4. The results of the G_2 group students related to the four indicators

G_2 group students have achieved very good results in I1 and I2 items, being actively involved as much as the others in solving problematical learning tasks (37.14%). About the same percentage (36.84%) has been obtained in I2 item, which quantifies the systematic interventions (through verbal communication – oral and written) resulting from cooperative learning. The research purpose was achieved and the general hypothesis validated. This is confirmed by the results presented and by the higher quality work produced by the students in both groups in their final evaluation, at the end of the first semester of study year II.

5. Conclusions

The results lead to the conclusion that the strategies we used have a positive influence on activating the students, by encouraging their participation in training activities specific to The psycho-pedagogical module. By their characteristics, the teaching strategies we have used activate students and increase the percentage of those who participate actively and consciously in instructive and educational activities. Both problem solving and practical work were intensively used in seminars by making students work together, communicate and solve together (in pairs, teams or groups) the given tasks. The call for new information technologies has increased the number of interventions in seminars as well as their participation in joint applicable tasks, most students being interested in showing their contribution in front of the others.

We have shown that the number of students who participated actively and systematically in the seminar increased. It also increased the number of learning tasks performed in pairs, teams or groups by means of the computer. It is true that G1 group students had better scores in the last two items (which involve using the computer – Power Point and Prezi presentations, web application through which students could design more attractive and persuasive presentations), but this is also due to the specialization they attend (Mathematics-Informatics).

We can say that collaborative learning increases activism among students, and when integrated into activities and information technologies, students become more interested in solving training tasks by participating in a greater proportion.

There is no need to ask ourselves if training is improved through the use of computers, but how to use more the unique qualities of computers, qualities that distinguish them from other media. This will require a rethinking of the future educational system, where the training of future teachers will be the “engine” that will generate change. We refer to accelerating the transition from classical training, where the teacher has the main role – hence the emphasis on expository methods – to a modern training, where the students are motivated to participate in their initial training as teachers, to actively engage, as they are stimulated by the modern strategies, including new information technologies.

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ASSERTIVENESS OF PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS AND PRESCHOOL TEACHERS

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Abstract. *Assertiveness represents the aspect of social competencies related to indicators of socially-adapted and self-reliable behaviour. Given the importance of social competencies in the context of developing professional competencies of teachers and preschool teachers and the realization that assertiveness is a particularly important aspect of social competencies, this research was aimed at examining the level of assertiveness of prospective teachers and preschool teachers at the beginning and during university studies. The total sample consisted of 699 subjects (254 candidates for the study groups for teachers and preschool teachers at the Faculty of Education of the University of Kragujevac and 445 first, second and third year students of the same faculty). The degree of assertiveness was measured by the Scale for the Assessment of Assertiveness (A Scale) by Tovilović and associates. The results show that there is a significant difference in the degree of assertiveness between the candidates and students, in favour of the students ($F=8.209$; $p> 0.001$). It was also determined that the degree of assertiveness significantly increases in parallel with the year of study. Despite the fact that this increase is encouraging, given that it indicates a rise in the level of assertiveness over the course of the studies, the percentage of candidates and students, prospective teachers and preschool teachers, with low and extremely low assertiveness is troubling and indicates the necessity for planned activity aimed at developing assertiveness during studies at this faculty.*

Keywords: *assertiveness, classroom management, professional development of teachers and preschool teachers.*

1. Introduction

Presently, a concept of professional competencies of teachers is adopted in different reference frames, according to which the contemporary teacher should possess an entire range of competencies, many of which belong to the category of social competencies. There is no role of the teacher in the teaching process that is not directly related to social competencies (Korać, 2012). Given that educational work is viewed as a form of social interaction and that management of educational groups and classrooms is viewed as an aspect of the teacher's role in which his professional competencies are best reflected in, the authors of this paper believe that assertiveness represents a significant component of professional competencies of preschool teachers and teachers.

In the context of social competencies, the construct of assertiveness is viewed as a manifestation of social and emotional intelligence or as social behaviour that contributes to an adequate adaptation of an individual in social interactions, maintaining socially desirable relationships and emotional well-being of participants in a social interaction (Sarkova et al., 2013).

Assertiveness (the term itself comes from an English verb *to assert*, meaning *to declare, claim, defend* and adjective *assertive* meaning *persistent, self-conscious, self-reliable*) represents a unique capability of self-reliable self-expression in a social interaction (Vagos & Pereira, 2010). It is most commonly described in the context of two opposite forms of social behaviour – submissive and aggressive (Van Dyk & Evans, 2008). Assertiveness, as the middle road, includes the expression of thoughts, feelings and beliefs in a direct, honest and adequate manner, while taking into account the rights of other people, and it involves specific categories of social reactions, such as the ability to say “no”, the ability to make demands and ask for favours, begin and end conversations (Lange & Jakubowski, 1976). An assertive message in an interaction is a form of self-expression without domination, humiliation or any other type of endangering or injuring the feelings or rights of another individual. Assertive people respect themselves as much as they respect other people, they have control over their emotions, they do not look for or avoid conflicts and they handle conflicts well, they do not hesitate to express their opinions or disapprovals, they have a developed sense of responsibility, a more developed social network and good relationships with others, they develop a higher degree of responsibility even in difficult situations, they allow others to feel good as well and share the experience of victory, they know how to cope with stress (Shiina et al., 2005).

Previous studies indicate the existence of a high correlation between assertiveness and self-respect (Mirjanić & Milas, 2009). In literature, self-

respect is seen as a reflection of the type and quality of relationships that an individual has with others (Bishop, 2006). In the context of social competencies, high self-respect reduces the possibility for failure in social relationships and maladjusted behaviour and increases the possibility of desirable, adaptive and useful forms of behaviour. Research has also reported a high negative correlation between assertiveness and social anxiety. Authors emphasize the fear of being evaluated negatively by others as the essence of social anxiety (Hollander & Simeon, 2006). The results of many studies indicate that there is an anxiety component in the lack of assertiveness and confirm the positive effect of assertiveness on self-respect as well as on the reduction of social anxiety and improvement of social functioning (Lin et al., 2008). Assertiveness was, in fact, first studied in the domain of anxiety and depressive disorders.

In recent years, the concept of classroom management has been a recurring topic in domestic literature. The concept of classroom management refers to the management of social situations in the classroom, management of student behaviour and organization of the group's work, with an aim to create a positive learning climate. Each educational group or school class is a special social structure with its own norms, atmosphere and group dynamics. The concept of classroom management is established as a concept that connects the teacher's personality and his professional conduct, which is based on necessary competencies, directed at fulfilling all of his professional roles and the achievement of educational goals, with the processes that take place inside a group of students, that the teachers is working with, and with the outcomes of these processes (Djigić and Stojiljković 2011).

In order to effectively manage a classroom it is necessary for teachers to be persistent in their efforts, to react to inappropriate student behaviour in an adequate manner which includes a sense of security, ability to control and a desire to solve the problem (Edwards, 2005). Given that assertiveness includes a sense of security in social interactions, resolute rejection of unjustified requests, adequate opposition, clear expression of ideas, independent decision-making with respect for others, openness and honesty towards others, an ability to listen to, understand and praise others, the authors of this paper believe that assertive behaviour is one of the most desirable forms of behaviour in the context of professional competencies of preschool teachers and teachers. Some other effects of assertive behaviour that need to be brought to mind are: equality in relationships, reduction of fear in emotionally charged situations, openness in resolving conflicts, maintaining self-respect and dignity of others in social interactions. The evidence that assertive individuals manage to cope with stress in a more successful way should also not be ignored, given that it is well-known that stress represents an integral part of educational work (Zavertnik et al., 2010),

that assertive behaviour is learned and that preschool and early school age education is pivotal for the development of assertiveness (Milenković, Hadži–Pešić, 2006). In this respect, timely encouragement of appropriate forms of assertive behaviour will affect the development of the children's social skills and self-respect as well as their skills of coping with stress (Tavakoli et al., 2009).

Assertiveness is an important quality in the context of professional competencies of preschool teachers and teachers given the fact that it facilitates the creation of interpersonal relationships based on clearly defined boundaries, open communication, persistence and consistency, which are all necessary in educational work. The professional development of preschool teachers and teachers is a continuous process and it is clear that professional competencies cannot be discussed independently of their education and programs of their professional development (Locke & Sadler, 2007). Education programs for prominent teachers and preschool teachers should be designed in such a manner that they ensure the development of defined competencies. Research shows that, in our country, education of teachers is subject-driven and that it is dominated by the acquisition of theoretical knowledge (Vilotijević and Vilotijević, 2014) with the development of methodical competencies and social skills being neglected. Proceeding from what was stated above, the assessment of the level of assertiveness of prominent preschool teachers and teachers at the beginning and during their studies may be a relevant undertaking, given that hardly anyone has addressed this issue thus far. This study, as well as those that are similar to it, can indicate the direction that should be taken when making changes to the curriculum of pedagogical university studies, in order to promote and support the potentials of prominent preschool teachers and teachers.

2. Method

Sample. The sample consisted of 699 subjects (254 candidates for the study groups for teachers and preschool teachers at the Faculty of Education of the University of Kragujevac, in the entrance exam in 2015 and 445 first, second and third year students of the same faculty). The average age of candidates was 18.11, of first-year students it was 19.9, of second-year students 20.2 and of third-year students 21.8 years of age. Female students were represented in a higher percentage than male students (85.82% of female students and 14.7% of male students). The structure of the sample with respect to the status and year of study is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure of the sample with regard to the status and year of study

<i>Status and year of study</i>	<i>f</i>
Candidates	254
First-year students	147
Second-year students	144
Third-year students	154
Σ	699

Instrument. Assertiveness was assessed by using the *Scale for the Assessment of Assertiveness (A Scale)* by Tovilović and associates, which was constructed from items that, according to the authors, describe reactions and behaviours typical for the (non-)expression of assertiveness. Respondent are instructed to use a five-point Likert scale to provide an answer in accordance with their reactions in social situations that require assertiveness, ranging from permanent absence of such reactions or behaviours (never), to their permanent presence (always). From a total of 27 items of the A scale, 13 items are positively directed (directed towards assertiveness) while 14 items are negatively directed (Tovilović et al., 2009). Positively directed items consist of indicators of assertive behaviour (“When it is necessary I can provide clear and fair criticism to another person”, “Without imposing my own will I can openly make it clear to other people what it is that I want and what I do not want”). Negatively directed items consist of indicators of non-assertive behaviour that point to socially inhibited, passive social behaviour (e.g. “I give in to others more than I would like to”, “I would rather remain silent than enter a conflict with another person”, “It is hard for me to openly say NO”). The reliability of the A scale is high (Cronbach’s Alpha =0.960). The representativeness of the scale expressed by normalized KMO is 0.926 which places it in a group of scales with a high level of representativeness. Scale validity examinations are in favour of good concurrent and construct validity of the A scale.

Analysis procedures. Data analysis included methods of descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, standard deviation) as well as methods of analytical statistics for the assessment of the significance of differences. In order to examine the significance of differences between three groups of data single factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used. In order to examine the significance of differences between the means obtained in our research in relation to the normative sample the *t-test for independent samples* was used.

3. Results

Descriptive indicators of the level of assertiveness in the entire sample and in groups are shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive indicators of the level of assertiveness in the entire sample in relation to groups and in the normative sample

	<i>N</i>	<i>m</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>
CANDIDATES	254	83.44	9.98.	18	101
FIRST-YEAR STUDENTS	147	84.32	10.12	35	101
SECOND-YEAR STUDENTS	144	86.27	11.91	59	101
THIRD-YEAR STUDENTS	154	89.03	12.54	57	101
ENTIRE SAMPLE	699	86.24	11.16	18	101
NORMATIVE SAMPLE	727	95.25	15.34	45	133

The obtained average values in the group of candidates are lesser than the average values achieved by students from all examined groups. The obtained average values in the entire sample are significantly lesser ($t = -4.782$; $p = 0.000$) in relation to the normative sample of the assertiveness scale that was applied (Biro et al., 2009). The obtained average values in all four examined groups are also significantly lesser than the average values of the normative sample ($t = -4.866$; $p = 0.000$; $t = -4.182$; $p = 0.000$; $t = -4.071$; $p = 0.000$; $t = -4.091$; $p = 0.000$).

By further comparing the scores obtained in the entire sample and the scale norms, a classification of candidates into appropriate assertiveness categories was performed, according to the instructions provided with the scale (Table 3).

Table 3. Distribution of scores according to assertiveness categories in the entire sample

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
EXTREMELY LOW ASSERTIVENESS	58	8.28
LOW ASSERTIVENESS	148	21.13
AVERAGE ASSERTIVENESS	313	44.64
HIGH ASSERTIVENESS	147	21.16
EXTREMELY HIGH ASSERTIVENESS	33	4.79
Σ	699	100

In the entire sample the highest percentage (44.64%) belongs to the category of average assertiveness. Almost an identical percentage of respondents achieved scores that placed them in categories of low (21.13%) and high assertiveness (21.16%). Results which placed them in a category of extremely low assertiveness were achieved by 56 respondents (8.28%) and for the category of extremely high assertiveness by 33 respondents (4.79%).

The classification of individual scores into appropriate assertiveness categories by groups was performed in the same manner (Table 3).

Table 4. Distribution of scores according to assertiveness categories by groups

	CANDIDATES		FIRST YEAR STUDENTS		SECOND YEAR STUDENTS		THIRD YEAR STUDENTS		Σ	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%		
EXTREMELY LOW	21	8.26	15	10.20	13	9.02	9	5.84	58	8.29
LOW A.	82	32.28	28	19.04	22	15.27	16	10.38	148	21.17
AVERAGE ASSERTIVENESS	120	47.24	63	42.85	50	34.72	80	51.94	313	44.77
HIGH A.	27	10.62	34	23.12	51	35.41	35	22.72	147	21.03
EXTREMELY HIGH	4	1.57	7	4.76	8	5.55	14	9.09	33	4.72
Σ	254	100	147	100	144	100	154	100	699	100

The highest percentage, according to the achieved scores, belongs to the category of average assertiveness in all groups. In other assertiveness categories the examined groups differ. In the category of low assertiveness first place belongs to the group of candidates, followed by first and second-year students and, in the end, third-year students. The reverse is true in the category of high assertiveness – first place (the highest percentage) belongs to third-year students, followed by second and first-year students, and in the end the candidates.

Table 5 shows the distribution of scores achieved by candidates and students in two categories – *assertive* (obtained by adding the number of respondents from the average assertiveness, high and extremely high assertiveness categories) and *non-assertive* (obtained by adding the number of respondents from the low and extremely low assertiveness categories).

Table 5. Distribution of scores in the categories – assertive and non-assertive – in groups of candidates and students

	CANDIDATES		1ST YEAR STUDENTS		2ND YEAR STUDENTS		3RD YEAR STUDENTS		Σ
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	
NON-ASSERTIVE	103	40.55	43	29.25	35	24.30	25	16.23	206 29.47
ASSERTIVE	151	59.44	104	70.74	109	75.69	129	83.76	493 70.52
Σ	254	100	147	100	144	100	154	100	699 100

The percentage of non-assertive subjects obviously decreases with the year of study, starting from 40.55% of candidates and ending with 16.23% of third-year students. On the other hand, the percentage of assertive subjects increases, starting from 59.44% of candidates and ending with 83.76% of third-year students.

In order to determine whether there are significant differences between the examined groups a single factor analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied. Table 6 shows the values of the applied test.

Table 6. Significance of differences between examined groups

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1065.684	2	532.842	8.209	.000
Within Groups	37127.871	572	64.909		
Total	38193.555	574			

The analysis shows that there are highly significant differences ($F=8.209$; $p>0.001$) between groups. However, this does not yet imply that it is evident between which groups this statistically significant difference occurs. Subsequent statistical tests, the results of which are shown in Table 7, determine the pairs between which the significant difference occurs.

Table 7. Results of subsequent tests (Post Hoc Tests)

(I) Group of subjects	(J) Group of subjects	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
I group	Second group	-2.82785*	.76379	.001	-4.6126	-1.0132
	Third group	-2.58764*	.88502	.010	-4.6673	-1.0231

	Fourth group	-2.82785*	.76379	.001	-4.6126	-1.0132
II group	First group	2.82785*	.76379	.001	-4.6451	-1.0131
	Third group	-2.82785*	.76379	.001	-4.6226	-1.0311
	Fourth group	-2.82785*	.76379	.001	-4.6126	-1.0132
III group	First group	2.58764*	.78502	.001	-4.5126	-1.0231
	Second group	-2.82785*	.76379	.001	-4.6226	-1.0231
	Fourth group	-2.82785*	.76379	.001	-4.6126	-1.0132
IV group	First group	-2.72765*	.76379	.001	-4.6326	-1.0230
	Second group	-2.72785*	.76379	.001	-4.5326	-1.0131
	Third group	-2.81765*	.76379	.001	-4.5226	-1.0321

The mean difference is significant at the 0.01 level.

According to the results of subsequent tests it was found that there is a statistically significant difference between a group of candidates for the faculty of pedagogical sciences and its students ($p=.001$), in favour of the students. It has also been determined that there is a highly significant difference between the candidates and students of all examined years of study, in favour of the students. The research also showed highly significant differences between first and second year and senior students ($p=.001$). First-year students have achieved significantly lower scores than second and third year students and second-year students have achieved significantly lower scores than third-year students.

4. Discussion

The results of this research, whose aim it was to examine the assertiveness of prominent teachers and preschool teachers at the beginning and during their studies, have shown that the level of assertiveness that candidates possess when they enter university studies is troubling given that the percentage of candidates who are classified into categories of extremely low and low assertiveness is, in total, greater than the number of candidates classified into the average assertiveness category. If we add to this the fact that a small percentage of candidates is recognized as belonging to the categories of high and extremely high assertiveness and that the average assertiveness values obtained by all examined groups are significantly lower than those obtained by the normative sample, this concern becomes quite justified. However, the fact that the level of assertiveness of students increases with the years of study and that candidates significantly differ from students, in favour of students, which is clearly shown by the distribution of

results obtained by prominent teachers and preschool teachers – first, second and third year students, is encouraging. In these groups, a much higher percentage was recorded, in total, in the categories of high and extremely high assertiveness, and a much lesser number in the categories of extremely low and low assertiveness. If the percentage of achievements in the categories of average, high and extremely high assertiveness is summed up, it becomes evident that 55.89% of our students are assertive at the beginning of their studies, while 73.47% of the first, second and third year students are assertive at these levels. By comparing the results of this research with results of available foreign studies it can be seen that 62.5% of foreign students are assertive at the beginning of their studies while 67.2% of them are assertive in their third year (Eskin, 2003; Ibrahim, 2011). According to the results of this research, our students are assertive in a smaller percentage at the beginning of their studies than their foreign colleagues, but they are assertive in a larger percentage during their studies.

The level of assertiveness of prominent teachers and preschool teachers at the beginning of their studies differs from the level of assertiveness of their older colleagues – students of the first, second and third year. The obtained differences in achievement between candidates and students are statistically significant. Candidates for the Faculty of Education have achieved scores that are significantly lower than those of their colleagues – students of the first, second and third year. The progress in the assertiveness of prominent preschool teachers and teachers is considered significant since assertiveness is very important for both professions (Lawton & Stewart, 2005). It is important that preschool teachers and teachers develop assertiveness skills in order to ensure safe and efficient cooperation and communication for their own students (Unal, 2012). By expressing their feelings, attitudes and demands honestly, clearly and directly, without anxiety or intimidation, they can strengthen the confidence of children and provide a good basis for constructive communication that leads towards the realization of goals. Given that both of these groups are expected to manage and become leaders, assertiveness will allow them to appear as motivators, in order for those that they work with to also be able to freely express their feelings and attitudes. Their position also implies empowering people that they work with towards improving their personal autonomy (Watanabe, 2010).

The obtained results are consistent with the results of other studies that show that young people become more assertive during their academic education (Delsidou, 2008). This can be explained through the connection of assertiveness and self-respect. High assertiveness scores are continually related to high self-respect scores (Alinčić, 2013). Students who have already completed one, two or more years of study certainly have more self-respect

than beginners, especially candidates in the entrance exam. An explanation can be sought in the process of education itself. Researchers have found a positive correlation between the level of assertiveness and assertiveness training conducted during their education (McCabe & Timmins, 2005). The results of this research can also, at least partly, be explained by the contents of study programs at our university (students learn communication skills in several study subjects). This also points to the conclusion that assertiveness trainings should become a component of all programs of education of future professionals whose jobs are based on communication.

The obtained results, at least those related to the candidates, can also be viewed in light of the connection between assertiveness and anxiety that has been confirmed in many studies (Calkins et al., 2009). Assertiveness was first studied in the domain of anxiety disorders. High scores on assertiveness scales are associated with low scores on social anxiety scales (Tovilović, 2005). It has been shown that greater assertiveness leads to a significant reduction in social anxiety and that low assertiveness may have importance as a predictor of the development of anxiety disorders (Košutić et al., 2012). Since the assessment of assertiveness of the candidates was conducted during the entrance exam, it is conceivable that the test-situation related anxiety has influenced the results on the applied scale by lowering them. On the other hand, it is possible that this situation was particularly convenient for the assessment of real assertiveness, given that assertive individuals possess stronger mechanisms of coping with stress and reducing anxiety (Ito et al., 2008). In any case, it is necessary to follow the candidates and students that have been classified, according to their achievements, into categories of low and extremely low assertiveness, during their university studies, given the mentioned association that exists between anxiety and self-respect and given the experiences of teachers with a number of students of these study programs who have, during the course of their studies, shown visible anxiety in situations when they needed to appear before their group or in class during practical teaching. Anxiety, insecurity and a lack of assertiveness can be a serious impediment for working in the pedagogical profession that demands group management and cooperation with parents and other subjects in educational work.

5. Conclusion

The starting point of the paper is a theoretical definition of assertiveness as a significant component of social competencies. Given that assertiveness implies a feeling of security in social interactions, without aggressiveness, that it is connected to self-respect and the absence of social anxiety, assertive behaviour is one of the most desirable forms of behaviours in the context of professional competencies of preschool teachers and

teachers. In addition to this, knowledge about the real potential of students is very important in the process of education, in order to deliberately foster their strengths and work towards the timely correction of deficiencies. By assessing the assertiveness of candidates and comparing it to the assertiveness of students, prominent preschool teachers and teachers, results were obtained that allow us to infer that students of both directions are more assertive than their colleagues at the beginning of university studies, and that they are becoming more assertive as they progress in their studies. Despite these indicators being encouraging, because they suggest a rise in assertiveness during the course of the studies, the percentage of candidates and students, prominent preschool teachers and teachers with low and extremely low assertiveness is worrying and requires further monitoring. Since research has unequivocally confirmed that assertiveness can be significantly improved through practice and that this in effect reduces anxiety in social contexts, the authors of this paper consider that it is of the utmost importance for the development of professional competencies of prominent preschool teachers and teachers to be familiar with their real characteristics at the beginning of their studies and to systematically work on improving them during the course of their studies through a system of practical exercises, supervision and mentoring.

Finally, it is important to emphasize that the issue of factors that are associated with an increase in students' assertiveness levels during their studies, remains an open one and represents a challenge for future research which could deal, for example, with assessing the extent to which the contents of study programs contribute to the development of the students' assertiveness during their studies or the contribution of self-reliability, which is a consequence of the advancement in studies.

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EDUCATIONAL ALTERNATIVES IN THE ROMANIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract: *After a long phase of standardization, in the past two decades a lot of alternatives to the formal education have been enacted and promoted in the Romanian legislation: The Curative Pedagogy, The Montessori Pedagogy, The Waldorf Pedagogy, The Freinet Pedagogy, The Jena Plan, The Step-by-Step Program. Within a relatively short span of time, they have managed to evolve and improve, succeeding in involving an increasing number of children and teachers. This study aims to briefly present these educational alternatives to the Romanian education system.*

Key words: *educational alternative, educational system, child.*

General characterization

Until 1990 the Romanian system of teaching has been guided on the strictness of a dogmatic education that led to forming multilateral developed personalities through the teaching institutions that were functioning as a unit. Within this educational frame the student was considered as being a “recipient” for information and less as a real person with individuality and developing personality.

In the 21st century the education is aiming to the process of forming and developing through the improvement of the performances of each of us. The teaching reform in Romania underlines the importance of moving the accent from the informative side of the educational process to the formative one.

Due to the promoting of the educational pluralism, some teaching institutions from Romania have adopted other variants of education and teaching, alternative means of realizing the same national curriculum. Thus, “the educational alternative represents the form of school organization, which sets methods of organizing and functioning of the instructive-educational activity others than specific forms of an era or which appear in a social context”¹

In the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century in the education from Europe and the US a motion challenging the traditional education, of renewal of the traditional system of teaching based on classes and lessons with theoretical, formal, rigid contents and largely external possibilities of

choice and intrinsically motivation of the child has been outlined. Ellen Key entitled one of her works from 1900 "The Century of the Child", which was significant for the new launched trend.

The renewal trend is found under different names: The New education in France, Switzerland and Belgium, the Progressive Education in the US, The Pedagogy of the Reformation in Germany. This trend has been materialized in Romania, both in the interwar period and after 1989 when educational alternatives such as:

- The Waldorf pedagogy with the curative Waldorf pedagogy,
- The Montessori Education
- The Freinet Pedagogy,
- The Jena Plan
- The Step by Step System were introduced and declared legal

Each of these alternatives has its specifics, but one of the principles pursued by all educational alternatives is situating the child at the heart of the educational activities.

The Waldorf educational alternative

The Waldorf pedagogy was created in the early twentieth century being based on the anthropology developed by Rudolf Steiner (1919) on the initiative and with the material support of the Waldorf Astoria cigarette factory director. In Romania, the first classes were established in 1990 in public education, without any additional tuition being charged, this form of education addressing both those who are weak when it comes to achieving performance, and to those gifted in their aspiration for notable performances. This education takes into consideration the needs and capabilities of each individual. The content of the subjects is not aimed at acquiring these disciplines, but wants to stimulate the child's interest for knowledge. Highlights of these alternative educational objectives are the development of thinking, feeling and the will of the child.

The Waldorf pedagogy works based on seven principles such as the principle of lifelong learning, the principle of rhythmic organization, the principle of creating an environment suited to the objectives, the principle of ensuring a balance between theory and practice, the principle of artistic teaching, the principle of teaching in images, and the fundamental principle of the Waldorf pedagogy which is an integrated approach of the human being according to age and having as an aim the development of the child's personality.

The Waldorf pedagogy differs from mainstream education by the following²:

- It aims to educate the whole man;
- The curricula of different subjects are comparable to those of the traditional system and approved by the Ministry of Education and Research;

- The school subjects are not seen as an end in itself but as a means of education;
- The level of knowledge is equivalent to that of the traditional school, at grade IV, the national testing and the Baccalaureate;
- Students are not graded but they receive at the end of the class a complex characterization which specifies both skills and drawbacks for each object of study and also issues related to the young man`s evolution and advice on possible directions of orientation in the study;
- The main subjects: Romanian, History, Geography, Biology, Mathematics, Physics, Chemistry, are taught in periods of 2-4 weeks, two hours at the beginning of each day, within the basic course. This means of working greatly reduces the number of subjects that the student must prepare for the second day and leads to a better deepening of the subject through daily rhythm. Depending on the student's age, training takes 24-36 hours a week, plus artistic disciplines which keep a great share of the curriculum.

Class1 Waldorf is taken by a teacher (tutor) and lead for 8 years. In the Waldorf pedagogy there are no manuals, this absence helping to increase respect for books and other sources as students get used to document themselves from as many sources as possible on a theme study. Also, children work on notebooks with screen ruling, being considered that clearly defined lines restrict and limit the child's handwriting to clearly established norms. The Waldorf alternative does not plead for a messy writing, but rather order and aesthetics are generally highly cultivated in school.

In conclusion, the essential characteristics of the Waldorf education are:

- The importance given to rhythm;
- The learning period;
- A school without textbooks;
- Notebooks and pens;
- The number of special courses and practical arts;
- A school without grades;
- Class lead by teacher also beyond the fourth grade;
- Peer leadership;
- Distinct subjects and activities.

The Montessori educational alternative

"Never do for a child what he can do alone." (Maria Montessori)

Maria Montessori, considered the child "a divine but misunderstood being". An Italian physician and educator by profession she was the first woman doctor of Italy and in 1907 she founded the 'Casa dei bambini' for children aged 2-6 years whose parents were looking for work. Similar to

kindergarten this house was an educational community that completed and perfected the child's education in the family.

Maria Montessori pedagogy is essential in the concept of the respect for the child - as an individual with unique personality and potential. The Montessori pedagogy has as a basic principle the necessary, appropriate and continuing education, the trends of current reforms in education confirming Maria Montessori's ideas and making them applicable in practice³. The Montessori pedagogy aims to promoting children's rights, to forming skills of intellectual activity that is intensive and continuous, to expanding and enhancing early childhood and parent education, adaptability and assuming of changes; increasing the role of the educational environment within education, family and community.

In the Montessori alternative children have activities as they do in everyday life. Almost all lessons are individual, so each child usually has a different plan of activities that the teacher thinks and puts into practice according to the interest and the level at which the child is. In the Montessori classes the child can move freely from one side to the other of the class, is free to choose any work material wants, those being placed so as to be accessible and available to all children, but he also has the obligation to put them on the shelf in the same place and the same conditions after having finished, so as to be used by the next child interested in the same activity.

In a Montessori kindergarten children are organized on three levels of age between 3 and 6 years old. Children who started kindergarten this year when being 3 years old will be in the same class two years from now. Now they are the youngest but in two years time they will be the oldest - a process of growth and development that they themselves enthusiastically acknowledge. Thus the relationships between children within classes resemble much more to life outside the school, to real life. Another great aspect is that in the Montessori class there is only one copy of each material, which means that only one child can have an activity involving that material. By default, if another child wants to use the same material that one will have to wait until the activity ends and his colleague places the material back on the shelf. At the beginning of the year this situation may create conflicts, but in time accepting becomes habit. Indirectly, they can thus educate respect for other people's things and patience to wait for their turn⁴.

Therefore the aim of the Montessori method is educating, not schooling. And educating means, etymologically speaking, to reveal potential (Lat. Ex. Duction = extract).

When it comes to assessment, there are no grades, rewards and punishing, the assessment is done by portfolio, observations made by the teacher and record keeping.

The Freinet educational alternative

"Prepare children and adolescents today to be able to act in the world of tomorrow"

The Freinet Pedagogy practiced for more than for 75 years, is based on a series of values such as cooperation, autonomy, responsibility, mutual aid and clearly established principles: a child-centered school, motivated school work, customized activity, free expression and communication, learning through exploration and globalization of the educative action.

Working in small groups is considered as the fundamental means of education. Forming groups is at the discretion of children and it lasts for 3-4 weeks. The noninterference of the educator will allow the child to realize for the first time, his value as a member of a group as well as the value of the ones he is collaborating with. In this case the educator's role will be limited to: organizing the materials necessary to education, securing and maintaining the climate of trust and building trust in the opinions of others⁵. Mostly the educator is only a careful observer who directs and coordinates the activities of his students.

The mission of the Freinet pedagogy is to train people not to produce students Freinet considering that a true education is the one that makes the individual adapt his own development to his environment. Education should be based on creative work, freely chosen and assumed and the school should become a place of production together decided by students through exploration, creation and acquired skills.

The Freinet pedagogy starts from the idea that any child can become the best at a particular moment of his existence. The main feature of this model is to develop working techniques. Celestin Freinet gave up classical textbooks replacing them with books and working sheets prepared and printed by students. Thus the child writes the text, at home or at school, without being constrained by a particular subject and in the morning they read and by vote, selected the ones that will be printed. To free text and school printing school correspondence is added, where children from different localities exchange texts, so as to come into contact with other habits, ways of thinking, traditions and life experiences.

In addition to these techniques new ones have been added such as: drawing freely, wall gazette, school diary, documentary investigation, patent, self assessment, studying the local environment

The Freinet pedagogy in Romania complies with the national curriculum and is part of the state alternative educational subsystem. It is applied in preschool and primary education (alternative education network), the secondary school (Freinet techniques) but also in extracurricular activities (international camp). The Freinet pedagogy is a cooperative pedagogy where the child-author has his defined place and it implements the

natural method of learning through exploratory experiments. The Freinet school is a school for all where everyone is accepted, recognized, listened to and respected.

The Jena plan

This pedagogical alternative binds to the name of Peter Petersen from the University of Jena in Germany, where in 1924 he initiated a school experiment. In time, seeing the remarkable results that were achieved, the Jena Plan began to be widely used, relying on the following pedagogical principles:

- Grouping - most of the time is spent by children in heterogeneous age groups, on family model;
- core activities are the ones that define the human being - conversation, play, work (labor), celebration (festivals marking the beginning and the end of the week, anniversaries, arrival or departure of a child from school or from the core group, religious or national holidays , other important events in the life of the individual, the school or the community);
- efficient participation of children is significant in organizing educational experiences and the activity itself when it comes to spatial planning, classroom management, establishing rules etc.
- In the alternative Jena there are several types of groups:
- basic groups - that can be identified in a number of 4, which, depending on the pace of individual pupils may remain more or less, but a yearly a third must leave the group: - lower (6-9 years); - Medium (9-12 years); - Upper (12-14); - Youth (14-16);
- Mass groups - formed spontaneously around a table, according to the affinities and interests of children. There are small groups of 3-6 people and they are very dynamic;
- Working Groups – level ones, where the age criterion is linked to the capacity of understanding;

Organizing students on groups causes another organization of courses, instead of daily schedule there is only a weekly schedule. The optimal duration of a teaching-learning unit is 75 minutes, depending on the type of activity. At the beginning and at the end of the day or the week there are meetings of the group and with the whole school, where matters of mutual interest are presented and discussed.

Among the methods and the means used for the alternative education in Jena are mentioned:

- the conversation (dialogue) - in various forms, compulsory at the beginning and at the end of week;
- the game - especially in the first three years and even later as a form of review;

- the work - used in all kinds of courses, often combined with the conversation and the game;
- the celebration –which has a very important place and role in school life, with a very pronounced social character;

In terms of educational content, they are not different from those of the traditional school so that children can always migrate from a school organized by Jena Plan to traditional one and vice versa. But subjects are interdisciplinary dealt with and started - if possible - from authentic learning situations. Taking into account the age peculiarities of children at nursery and primary level, focus is particularly put on getting into a direct contact with nature and the surrounding world in general, because personal experience is the best basis for learning.

Some positive results achieved so far by those working on the Jena Plan model are: greater enthusiasm of kindergarten teachers and children for the life in their environment, greater care with which educators prepare the educational process; greater degree of independence of children from adults and thus unleashing their inner forces, stimulating their imagination and their sense of initiative, better sharing space in kindergarten; closer cooperation of the staff with the parents of the children from the kindergarten; stronger emphasis on accountability, on the power of decision, on the ownership and freedom of each member of the educational community; the results of children who are in a continuous process of natural learning.

In this system no grading is used and grade repetition does not exist. The evaluation is continuous, based on observation.

The Step by Step educational alternative

"Do not let your child be limited to what you know, because they were born in another time" Hebrew proverb

This program first appeared in the US in the '60s, it was originally developed for preschool children from disadvantaged environments in terms of socio - economic state and who had no access to any form of education. The program, through its structure, is trying to cover the emotional, social, health, nutritional and psychological needs of children aged 3 to 5 years old from families with low incomes or from migrant families.

In 1969, this program was put under the guardianship of the Department for Education and was extended in most US states. In 2005, included in the program were more than 22 million preschool children in 48,000 groups scattered throughout the United States. The program was consolidated and verified on more than 30 years of applicability and it operates in over 26 countries. The elaboration of the Step by Step method and its license belongs to the Children Resource International of Washington

- USA. The Step by Step is considered the "longest" educational program in the United States which was appreciated by many families of Americans and is currently coordinated by the Department for Child and Family and is considered as an educational alternative, especially for preschool.

The Step by Step alternative is devoted to preschool and school children of up to 13 years of age and to their families. In Romania, the program appeared in 1994 as the Head Start and in 1995 it was named Step by Step, at the initiative of the Soros Foundation for an Open Society, after signing a convention with the Ministry of Education. Since March 1998 the program is continued by the " Step by Step Centre for Education and Professional Development 'which provides new methods as a continuation of the vision of educating future generations regarding an active participation within open societies.

At the basis of the Step by Step Child programs for children stands the firm belief in the principles of democracy that encourages children to become active citizens and to appreciate the values of a democratic lifestyle, to formulate and express their own opinions, to ask questions and support discussions. The program highlights the mutual respect, responsibility towards others, honesty, civics and reliability.

The Step by Step promotes the student-centered education, the teaching targeted on the needs and interests of the students, learning is organized on activity centers and the family and the community are involved in the children's education while respecting the national curriculum and the national standards.

The alternative education through teachers wants to develop in students the ability to be creative, to form critical thinking, to have options and initiative, to take decisions and to be able to take responsibility for their decisions, to communicate easier, to negotiate, to freely express their opinions, to initiate discussion and to ask questions. The Step by Step considers communication as a key concept in forming vocational skills and qualities of knowledge about literacy, reading, writing, speech development, listening, visual arts and mathematics.

The subjects taught in the Step by Step program support the development of skills necessary for students to become responsible individuals and as they get more successful students begin to have a positive and stronger outlined self image. Through mathematics students learn to think logically, to find solutions and understand the world of numbers. Through literacy students learn to formulate and express their views in both orally and in writing. Through scientific explorations students learn about their environment, about living things around them and how to care for them. Through social studies they become aware of the historical perspective

respecting and appreciating the events and people who have contributed to this. Art offers students the opportunity to express their ideas and emotions.

The Step by Step class has two teachers who direct children when it comes to putting in practice the choices they made. The teacher's task is changing from the exclusiveness to teach to co-participation in the organization activities and the achievement of learning. The Step by Step alternative does not destroy the Romanian education, but tries to make his students minded people, people who will know how to work together and achieve enviable profits. It takes into account the skills students need to be redeemed at any time of the school day and it highlights the multiple intelligences. Teaching and learning in this alternative provides a new educational model that adheres to the individualization of teaching, complying with the efforts and the intellectual abilities of each pupil in his endeavor to acquire knowledge. In an environment as familiar as possible (comfort, teaching materials, abound stationery, audio-visual media, electronic devices) psychological, social, emotional barriers are removed, thus giving the child the opportunity to think freely, to act openly, honestly, critically and self-critically, to correct his behavior. Thus students develop their autonomy, initiative, self-control, they make choices, and even more, they help establishing classroom rules and decision-making.

Throughout the daily school work, the student is encouraged to adopt an active – participative attitude, which will help him acquire solid knowledge and develop his thinking and his positive character traits.

The goals of the Step by Step Program for primary education are set bearing in mind the child's intellectual and social development needs. The goals are unique for each school year within a scheme unit regarding the child's development. This approach ensures that organizational objectives take into account the personality of the child when the teacher makes decisions about the curriculum, the instruction and the assessment process. Clearly defining and maintaining high standards in fulfilling these objectives, the Step by Step program for primary education provides a good quality of the teaching and learning process. In a class organized on the principle of development, the interests and the needs of the children help to determine what material is to be taught. In addition, as an important of a role is also played by the fact that the teachers know the scientific theories about child development and about patterns of normative growth.

The Step by Step program adheres to an individualization of the teaching process that respects the efforts and the intellectual abilities of each child in his effort to acquire knowledge. "Educators must open way for students to explore the world around them, to stimulate them to ask questions and to find answers, to help them understand the complexity of the world" (Brooks,1993, p.5). Thus, the Step by Step program creates classes focused

on child development in which learning is valued and relieved, forming a framework for exploration, troubleshooting group, investigation, effective dialogue. The teacher helps children to understand the phenomena, to get used to ambiguity and to work in order to find answers to questions that may arise in their minds. "When the learning environment in which students spend most of their time is organized in a way that encourages the interaction student-student, when cooperation between students is cherished, themes and materials are synthesized, and students are free to pursue their own ideas, children become more willing to take risks and work so as to be able to respond to current intellectual challenges. Such a perspective on teacher also shapes environmental conditions and contributes to creating a respect for children, as future intellectuals. "(Brooks, 1993, p.9)

To describe the classroom organization focused on child development we have taken the comparison made by Kate Burke Walsh between the program of the classes dominated by the teacher and the one of the student-centered classes.

<i>Comparing Classes⁸</i>	The class dominated by the teacher	The class focused on the child's necessities
<i>Philosophical hypothesis</i>	-the school prepares the students for life,	- the school is part of life
	- the teacher makes the knowledge available for the students	- the knowledge is discovered by the child himself
	-schooling is a duty to be endured	-schooling is interesting and cheerful
	-education is regarded as a result	-education is regarded as a process
	-the learning process takes place in a linear progression by mastering the information and the skills they acquired	-the learning process is seen as a spiral that keeps expanding, having content depth and width
	-students are passive consumers of information and authority	-students are actively involved in solving problems and they participate in all projects
<i>The content of the curriculum</i>	-the content of the curriculum is globally presented	- the curriculum is conceived according to the students' requirements and also to the teaching plan and adapted by the teacher
	-making decisions is hierarchical and centralized	-making decisions is divided between the participants

	- the curriculum encourages adapting to the expectancy of the group both as far as social behavior is concerned and also the levels of the theoretical realizations	- the curriculum is due to develop skills and positive experience, favourable to learning
	-the cultural and individual differences are ignored because it is assumed that students adapt themselves to the dominant culture	- the curriculum acknowledges the reality of a multicultural and different world in order to be able to better prepare the student for the future
	-the activities are based on manuals and exercise books	- the activities are based on primary data sources and manipulating the materials
	-focus is set on learning basic skills	-focus is set on understanding important concepts
<i>The teacher's role and teaching strategies</i>	-teachers are the only source of information	-teachers are the ones that facilitate and guide the students within the learning process
	-teachers are considered to be fully trained	-teachers are learning together with children
	-teachers present information through reading	-teachers create learning situations based on direct experience, social interactions and research
	-the teachers' questioning techniques are focused on right/wrong answers or closed questions	-teachers demand children to ask questions and they stimulate their thinking by open questions
	-skills are taught as aims to be achieved	-skills are presented as instruments and they are tied to a certain content
	-the teachers are responsible for the class behavior and they are seen as being the supreme authority	-teachers and students establish together rules of behavior which are focused on assuming responsibilities
	-teachers generally behave in a didactic manner, offering information to students	-teachers behave in an interactive manner being mediators in the learning process
	-teachers see students as white pages where information has to be written on	-teachers see students as thinkers that elaborate theories about the world
	-students work mainly alone	-students work in pairs and in small groups
<i>The participation of the family</i>	-parents are seen as outsiders and they are not involved	-parents are seen as the first teachers and also partners

	-the communication with the families appears mainly when there is a problem	-the communication with the families starts at the beginning of the school year and is focused on setting objectives of co-working and planning for each child
	-parents have a fix day to visit the school	-parents are welcomed to school at any time
	-involving parents in the school activity is only connected with surveying homework	-the parents role is to complete the studies made in class
	-the community is seen as being separate from school	-the community is an important learning source
<i>Evaluation</i>	-the evaluation is made at fixed moments by an annual schedule	-the evaluation is continuous and cumulative
	-the evaluation is conceived in a pre-established format	-the evaluation uses open type formats
	-the evaluation is based on an unique situation	-the evaluation is focused on revising and is based on a variety of situations
	-the evaluation instruments are reported to a pattern	-the evaluation instruments are reported to criteria
	-the evaluation is totally controlled by the teacher	-the student is involved in the evaluation process
	-the evaluation is based on competitiveness	-the evaluation is seen as a means of individual perfecting
	-the evaluation takes into account the memorized information, specific to a certain place and moment	-the evaluation is made on a long period of time through collaboration
	-the intelligence is measured in linguistic and logical-mathematical skills	-the intelligence is seen as including artistic skills and it is measured in the solutions found from the problems in real life
	-the right answer is searched by the teacher as a validation of the knowledge gathered by the student	-the student's point of view is searched for with the aim of understanding his current perceptions and to use them in accumulating future knowledge
	-the evaluation is seen as being separated from the teaching	-the evaluation is combine with the teaching

Conclusions

Clearly, the presence of various alternatives can be advantageous within a dynamic and concise educational system, these highlighting, from a

self perspective, details less observed in the classic educational system. They promote ways of making the educational process that confer other variants of organizational type and functional order compared to the ones specific to the traditional school, as a result of certain general visions for various major contemporary educational systems, but also for modern school practices in the world.

The model of alternative pedagogies was created and it was improved in many forms, having the concrete aspiration to provide actual solutions to current pedagogy and in particular to develop a current reality in relation to the classical foundations of pedagogy. The educational alternatives have represented more of a concrete opposition compared to the traditional pedagogy. These have managed to change the approach of the educational practice and of the work of pedagogic type. One could see the individual activity of children, which is based on a combination of the concise labor with the abstract study. The program is determined based on the interests of spontaneous type of the children. In some situations school republics are made within which the judgment of critical type and the sense of freedom are progressively developed. The social tasks are divided between children. Such schools may be described by the presence of an aesthetic atmosphere and by underlining the importance of improving moral conscience.

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PREVENTION OF DIGITAL VIOLENCE IN EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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Abstract: *Rapid development of information technology makes life easier; however, negative aspects of its influence can be recognized as well. Using Internet provides series of opportunities for better communication, higher quality education and great fun but involves a lot of risk. Young people spend majority of their time using digital technologies, therefore becoming key actors in creating good or bad peer communication. The young/adolescents are also exposed to the highest level of risk on the net because they have high level of autonomy and independence, because Internet erases social brakes, gives them fake feeling of safety and power, allows users say and do things they couldn't do in face-to-face communication. The young have the feeling they aren't responsible for that kind of behavior in a way they would normally be responsible, they are sure that on the net they won't be judged by their looks; relations on the net seem safer than real relations, there are nosocial boundaries; two lonely souls can communicate without being watched. Among the most mentioned risks are various forms of digital violence, from disturbing to most severe forms of violence, exposure to inappropriate content, exposure to political, economic and religious propaganda, disinformation, privacy threat, soliciting gambling and illegal activities. One way of protection on the net in order to prevent unwanted communication is to educate students, parents and teachers about the risks of digital technology and digital literacy. Parents consider that they are sufficiently informed about what their children do online, but think they need more information and education. The role of schools in preventing digital violence is very important because it is the place where children in an organized way spend most time during the day. The educational mission of school is to promote social relationships with students, colleagues and parents, and educational task is to*

teach about the use of modern media and technology, with special emphasis on digital literacy. Therefore, the school and its employees have an extremely important role in the prevention of abuse of digital technology.

Key words:*digital technology, digital violence, digital literacy, internet, education*

1. Introduction

Rapid development of information technology makes life easier, however, negative aspects of its influence can be recognized as well. Computers, internet, social networks, mobile phones have opened space for the expansion of different forms of electronic/digital violence. Beginning of the 90s brought a revolutionary innovation in communications-Internet. According to Popadic/Kuzmanovic (2012), the invention of the Internet occurred in 1969. Internet becomes the basis of currently available information, among other things, news, music, movies, books.

It also becomes a medium for mutual communication, via e-mail, chat / correspondence in real time / or internet telephony, with or without images.

According to the latest report of the UN Commission on broadband internet connection and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in the world by the end of 2016, 3.5 billion people will have used the internet, which represents 47% of world population. The number of Internet users is about 300 million higher than in 2015.

New technologies provide children and adolescents with new approaches to information, culture, communication and entertainment that was impossible to imagine 20 years ago. The young, spend a large part of their time using digital technologies and thus become the main actors in the creation of good and bad peer communication.

The results of the research show that children are beginning to use digital devices in younger and younger age and the number of children and young people who daily use the Internet is steadily increasing, both in the world and in our country (Livingstone et al., 2011).

It is undeniable that digital technology provides various opportunities for psycho-social development/finding information, learning, research, communication, entertainment, creativity development/education and social inclusion of young people. However, unsafe use of digital technology brings with it a number of risks, especially when it comes to children and young people (Kuzmanovic et al., 2016).

2. Digital violence

Digital violence is a relatively new phenomenon that during the last two decades have attracted more and more attention in scientific circles. There are a number of definitions of digital violence, some are more general including all forms of harassment by using digital technologies, while others are related to specific forms of digital violence.

Digital violence, according to Willard (2008) is defined as sending or posting offensive or cruel text or images using the Internet or other digital communication tools. In the Book of Rules on the protocol treatment in an institution in response to violence, abuse and neglect ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia", 3/2010) digital / electronic violence means the abuse of information technology that can result in a violation of other persons and endangerment of dignity and it is realized by sending a message by e-mail, SMS, MMS, via a web site, chat, involvement in forums, social networks and so on.

Electronic/digital violence includes friendly teasing and arguing over the phone or Internet, accidentally or unintentionally causing harm and hurting. Electronic/digital violence may include messages of sexual violence, insulting, harassment, threats

Digital violence can occur in many different forms (Popadic, Kuzmanovic, 2012.)

- Sending SMS messages of insulting and threatening content/insults, threats, bad jokes etc./
- Disturbing by phone calls/false introducing oneself, keeping silent, insulting etc.
- Taking photos by use of a mobile phone or a camera, transferring and placing images on the Internet
- Disturbing e-mails/insults, threats, inappropriate jokes and the like.
- Disturbing on social networks/Facebook etc./and on the Internet/concealing identity, false introducing, the use of other people's accounts, uploading photos and videos of others without their consent, sending of viruses etc./
- Blogs, posting on you tube, sending viruses ...

Specifics of digital violence are:

- It provides bullies with such convenience, that other forms of violence do not: anonymity
- Victims may suffer great harm, without having the ability to protect themselves / or defend
- Information that is placed via digital media are rapidly spread.

2.1. *Cyber predators*

Digital violence is saturated with sexual content, and electronic media are a convenient means for committing sexual violence. Cyber pedophiles are using the Internet for committing sexual abuse. They use the anonymity offered by the internet and various tactics to deceive their victims. They are very patient and willing to often communicate with their victims for days, weeks, months or even years to get to the target, ie. to force the young person to meet.

A predator is most commonly an adult, experienced person who knows the mechanisms of seduction and possesses trickery, knowledge and skills to deceive a child and to engage him/her in a vicious circle which can be fatal. This form of violence is often carried over the school children in a way that the predator first becomes informed about the traits, interests and motives of the young person he is planning to threaten and then creating fake profiles in the most diverse ways, using information and communication technologies, comes into contact with the victim and gradually infiltrates the person (Kowalski et. al, 2008.).

Communication by electronic means is independent of place and time, does not require direct physical contact, and as such is extremely convenient for anonymous and productive operation of predators. Children in the school age attribute a lot of importance to their virtual environment, feel freely, safely and have the impression that they govern all phenomena of virtual environment. Their curiosity, the desire to prove themselves and acquire sound reputation in the network, often takes them to places that can 'cost them high price'.

Children are not aware of the danger of leaving their personal data on the network and often are not aware that only one information of them may reveal a few other related information. Getting to know children, using trickery, a predator can find out delicate information, and by using it later can blackmail the victim, threaten her/him, or simply frighten the victim day in day out

Children are often unconfident of themselves in these situations. They rarely ask their parents for help, they often feel ashamed of something they have already done wrong and then try to make things right by themselves, but this is very difficult. When the predator feels their fear and dominance over the victim, the victim can hardly get out from a spider web which he/she got into.

Children even less frequently ask teachers for help, because they have no confidence in them. This situation of helplessness, with constant pressure and without the help of loved ones, leads to severe depression, and can be ended in a complete loss of confidence and coming under the influence of predators, severe mental disorders and even suicide of victims.

Good communication is the key to overcoming these problems. Kids usually do not talk to their parents about their problems because they believe that parents' have no idea' of how things operate on the network. According to the children, parents have old-fashioned ideas, do not have the necessary computer knowledge, are not up to date with electronic forms of communication, so it's almost one third of children unsupervised while playing on the computer. It takes intensive education, to ensure proactive parents' action.

2.2. Campaigns and Researches

To protect Internet users, primarily children, the European Commission has launched a campaign 2009-2013 under the name Safer Internet INSAFE (www.saferInternet.org).

Significant are also the actions and programs provided by Microsoft, which aim to prevent harmful phenomena on the Internet from unwanted advertisements to the most serious crimes.

In the Republic of Serbia, the most important initiatives to improve the safety of children on the Internet is Click safe (www.kliknibezbedno.rs), which operates with the support of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, a Net Patrol (www.netpatrola.rs) the online mechanism for submitting applications of the Safer Internet Centre which was established for the purpose of receiving and processing reports of illegal or harmful content on the Internet.

„Children Online“ research carried out by the company Kaspersky Lab, shows that in 2014 more than two-thirds (68%) users of the Internet were faced with inappropriate or dangerous content on the Internet. More than half of the users (59.5%) of the Internet with pornography, more than a quarter of users (26.6%) ended up on sites dedicated to gambling; every fifth user was faced with sites that published the content of the weapons and almost the same number was faced with curses.

In “Use of Digital Technology Research, risks and digital violence presence among students in Serbia ”/ 2012 /, participated 34 primary and secondary schools, a sample consisted of 3786 students, 1379 teachers and 3078 parents. Based on the results of the research (Popadic, Kuzmanovic, 2012) nearly two-thirds of older primary school pupils and 84% of high school students at least once during the last years have been exposed to some risks on the Internet.

The most common risky behaviour is accepting the invitation to friendship from an unknown person /a half of primary school pupils and three-fourths of tested secondary school students./

One third of parents tested whose children are ten years old do not have a good insight into what their kids are doing on social networks, or know only what their children tell them.

3. The role of schools in preventing digital violence

With increasing use of the Internet and modern communication abilities definitely the rate of abuse and electronic violence among children is growing, too. Teachers often do not approve of such behavior, or, in situations of violence detection via the Internet or mobile phone, as a rule, they feel powerless. One of the more common reactions of employees in schools is not to wrestle with this type of abuse because it happens outside the school environment, thus the possibility of control of children's behavior is reduced. The school as an educational and training institution has an extremely important role in the prevention of abuse of the Internet and prevention of digital violence.

Five key areas for effective prevention of violence, according to Vuckovic, Zajeganovic (2011) are:

1. Highlighting the positive use of digital technology
2. Understanding and talking about modern ways of communication, the dangers and risks of digital violence.
3. Establishing new rules and finishing the existing rules and consequences/ restitution /
4. Detailed procedures of reporting digital violence
5. Monitoring and evaluation of the effect of prevention activities

Although digital violence is not solely related to the school environment, but can happen anywhere and at any time, the role of schools in the prevention and intervention is of great importance. Research results (Popadic, Kuzmanovic, 2012) show that more than half of teachers believe that schools do not have enough capacity to cope with digital violence, but also think they need extra support when it comes to prevention. It is disturbing that more than half of teachers have said that schools do not teach students how to protect themselves on the Internet. Also, two-thirds of teachers think that school alone can not cope with 'new' challenges and that parents are the most important in this matter.

3.1. Information and education of students, teachers and parents

Preventive role of the school is primarily about informing students, teachers and parents on digital violence/ forms, phenomena, good sides, hazards, risks, consequences, preventive measures). Realization of education of teachers, parents and students is an extremely important step when it comes to prevention, as well as the realization of the themes of digital violence

within regular classes: Informatics and Computer Science, Sociology, Civic Education, Religious Education, Psychology ...

Lectures and panel discussions which are desirable to be organized by schools, certainly, should include experts in the field of violence prevention, as well as police inspectors from the Department of High-tech Crime.

3.2. Highlighting positive use of technologies

It is necessary to make the students use 'good places' on the internet, as well as the contents that are appropriate to the developmental and psychological needs of children, to encourage them to use the Internet to gain knowledge, solving the tasks for school (Popadic, Kuzmanovic, 2012). The school plays an important role in the promotion and encouragement of rules of good behavior, safety on the Internet and digital knowledge. Also, research and encouragement of safe ways of using the Internet is an important role of schools, because this way ensures self-affirmation, assertiveness, participation and developing relationships with the students.

3.3. Proper communication and digital literacy

Establishing response procedures /intervention/ and gaining knowledge about them in cases of digital violence with a message that an active attitude is required and also taking the initiative by all employees in the schools, students and parents (Dunjic-Mandic, Karanac, Pasic, 2014). Teachers should pay particular attention to teaching students the digital literacy as a key competence for the entire lifetime education and active participation in society (European Parliament and the Council, 2006). In most European countries, digital literacy is integrated into the compulsory curriculum, and in Serbia in 2013 were defined the standards of general cross-curricular competencies for the end of secondary education (Quality Education Institute, 2013). A child needs to be explained the basic rules of communication on the Internet, the risk of leaving personal information/phone number, address, school, sports club, etc./ at various sites, as well as the way in which to protect their own privacy and respect the privacy of others.

It is important to establish a relationship based on trust, which means to inform of any experience in the virtual world, which children can be concerned about and to explain to them that they should be as careful on the Internet as outside the virtual space.

3.4. Response procedures /intervention/

It is important to do the following in cases of violence and abuse:

- If you know who is the person responsible for disturbing content, ask him/her to remove it;

- Contact the Internet provider to make a request for the said content to be removed, but before that save the link from which the disturbing content has been forwarded;
- If some students have sent messages of inappropriate content, ask them who they have sent the messages to;
- In cases of violence, be sure to inform parents and to contact the police, who can determine what has to be taken as evidence. It may be necessary to include the police and order the Internet service provider check the data on the other persons involved in the case
- As soon as a person who has committed violence is detected, it is necessary to take steps in order to change his/ her attitude and behavior, ie. Intensify educational work, in accordance with legislation acts.

How to help a child who has experienced digital violence in school (Vuckovic, Zajeganovic, 2011)

- If a child ask you for help or confides to you, find a quiet place to talk and listen to the child carefully. Let the child know that he/she did the right thing because of telling someone about his/her experience.
- Please inform parents and give them instructions
- Please inform the police in case of serious forms of violence, threatening messages or a possible criminal offense.
- Advise the child not to respond to provocative, abusive messages and other messages that make him/her feel bad. It is important to encourage the child to feel safe and alleviate the disturbing emotional reactions.
- Suggest some ways that could prevent the recurrence of violence: change of mobile phone number, e-mail addresses, the abandonment of Internet pages/forum, chat, vveblog .../where violence happens or change the nickname that the child uses;
- Inform the child and the parents that within the communication programs there is the possibility of blocking and filtering unwanted messages via options 'ignore' or 'block' and prevent access to certain senders on e-mails or a child's blog.
- Help students to save all information relevant for the investigation (eg. not to delete received messages, to save photos and to register web addresses where the abuse and harassment have occurred).

4. Conclusion

The Internet and other digital networks have created an exciting new world of information and communication for anyone with access to the network and offer young people immeasurable opportunities for learning, communication and development of their own view of the world. New

technologies provide children and adolescents with new approaches to information, culture, communication and entertainment which was impossible to imagine 20 years ago.

Communication by electronic means is independent of place and time, does not require direct physical contact and is therefore extremely suitable for anonymous and productive operation of predators. The schoolchildren attribute a lot of importance to their virtual environment, they feel free, safe and have the impression that they govern all phenomena of virtual environments. Their curiosity and desire to prove themselves and acquire sound reputation in the network, takes them to places where it can "cost them a high price".

Use of the Internet has opened up a lot of opportunities for children to quickly and better communicate with others, for quality education and good fun, but carries with it certain risks. Among the risks that are most frequently mentioned are various forms of digital violence, from harassment to extremely serious form of violence, and exposure to inappropriate content, exposure to political, economic and religious propaganda, misinformation, endangering privacy, persuading to gambling and illegal activities.

In the greatest risk on the Internet are just young people / adolescents because on the Internet they have a high level of autonomy and independence, as the Internet erases social brakes and gives a false sense of security and power, allows users to say and do things that they would not have been able to do in "face to-face communication and they have a feeling they will not be responsible for such behavior in a way that would otherwise be, they are sure that they won't be judged on the Internet according to their looks.

Relations via the Internet seem safer than real relations, no social boundaries, two lonely souls communicate to each other without being watched.

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NEW TRAININGS IN ERASMUS+ PROJECT. FIRST PILOT SEMINAR

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Abstract. *The article presents the results of the phase of Project K2: Santé Publique - Santé Mentale (SPSM), first Pilot Seminar. The Project SPSM refers to the professional accompaniment at work of adults with psychic disorders. It is an interventional research in Public Health and Socio-professional Integration. The project involved 5 European countries: Luxembourg, Romania, Swiss, Belgium and France. In this autumn, the first SPSM Pilot Seminar took place in Geneva. This aims to put in place a training module intended to improve competences of the socio-professional integration specialists. With duration of 1 week in the end of November 2016, the first Pilot Seminar encourages the return of good practices and exchanges of experiences and work instruments between specialists. All the knowledge of socio-professional integration specialists that was implemented in the pilot training action was produced through practice. The Pilot Seminar aims to find a better adequacy of training between the new realities of employability in companies and administrations and the mental health policies. The aim is to exchange and ameliorate the work instruments and specific skills in order to find the best open training perspective, adapted to the tendencies in European mental health needs.*

Keywords: *Pilot Seminar, socio-professional integration, mental health, specialists, competences ameliorated.*

Introduction

The Project: Santé Publique - Santé Mentale (SPSM), refers to the professional accompanying in work of adults with psychic disorders. It is an interventional research in Public Health and Socio-professional Integration. The project involves the next European countries: Luxembourg, Romania, Swiss, Belgium and France.

The First Pilot Seminar of SPSM Project brings together specialists in health, pedagogy, psychology and sociology from the 5 European countries abovementioned. In this Seminar there were involved 3 specialists from

every country, in total: 15 people. It took place in autumn in Geneva, Switzerland.

It refers to best practices of specialists who accompany, at the workplace, people with psychic disorders.

In the field of Mental Health and Socio-professional integration, this research project constitutes a real social treatment.

The human health has 3 pylons: biological, psychological and social. This is a bio-psycho-social approach of human clinical wellbeing, after Engel (Engel, 1980). The concept was developed by 2 doctors: George Engel and John Romano at Rochester decades (Cohen & Brown, 2010). In the SPSM Project, in training programs of Pilot Seminars, the social education in bio-psycho-social approach emphasizes the role of socio-professional environment for human mental health in its fullest contexts. This system has a complex interaction which is important for a global human health: individual health and public health. The theory is approached in social context by doctors Gavrilă-Ardelean (Gavrilă-Ardelean & Gavrilă-Ardelen, 2016). The next diagram presents the human health pylons (figure 1), after doctor Gavrilă-Ardelean (Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016).

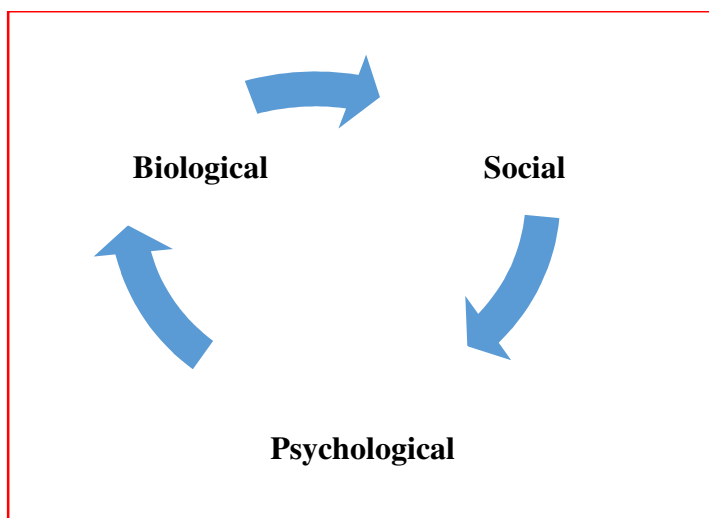


Figure 1. Human Health Pylons' Diagram
(Adapted after Dr. Gavrilă-Ardelean, 2016)

The importance of this system is applied in the field of education for health, which was discussed by Borrell-Carrió & all, elsewhere (Borrell-Carrió & al., 2004). The education is complete if it addresses to all pylons, because the human nature is a complex and integrated system. In this context, the socio-

occupational integration trainings for people with mental disorders in Pilot Seminars of SPSM Project are a real social therapy for mental health rehabilitation. The socio-professional factors are not merely epiphenomena: they can be understood in scientific ways with biological correlations. The bio-psycho-social approach at human mental health level involves applying the scientific method to biological, psychological, and social phenomena, as related to human health, understood like a scientific continuum system, as presented in 2003, elsewhere by Frankel & all (Frankel & al., 2003).

Applying the practice of bio-psycho-social approach in human mental health provides a multidimensional integrated treatment, with economical effects. That is important, because, as shown in World Health Statistics (WHO, 2016), the European morbidity has an ascending trend in mental illness (figure 2).

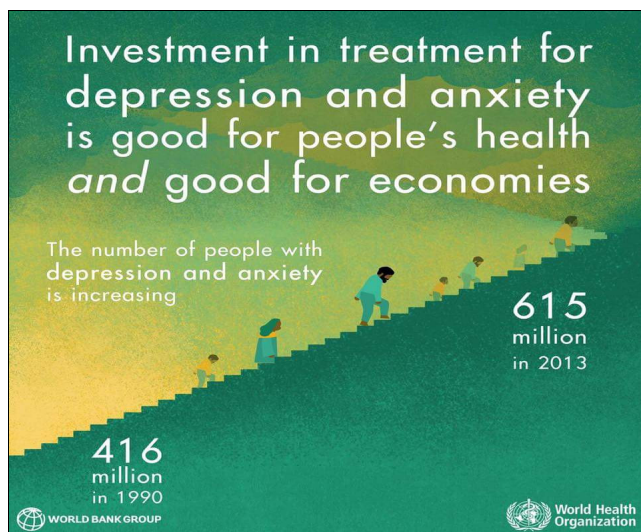


Figure 2. European Mental Morbidity Trend
(After W.H.O, 2016)

The interventional research of SPSM Project aims to put in place a training module, as Pilot Seminars, intended for socio-professional integration specialists. The First Pilot Seminar to train socio-professional integration specialists for people with psychiatric disorders took place in Geneva. The program is intended to perfect the training of 15 specialists in socio-professional integration for people with mental disorders. The specialists come from the 5 European partner countries, and benefit through a Pilot Seminar program of theoretical and practical courses and exchanges with homologues from the other countries involved in project.

Aims of Research

The Pilot Seminar aims to find a better adequacy of training between the new realities of employability in companies and administrations, and the mental health politics. The aim is to exchange and ameliorate work instruments and specific skills, in order to find the best open training perspective, adapted to the tendencies in European mental health needs.

Research Method

The elaboration of Pilot Training Seminars in the Project was made after we identified the local needs in terms of ameliorating the insertion specialists' competences.

The method of the Pilot Seminar was divided into 3 axes of action:

5. Training to ameliorate the competences of socio-professional integration specialists;
6. Exchanging the work tools, and improving good practice and skills related to socio-professional integration for people with mental handicap;
7. Establishing a link between specialists and researchers in Europe, through professional and cultural exchanges.

The level of specialists' competences was appreciated with an *Evaluation Grid*. This is an anonymous questionnaire that was applied before and after training the specialists, in order to assess the impact of our Pilot Seminar. The grid has a scale for assessing the level of knowledge from 1 (no knowledge) to 4 (very good knowledge).

Results

The Pilot Seminar at Geneva has the following program (table no. 1).

Table no.1. Training Plan of Seminar Pilot

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
10.00-12.30 h	8.30-12.30 h	10.00-12.30 h	8.30-12.30 h	8.30-14.30 h
Welcome & Organization Presentation of SPSM Project	Psychical diseases	Network approach	Factors of inclusions	Utilizes
14.00-17.30 h	14.00-16.00 h	14.00-17.30 h	14.00-16.00 h	15.00 h
Local context: social, economic and legislative	Marketing of enterprise	Professional posture	Training uses	Evaluation, assessment
Local intervention	Local cultural evening	Free	Visiting in social enterprise	Fin

The Training Plan of our Pilot Seminar aims to establish which is the best method for specialists to solve problem situations. Problem situations are obstacles in the process of socio-professional integration. Our training

program has modules designed to ameliorate the competences of professional integration specialists. The modules have practical exercises based on using competences in specific life contexts. The threats and their solutions were analyzed. The social, economic and local legislative contexts were analyzed (Maeder & Nadai, 2009; OFAS & OFS, 2013).

The psychical pathology was presented in terms of practical cases, in role play. To reduce the visible signs of mental disease, we developed a method based on next 7 principles:

- The Evaluation Grid;
- Decisional Balance;
- Commitment Charter;
- Emergency Measures;
- Psycho-education;
- Information;
- Prevention.

These principles need to be applied for the users.

The conclusion is: the knowledge about network and local resources is vital for employment.

This training delimited the perimeter of professional integration specialists' competences, as studied by Gavrilă-Ardelean & all elsewhere (Gavrilă-Ardelean & all, 2016).

At the end of the seminar, the tools were collected in drop-box in order to improve the insertion specialists' work.

We collected our points of view, based on our knowledge and experience.

The Program of Pilot Seminars will be realized in the first semester of 2017.

Conclusion

The results of First Pilot Seminar of SPSM Project show that: the 'expected functions' of professional insertion specialists' competences, after Mintzberg (1984, 1995), were covered in terms of improvement, in 3 main types of roles:

4. Interpersonal Roles;
5. Information;
6. Decision roles.

The functions of professional integration specialists were trained in modules in all areas of interest. The goal to improve socio-occupational integration competences of specialists was achieved in the next fields:

7. Local context: social, economic and legislative;
8. Managing the mental diseases;
9. Marketing of enterprise;
10. Network approach;
11. The professional posture;

12. The factors of inclusions;
13. Methods and tools.

On the issue of accompanying people with psychological diseases to employment is important to know how to efficiently shorten the way from *Exclusion* to *Inclusion*. The trend of the new concept of work integration for people with special mental needs is illustrated in the image of road from *Exclusion* to *Inclusion* (figure 3).

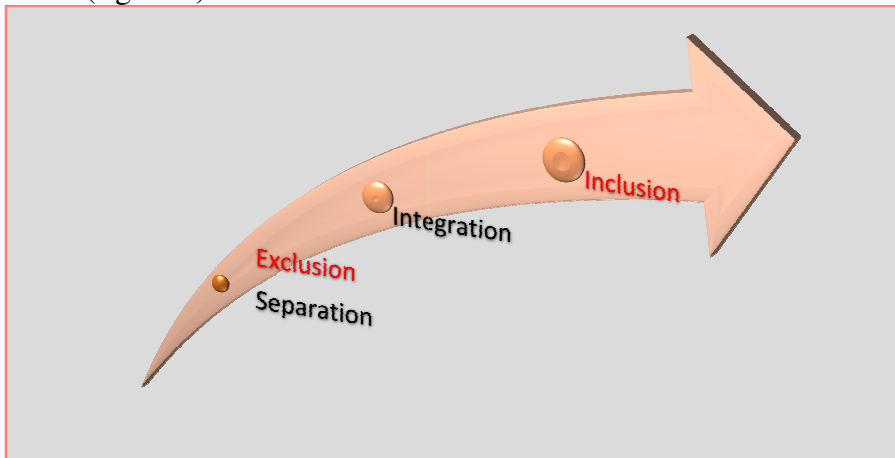


Figure 3. The way through education, from Exclusion to Inclusion

This aspect is better illustrated in next picture (<https://www.diagram+exclusion-separation-integrationinclusion>).

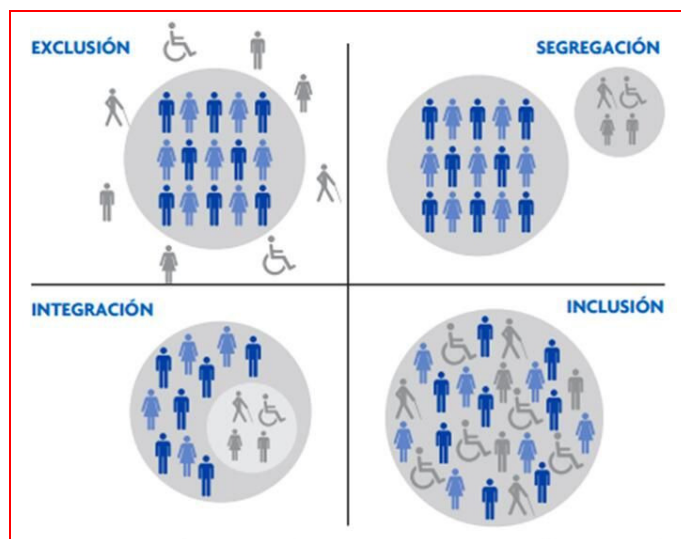


Figure 4. The Diagram of Exclusion-Segregation-Integration-Inclusion

(<https://www.diagram+exclusion-separation-integrationinclusion>).

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COLLABORATIVE LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PRACTICE

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Abstract: *Emphasizing on many other collaborative learning or co-labouring (Latin-based term) and co-teaching approaches nowadays is well-known as an essential 21st century skill that brings educational and social benefits identified on educational research studies. In order to establish a common approach, we can use the definition of Smith and MacGregor (1992) in which it's acknowledged that "collaborative learning" is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together. In most collaborative learning situations students are working in groups of two or more, collaboratively searching for understanding, solutions, or meanings, or creating a product." (p. 11). The difficulties regarding the implementation of activities in collaborative learning are of different nature, but frequently relate to the inability of the teacher to organize cooperative groups effectively and to transfer the findings of the investigation in this area of knowledge and its practical use in the classroom (Gillies, Ashman, & Terwel, 2008, p. 2). Despite the difficulty of transferring theory to practice, we can also highlight that "many teachers noted that constraints to moving beyond pedagogy included lack of time and the need to cover the curriculum" (Cohen, Brody, & Sapon-Shevin, 2004, p. 63). So the main question remains how to improve children's learning quality and teaching effectiveness. The advantages of collaborative learning on engaging students in active learning are obvious when related to traditional methods and strategies co-labouring brings to large group activities. The benefits include the importance of sharing ideas, resources, outcomes, peers and blended features, facilitated learning by a flexible, interactive classroom, project-based learning, collective and reflective learning and leadership forming competences.*

Keywords: *collaborative and cooperative learning, classroom-lab, co-teaching, critical thinking, based-project learning, outcomes learning,*

Introduction

The origins of the concept of “collaborative/ cooperative learning” are timeless and with no inquire related to human activities developed within society. However, in order to establish a common approach, we can use a definition given by Smith and MacGregor (1992) in which we have already established that “collaborative learning” is an umbrella term for a variety of educational approaches involving joint intellectual effort by students, or students and teachers together”.

Collaborative learning offers real learning opportunities for students to develop self-critical thinking, to achieve valuable interpersonal and team skills, participate in task-oriented learning groups. Also the main purpose of *co-teaching* is implementing group learning activities and design learning. Being an informed teacher requires making instructional decisions based on collective wisdom from scholarship and practice. Reflective teaching implies assessing and documenting its efficacy promoting a philosophy of cooperation rather than competition.

In practice scholars and teachers alike seem to use cooperative and collaborative terms similarly, not taking into account the epistemological meaning. Most teachers don't always have a non-associated perception on using semantically distinguished terms but instead, focus on accomplishing their goals no matter whether learning is achieved .

Thus, the terms collaborative and cooperative have similar meanings, the debate comes whether they mean the same thing when applied to group learners. (Cuseo, 1992) Others sustain the most common approach for collaborative and cooperative learning is an extended position from most structured (cooperative) to least structured (collaborative). (Mills & Cotel, 1998). Some authors insist on having a separated division between terms, Brufee (1995) asserts “describing collaborative and cooperative learning. The goal for cooperative learning is to work together, joint for the final solution and the aim of collaborative learning is to flourish self-determining, eloquence, reflective-thinking people, even if declining the competition seems undermining the theory of cooperative learning. Offering the epistemological dissimilitude scholars use their arguments for choosing one way or another. The most forthright definition of cooperative learning is “the instructional use off small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning”. (Smith, 1996, p.71)

Theoretical Foundation

There is a substantial agreement in literature on what cooperative learning is not, so: it is not having students side by side or small groups at the table, it is not assigning properly the report to a group of students on which some of them do all the work and others don't, it is not having

students on doing tasks individually and then help the slower ones. (Smith, 1996 p,74)

Cooperative learning has been defined as “the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson et al. 1990), cooperative learning is based on the social interdependence theories of Kurt Lewin and Morton Deutsch (Deutsch, 1949; Lewin, 1935). We recognise and appreciate studies of the pioneers in cooperative learning such as David and Roger Johnson at the University of Minnesota, Robert Slavin at Johns Hopkins University, and Elizabeth Cohen at Stanford.

In addition to the structured activity, Smith (1996, p.74-76) lists five elements considered as essential for successful cooperative learning groups (Johnson, Johnson & Smith, 1998,a., pp.21-23): positive interdependence, promoting interaction, individual and group accountability, development of teamwork skills, group processing. According to this statement, students can practice cooperative learning by working together and holding responsibilities for both members team. Teacher responsibility is to check the presence of these elements. According to Slavin that is not enough and considered”to simply tell students to work together; they must have a reason to take one another’s achievement seriously. (1996, p.21)

Collaborative learning brought in higher education as a pedagogical method as a cooperative learning, based a different epistemological finding, it assumes that knowledge is”socially produced by consensus among peers”. The conception of knowledge as”a mirror or reality” is replaced by the conception of the social construction of reality” focus on interpretation and settling a meaning to the world. (Kvale, 1996, p.41). Thus social interpretation conveys rather than focusing on mind (cognitive approach) needing to well-known in the groups construct knowledge”by creating a culture with shared meanings”

Kenneth Bruffee who ”made some brand of collaborative learning” reflected his assumption when he shaped that knowledge is ”something people construct by talking together and reaching agreement” (1993,p.3) Matthews offers the definition” Collaborative learning occurs when students and faculty together and that the process enriches and enlarge them”(1996,p.101)

Research has continued their documentations through time and passing ten years from first” reviewed the literature on interactive group learning. Nowadays educators must feel self-confident in coordinating an adequate supporting group on learning as an effective instructional approach in today`s onsite and online classrooms.

Recent research submit that”learning is fundamentally influenced by the context and activity in which it is embedded” (Brown, Collins and

Duguid, 1989). Attending collaborative learning activities offer students opportunities on challenging tasks or questions. Rather than beginning with facts and ideas and then moving to applications, collaborative learning activities usually begin with problems, for which students must gather real solutions, facts and ideas and become immediate practitioners.

“Learning in manner of groups, face-to-face experiences and online contexts authorise students to have more room to negotiate meanings and to express themselves and their own ideas. It also helps them to establish more effective relationships and can play a central role in developing key professional skills, such as listening, presenting ideas, persuasion, self-direction, self-monitoring and team working.”(Jaques & Salmon, 2007, p. i).

In the last ten years the term *co-teaching* was defined as a collaboration between general and special education on all the teachers responsibilities toward students assigned to a classroom (Gately&Gately, 2001). So co-teaching remains scattered in schools because of a lack of understanding that real collaboration in an educational setting means, and because existing policy conditions that hasn't always enabled it to flourish. Practitioner students and teachers also need to convey for space and time to experiment collaborative teaching and learning in practice.

Kenneth Bruffee remains one of the authors who most handed out patterns of a methodology of learning associated with collaborative learning. In one of his main works he proposed a convention or an operational protocol that is still so relevant up to nowadays.

Problem-centred instruction, extensively used in professional education, is recurrently gathered around collaborative learning strategies. “Many of these spring from common roots”, especially the work of John Dewey in the beginning of this century. The strategic framework for education and training (ET 2020) established by the Council of the European Union now counsel policy-related to identify the quality of education and training stating that “there is a need to ensure high quality teaching, to provide adequate initial teacher education and continuous professional development for teachers”.

As highlighted in the Communication from the European Commission, Rethinking Education”are opportunities to undertake 'skills renewal across the profession' and help schools become more geared to the modern world”.

The effort is to sustain Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Life Long Learning more efficiently while underpinning “the role of induction and mentoring; and to drive professional development towards more flexible, individualised, collaborative forms, and link it to teachers' career prospects and school development plans”. Earlier 2014, the Council of the European Union ” emphasised that teacher education is just one aspect of the wider

policy objective of raising the attractiveness and quality of the profession, along with appropriate policies for teacher recruitment and retention, effective ITE and early career support”.

EU Council further settled ”that countries should ensure that teachers have regular opportunities to update their subject knowledge and to receive support and training in effective and innovative modes of teaching, including those based on new technologies”.(Council conclusions of 20 May 2014 on effective teacher education, OJ C 183, 14.06.2014, pp. 22-23)

Methodology

Creating a collaborative classroom can provide real fulfilment and also bring challenges for both students and teachers as well. Few of us have experienced collaborative labour in our own undergraduate stage, and much of our graduate school training increased the teacher-centred, lecture-driven model of college teaching. Stepping out of the centre and engaging students in group activity means learning incitement for both sides.

In collaborative labour, students require differences, and must struggle with admitting and dealing with it. In collaborative work it is fundamental to develop the conscience that by sharing objectives and responsibilities, the members of the group benefit as a group and individually of the success they have.

The definition of ”group learning” is considered by Jaques and Salmon (2007, p.6) posing this feature: collective perception, needs shared aims, interdependence, social organisation, interaction, cohesiveness and membership. In this case the group learning is related to the way new objectives and motivations are established, both in situations of cooperation and competition, as Johnson and Johnson (1995) have described.

Studies of collaborative learning have identified social and educational benefits and important issues like sharing ideas, wisdom and resources with peers, gaining experience in conflict resolution, collective learning and leadership competences, developing self -criticism, self -evaluation and self - reflection. Teachers are developing competences such as leadership skills and improve their transversal competences designing learning strategies and adapting resources.

Teachers must organise efficient cooperative groups, and gather strategies in transferring the findings of researches in this area of knowledge and practical use of onsite/online classroom-laboratory. It’s important to notice the fundamental development of conscience that sharing objectives and responsibilities the members of the group award to the individual and also to the group success. Westberg and Jason (1996, p.52) propose a short check-list of working conditions on creating groups in facilitating teachers actions.

“Learning in groups in both face –to –face and online contexts allows students to have more room to negotiate meaning sand to express themselves and their own ideas. It also helps them to establish more effective relationships and can play a central role in developing key professional skills, such as listening, presenting ideas, persuasion, self -direction, self -monitoring and team working.” (Jaques & Salmon, 2007, p. i)

Tuckman first defined four stages in the preparation of group learning, having added a fifth stage later, summarized in the expressions “forming”, “storming”, “norming”, “performing” and “adjourning” (Tuckman, 1965;Tuckman & Jensen, 1977, 2010)

Practicing collaborative learning in this preschool stage is a real provocation for teachers and even efficient for children. This micro-research reveals the fulfilment of increasing preschool key competences and teaching skills by engaging all the educational partners in practicing collaborative learning in the detriment of traditional learning. Teachers are responsible for studying the best formation in this case and for choosing defined criteria adequate to the objectives and duration of activities.

This micro-research proposes practicing collaborative learning in a nursery school for a definite period of time, monitoring the learning process due to practicing traditional learning to another nursery school and assessing the results at the same period of time.

Collaborative learning requires learning in small groups face to face and in online contexts when needed, developing key skills, learning outcomes (communication, social, basic skills, digital skills, literacy, critical and creative thinking, working with others, being personally effective and extending boundaries. *Co-learning* provides Real-world Problem-Solving and Innovation.

The ”control group” is formed by 24 children aged six is proceeding on a traditional learning, and the experimental ”group community” is also represented by 24 children of the same age and their teachers represent the ”experimental group”. The experiment was established for a limited period of time (exactly 412 min). Children were engaged in different activities in small groups (4 members) or face to face activity engaged in different strategies and resources in providing outcomes learning by their teachers.

The independent variable was the collaborative learning and teaching shown in the experimental design. The specific guidelines planned in the experimental group attended in co-laboratory class were: Dream, Map, Explore, Ask, Re-make and Show.

The role of teachers in Dream activity was: team leader, team reporter, organiser and lead researcher. They had to create team blog to register and report their progress, and also can provide on line tutoring and

mentoring activity. Also children learn to work independently how to access e-portfolios and also to reflect on formative assessment.

Learning activity related to Explore focuses on developing team work and interpersonal skills. Teachers should observe children's digital skills, offer a collaborative learning environment in classroom or at home as well.

They used Map activity both with teachers to organise learning tasks working on small groups and using virtual tools and rubrics. This kind of activity is more efficient for students and teachers in peer learning. Students may use also Mind-Mup, Poplet, Paddlet.

The goal of the Make activity is to develop digital competences in using ICT efficiently. Also, by using Make activity students can self-assess on different topics and elaborate alternative strategies for other students.

Using Ask activity teachers in the experiment group created an online debate with interview results and collected different opinions on classroom learning.

During Re-Make activities teacher had the opportunity to connect with local personalities by e-mailing on the theme project developing language and social competences using collaborative learning". They had the opportunity to send online invitations and invite them to participate during nursery activities.

Show activity completed the project by setting out the process and the results of the class. Teachers facilitated their results using a webinar where offered the assessed work to other preschool teachers. It's a good strategy to self-reflect, self-assess upon the outcomes. Teachers disseminated project information and children's portfolios and gave a real feedback for other *actors* of school community and experts. ``Show`` reveals the pattern of the institutional model recognition .

We will attach a print-screen indicating the project-based learning of the Learning Designer project described in the research. (Follow –up)

Results and Discussion

Beyond the difficulty of transferring theory to practice, we can also highlight that “many teachers noted that constraints to moving beyond pedagogy included lack of time and the need to cover the curriculum” (Cohen, Brody, & Sapon-Shevin, 2004, p. 63).

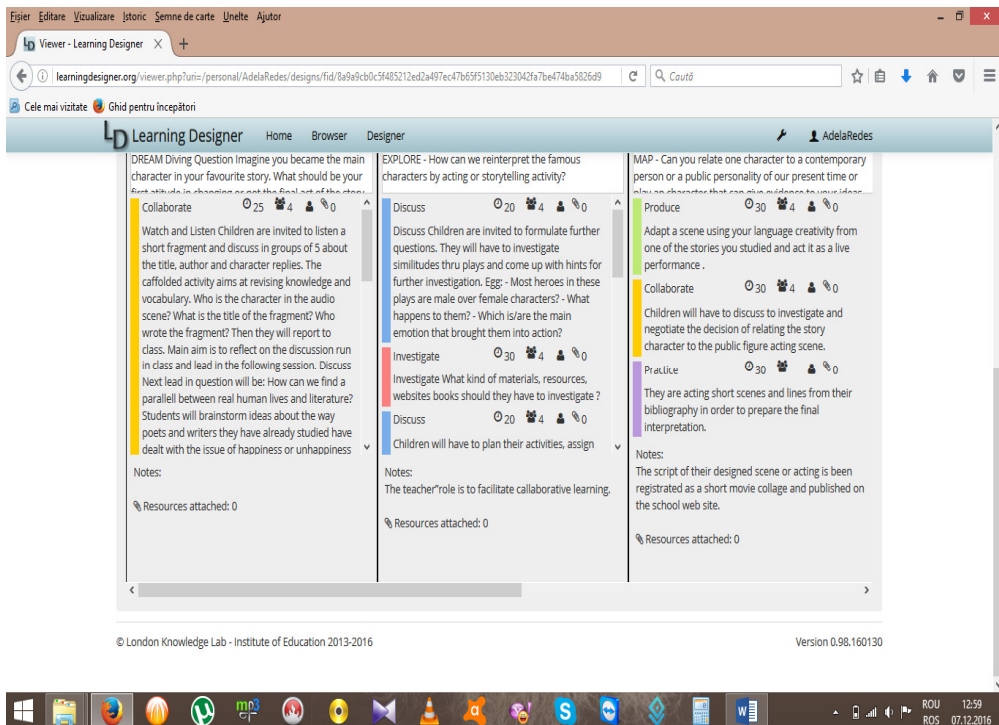
Due to the collaborative learning, the objectives and assessment have taken into account attitude towards learning and willingness to learn; setting objectives and planning activities; organised and targeted learning activities; fostering learning, reflection on learning activities and outcomes, and self-assessment (*Development of Students’ Key Competencies in Basic School (grades 5-8) and also aims to develop scientific, learning-to-learn and communication in the mother tongue competences*). *Education and Training 2020 Work programme Thematic Working Group 'Assessment of Key Competences' Literature review, Glossary and examples November, 2012*)

These elements included knowledge, skills and attitudes related to “learning to learn competences”. It is useful as a recommendation to attend ICT research (Innovative Teaching and Learning) as a powerful tool supporting a large range of 21st century skills, including all other Learning Design rubrics that help students collaborate in ways that have not been possible before, or communicate through new means of expression: interacting knowledge construction and real-world problem-solving and innovation.

This project on collaborative learning recorded best results both for children and teachers. The experimental group got familiarized with

innovative collaborative techniques methods and strategies. The results of Show activity technique reveals improving personal competences and aimed at objectives of the group community (print-screen project learning designer). Children improved collective collaboration: collaborative learning at 27% percent, inquiry at 17, 07%; acquisition at 7, 32; production at 21,95%; discussions at 18,29%. The group asked the opinion and suggestions of other groups.

All group members actively contributed to the final product, the live scene presentation and on webinar. Children and teachers offered each other support and feedback. When someone in the group was having trouble, others spontaneously helped. Children have the opportunities to develop their



public speech skills, oratorical acting. When needed the group community asked for help, others helped them immediately. In the end, everyone seemed satisfied with their group's work. Group members exchanged and negotiated their ideas between each other, strategies, tools and/or resources to carry out the activity. The group defined the tasks and the role of each member early on. The group assisted and gave advice to others using online classroom and requested

comments to other groups before finishing the activity. Everyone accepted critical comments from others outside and the other group participated to this research.

Conclusions

Challenges to collaborative learning instead of the traditional one, increasing the classroom level are blended with the traditional and culture issues where the role of the teacher is focusing on students' learning and act as a facilitator; balances of taking decisions about learning with students, in ethically responsible ways; teachers control less, and students are involved more;

The assignment of content, with the goal of charging strong knowledge foundations is used to develop learning skills and learner self-awareness, and self-assessment without *unconnecting* learning strategies from content.

The learning processes and the aims for assessing consider that evaluation activities should also be used to promote learning and to develop self and peer-assessment skills.

The taking-tasking and learning awareness activities, that requires schools are useful on create learning environments that motivate students or children to accept the role in group learning and a constructive classroom climate.

Designing classrooms-laboratory online-lab, face-to-face interaction, extended examination of ideas, debate sessions, the hearing-out of multiple perspectives; re-creating the educational informal-formal environment, the development of an intellectual community -all these are easy to accomplish by providing collaborative learning.

Collaborative classrooms stimulate both students and teachers in the most authentic design of learning, the collaborative learning process models what means to question, learn and understand in concern with others. Learning collaboratively inquires responsibility, persistence and sensitivity, but the result can be a community of flourishing learners in which everyone is welcome to join, to participate and to grow.

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