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Authors	Article Title	Page
Fabio Bocci	Movies in Education: A Non-Formal Approach for Lifelong and Lifewide Learning	4
Jonas Christensen, Joachim Thönnessen, Bret Weber	Knowledge Creation in Reflective Teaching and Shared Values in Social Education: A Design for an International Classroom	11
Raul V. Lupaş, Alina S. Rusu	Belongingness and maladaptive schemas: A wellbeing group intervention program for high-school teachers	24
Massimiliano Fiorucci	Interculturality Between Formal and Non-formal Education in Italy	32
Lavinia-Maria Niţulescu, Elena-Alina Hosu	Corporate Social Responsibility for Education	42
Alexandra Ioana Oltean	Middle School Students' Opinions Regarding Their Educational Experience during Covid-19 Pandemic	48
Trifan Irina-Mihaela, Chiş Olga	Curriculum Design for Building and Developing the Social-Emotional Skills of Preschoolers	58
Vodă Ioana-Maria	Correlation between school dropout and gross domestic product in the emerging countries of Central and Eastern Europe	65
Keren Ketko Ayali, Bocoş Muşata	Practical Five-Level Model for Activist Pedagogy and Promoting Active Citizenship: Film Study in Israel as a Test Case	73
Cristina Bălaş-Baconschi, Lucreţia-Delia Dobrican	Emotional intelligence and its influence on the adaptive skills	84
Chiş Olga, Adina V. Lung	Cyberbullying: a brief research study emphasizing junior high students' perceptions	93
Esin Hazar	Use of Digital Games in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners	98
Chiş Olga, Grec Claudia	Efficient ways to develop reading comprehension skills	105
Monica Halaszi, Muşata Bocoş	The curricular model of personal development and the multimodal text in the context of new curricula for Romanian language and literature. Diachronic and synchronic perspective	111
Horia Mihai Raboca, Daniela Cotoranu	The Efficiency of the Online Academic Teaching Process During the Pandemic Covid-19	118
Zehava Seter, Cristian Stan	Educational Change - Easy to Say, Hard to Do: Teachers' Perceptions towards Introducing Innovative Teaching Approaches	127
Delia Muste	The role of feedback in the teaching-learning process	137
Delia Muste	Opinions of primary education teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of on-line teaching	143
Cornelia Stan	Multiculturality and interculturality in the educational system	148
Alexandra Fodor, Carmen Costea-Bărluţiu	The Effect of a Pilot Group Psycho-education Program on the Death Attitude and Life Perception in the Case of an Adult with Intellectual Disabilities	154
Andreia Ştefănescu, Cârciag Petre Daniel, Diana Mariana Boeriu, Simona Călina Morar	The importance of humour and charisma to facilitate students' motivation for learning	162
Andreia Ştefănescu, Ion Albulescu, Petre Daniel Cârciag, Diana Mariana Boeriu, Editha Margareta Coşarbă	Measuring cohesion indicators in middle school: membership, implication and satisfaction	169
Efrat Luzzatto, Alina. S. Rusu	Development of a Neuroscience Motifs-based Teacher Training Program for Pre-Service Teachers in Special Education in Israel	180
Book Review		
Constantin Cucuş, Romiţă Iucu	Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide	191

Movies in Education: A Non-Formal Approach for Lifelong and Lifewide Learning

Fabio Bocci

Movies in Education: A Non-Formal Approach for Lifelong and Lifewide Learning

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Abstract

Keywords:

cinema; lifelong learning; cinematic experience

The cinematic language, in addition to acting as a persuasive mediator to be used in training contexts, can represent a meeting point between non-formal and formal education in the different lifelong-lifewide learning contexts. In this paper, the author specifies what we usually define as cinematic experience starting from the correlation between physical space (I'm going to the cinema) and visual act (I'm going to see a film). Then, he describes the components of the cinematic language (for example: long/full shot, plan américain/medium long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up and extreme close-up, extreme wide, long/wide, etc.). Moreover, the author presents the psycho-pedagogical characteristics that are activated while participating in the viewing of a film. Finally, describes two examples of non-formal education through cinematic language. The first one refers to the Visualfest, a contest organized by the Department of Education of Roma Tre University, that aims to promote the dissemination of works created by scholars, teachers, students, educators and professionals who use images as a vector of knowledge. The second one is Co-Educa, an initiative of co-education, of alliance between the scholastic-editorial-cultural-scientific fields for the construction of a network of active subjects and the establishment of an authentic pedagogical agora.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

filme; nicht formale bildung; lebenslanges-lebensbegleitendes Lernen; Kinoerfahrung; Filmsprache

Die filmische Sprache fungiert nicht nur als überzeugender Vermittler für Trainingskontexte, sondern auch einen Treffpunkt zwischen nicht formaler und formaler Bildung in den verschiedenen Kontexten des lebenslangen-lebensbegleitenden Lernens darstellt. In diesem Artikel spezifiziert der Autor das, was wir normalerweise als Kinoerlebnis definieren, ausgehend von der Korrelation zwischen dem physischen Raum (ich gehe ins Kino) und dem visuellen Akt (ich werde einen Film sehen). Anschließend beschreibt er die Komponenten der Filmsprache (zum Beispiel: Long / Full Shot, Plan Américain / Medium Long Shot, Medium Shot, Medium Close-Up, Close-Up und Extrem-Close-Up, Extrem Wide, Long / Wide, usw.). Darüber hinaus präsentiert der Autor die psychopädagogischen Eigenschaften, die bei der Betrachtung eines Films aktiviert werden. Abschließend werden zwei Beispiele für nicht formale Bildung durch Filmsprache beschrieben. Das erste bezieht sich auf das Visualfest, einen Wettbewerb, den vom Erziehungsbereich der Roma Tre Universität organisiert wird. Das Visualfest soll die Verbreitung von Werken fördern, die von Wissenschaftlern, Lehrern, Studenten, Pädagogen und Fachleuten erstellt wurden, die Bilder als Wissensvektor verwenden. Das zweite Beispiel ist Co-Educa, eine Initiative der Ko-Bildung, der Allianz zwischen den schulisch-redaktionell-kulturwissenschaftlichen Bereichen für den Aufbau eines Netzwerks aktiver Fächer und die Schaffung einer authentischen pädagogischen Agora.

1. Introduction

As we know, there has been extensive study and discussion by numerous authors, in both national and international publications, of the distinction between the diverse educational paths and relationships (formal, non-formal, informal), as well as the consequent levels of education and training that follow, and the different contexts from which they arise (among the countless contributions we highlight: Simkins, 1977; du Bois-Reymond, 2003; Rogers, 2005; Batini 2006; Hoppers, 2006; De Camillis, 2008; Werquin, 2010; Galliani, 2012). There is a certain amount of agreement among scholars in

specifying the way in which these three modes of education/instruction/learning are carried out. *Formal*: education takes place in an organized and structured context (a school, university or other educational institution), and is explicitly created, planned, designed and organized as a curriculum that leads to a certification (which can be of different types). *Non-formal*: education is connected to planned activities but not explicitly designed as learning (not provided by a training institution and not normally resulting in a certification, e.g. a day of study on a work problem in one's profession); *Informal learning*: multiple forms of learning through experience resulting from the activities of daily life related to work, family, or

leisure, which are not organized or structured and do not lead to certification (e.g. membership in an association).

All of this is seen through the lens of *lifelong learning*, an expression that we know refers to the learning process that spans the entire arc of life (*vertical, diachronic* or *longitudinal* aspects), as well as *lifewide learning*, the so-called *horizontal aspect* of learning that refers to all areas and contexts of life.

In this light, for several years there has been an awareness of the need to overcome the conception that there are only a few places or contexts considered to be suitable for or conducive to learning (traditionally or typically schools and universities) and the need to appreciate all the experiences that individuals go through on a daily basis, through which they acquire implicit knowledge.

Given this increasingly widespread awareness, the open question that still presents a challenge for those who study and are involved in education is twofold. On the one hand, it concerns the need for the various actors in the field (educators, teachers, trainers as well as students) to know how to recognize and appreciate the innumerable opportunities that favor learning processes in the various forms in which they present themselves (or in which they break down) and above all, how to take advantage of them. On the other hand (in synergy with the first), the challenge concerns both the need and the difficulty of integrating these different ways of learning and the aspects (*vertical* and *horizontal*) that concern them. In other words, still too often formal institutions struggle to give credit to experience and knowledge gained outside of the contexts recognized as *accredited* (or formal). But it must also be said that there is a marked tendency (and this also applies to the business world) of many people to keep areas of their lives separate, for example, by putting what is done at work or at school in opposition to passions, hobbies and so on.

With these very brief preliminary considerations in mind, given the subject of the essay and the volume, we will deal in particular with the contribution that cinema (or, as we will shortly specify, the language of cinema) has made to the educational field as a non-formal approach that contributes to lifelong learning. Indeed, for personal interests, cinema and its language seem to be a good example and setting for reflection on an opportunity that is neither informal, non-formal nor formal.

2. Going to the Cinema: The Cinematic Experience

When we refer to what is commonly known as the filmmaking experience, we tend to use the term *cinema* in a global way, as a whole. For example, let's say I go to the cinema both to understand the physical place (*I go to a movie theater*) and to define the act (*I go to see a film*). In reality, as industry experts remind us, we are in the presence of different situations that are therefore related to different terms and concepts. We can indeed speak of *Cinema*, meaning it as a *social fact*, of *Film* referring to the *means of recording* elements of reality and, finally, of cinematic language in the sense of *expressive form* having its own characteristics.

Cinematic language is for the author (screenwriter, director, etc.) what sound is for the musician, and color for the painter. Those who *make films* are confronted with a subject and a question that are their own. It concerns the material and lexicon that characterize what later unfolds in the film narrative. Specifically, this is embodied in the concept of framing, which constitutes, as Aristarchus and Orto (1980) affirm as “the point of view from which the author films objects and people with the camera” (p. 69). As we know, these shots are conventionally distinguished by angles and fields of view.

Shots, which always have the people as their subjects (long/full shot, plan américain/medium long shot, medium shot, medium close-up, close-up and extreme close-up) are related to the real distance between the camera and the subject being filmed and the type of lens used.

Fields (extreme wide, long/wide, full, medium) include spaces and human figures, stylistically defining the space chosen by the camera (i.e. the director).

We can add a few more specific shots, such as the detail shot (a part of a person excluding the face) or the extreme close-up (a part of an object, isolated from the rest of it).

The infinite storytelling choices that the author can choose to implement through the use of cinematic language exercises an extraordinary power of attraction over the viewer, which Cesare Musatti defines as *enchantment*.

On the same wavelength, Edgar Morin, in a volume that has become a classic, *The Cinema or The Imaginary Man* (1962), talks about real magic tricks. One thinks (by identifying with the audience, what we are, mainly) of the use of framing and focus, details, time effects (time-lapse, slow-motion, flashbacks, flashforwards) or space (for example, variations from one shot to another in the same

sequence of the location without the real geographic coordinates being respected), as well as, finally, sound (sounds, sound effects, silence, music, etc.).

The story-telling strategies of cinematic language used by the director certainly act as vectors in the construction of a certain individual and collective imagination. At the same time, and for the same reason, what happens on the screen, involves us fully, bringing us into the flow of narration and stimulating the activation of processes of and for knowledge that draws on both cognitive and affective aspects of our minds.

We enter the territory of the psychological and pedagogical implications of the use of the cinematic intermediary (and of the experience that makes it a living thing). These are the aspects that we are mainly discussing in the following paragraph.

3. Cinema and Education: Psychopedagogical Features

By participating in (not only watching or seeing) a cinematic story, or a film, it can (and often does) happen that we find ourselves moved in some way- cheering on a character, giving him advice or suggestions and so on. This happens, as Cesare Musatti (2000) cleverly explained, because the cinematic experience is able to activate two very powerful psychological mechanisms.

The first is the process of identification, by which we appropriate the moods of the actors and live them as if they were our own. The second is the projection process, a mechanism through which we attribute feelings, impulses and emotional states to the protagonists of the film, which are instead ours alone.

As Balázs (1955), one of the most famous scholars of the *Seventh Art*, points out, “the camera guides our gaze to the place where the cinematic action takes place, the image of the film. It is as if we see everything from within, as if we are surrounded by the characters of the film” (p. 52). The emotional involvement that accompanies this experience is of particular pedagogical relevance for at least three reasons.

First of all because the emotional involvement activates in the audience two different but related ways of encountering and processing information (and therefore learning). Following the thought of Maragliano (1996) we see how one process acts by immersion (accessing knowledge in a physical way) while the other by abstraction

(accessing knowledge in an analytical way). Comparing Maragliano to Bruner (1993) we can also say that during a film's viewing, the typical mechanisms of narrative thinking are activated in the viewer (emotional involvement, curiosity, and expectation orientation - this is a definition by Dieuzeide in 1966. It has to do with the emotional intensity aroused by participation in the watching of a film. A sort of state of alert (Arousal) is reached that, on the educational and training level, is particularly relevant since it affects involvement, interest, and perseverance) while the procedures and reasoning methods typical of paradigmatic thinking are then used (the explanation of personal feelings, the conscious detection of events, facts, episodes and behaviors described in the film, their identification and classification, or the analysis, the interpretation and generalization of certain observed events).

Secondly, following on the thought of Kracauer (1962), Lumbelli (1974) points out that cinema is able to “favor a perceptive restructuring of everyday reality, dismantling the conceptual schematizations through which it is trivialized and made repetitive, and in this way allowing us to perceive figural characteristics up close, aspects that we are used to letting go unnoticed” (Lumbelli, 1974, p. 21).

Thirdly and finally, the fact that the visual narratives are designed as a sort of *free zone* (Bocci, 2006) has great relevance to the educational field (be it informal, non-formal or formal). By reading, listening to or watching a story that does not concern us directly, but which could also concern us (through identification/projection), we experience different ways of bringing out and defining our personal belief systems, values, expectations and knowledge of specific or general situations that the film narrative brings to our attention.

We have asserted that this free zone has its place in education, making us an accurate reflection of Carboni and Cuzzolaro (1984), as we imagine education to be “a transformative experience in which the widening of cultural horizons derives not only from the learning of ideas, but from an emotional awareness that allows a link between what is known and what is felt” (p. 274). It follows that cinematic language is able to contribute to, through an affective-cognitive experience, the placing of three pedagogically relevant variables in synergistic alliance (Bocci, 2006):

a) subject matter (what comes to our attention as something that can be the object of learning);

b) what one already knows (in general and about the subject-learning object);

c) what one feels (in relation to one's general self, to the self as a subject of knowledge in a broad sense, to the self as a subject of knowledge in that precise context and with reference to that specific subject-object of knowledge).

Operatively, it follows that one involved in this point of view (in our case, individuals who are in a non-formal learning situation) has (or gives himself) the possibility to (Bocci, 2005; 2016):

- *involve* one's own experiences (full of expectations, values, convictions, and so on);
- *draw* from one's personal strategic repertoires the creative functions belonging to their personal resources;
- *encounter* dynamic information conveyed by a multiplicity of cultural-symbolic systems (images, sound, gestures, etc.);
- *access* information in a flexible and meaningful way;
- *activate* a variety of degrees of involvement in the learning process (from immersion to abstraction).

All of these aspects are incorporated in the two concrete experiences that we report on in the next paragraph.

4. Two examples of non-formal education through cinematic language

We now present, by way of example, two education/training experiences implemented with a non-formal approach by using cinematic language. The first refers to VisualFest, an exhibition put on by the Department of Education of Roma Tre University. The second refers to CoEduca, an event organized by Edizioni del Rosone, a publisher from the city of Foggia in collaboration with several partners in the area.

4.1 VisualFest

VisualFest is a contest created in 2013 on the initiative of a group of scholars and experts (Roberto Cipriani, Fabio Bocci, Gianmarco Bonavolontà, Claudio Moticone, Paolo Tomassini, Salvatore Di Riso, Mario Pireddu, Luciano Di Mele) which grew to include the participation of Valentina Domenici and Cristina Paupini starting from the 3rd year.

The exhibition, which includes feature-length, medium, and short films, aims to promote the dissemination of works created by scholars, teachers, students, educators, and professionals who use images as a vector of knowledge, as a methodology, as a method and as a medium of investigation of the phenomena that concern man in his

relationship with himself and others, with the world of ideas, things, and events. This is all carried out with an openness to the different visual forms on display, in the spirit of freedom and dialogue.

The intent is, first of all, to promote the dissemination of audiovisual products created by people who use images as a tool and vehicle for research and scientific knowledge in the field of human and social disciplines in all their forms. Although there are many visual works that can be used both in the field of scientific research and in teaching, the category considered here is that in which moving images become the preferred investigative tool. For this reason, the promoters do not consider the traditional categories that generally distinguish video productions by genre and format (as well as that of the author's professional position) to be relevant, because what is primarily considered is the link existing in the work between the research (not only scientific) and the expressive choices carried out with its realization.

Secondly, the intent is to allow the public (university professors and school teachers, students, enthusiasts, etc.) to be an integral part of this process both through voting on all the works presented and through moments of debate and comparison with the authors and other invited experts.

Thirdly, finally, taking inspiration from Institutional Analysis, the intent is to give the institution (formally, the Department) the possibility of dialectising the *institution* (the forms of training provided within a formal context) with the *instituted* (presented as innovative above all because it is generated from the bottom up, by those who participate and who can find a space to contribute with know-how and awareness generated in the non-formal and informal contexts).

In summary, we can describe the peculiar characteristics of VisualFest as follows:

- it is an unconventional space within a formal context (a university department);
- it allows the direct participation of the audience (who vote on the works presented and discuss them with the authors/creators);
- it is intended for a heterogeneous audience of people with different profiles and backgrounds (teachers, students, directors, screenwriters, critics, simple enthusiasts) who have the opportunity to talk; it is therefore characterized by an attitude open to the participation of all (professionals and otherwise).
- it is guided by a spirit of research, and experimentation with creativity;

- it also pays attention to the local community (the so-called *third mission*). With the term *third mission* attributed to the University, reference is made to the fact that the academy together with the two typical objects that characterize it (training and research) must today also work to contribute to social development. A first - and more immediate form of third mission is that which is linked to the technological transfer of products that are developed within the research projects conducted by the universities. Nevertheless, a second socio-cultural form of the third mission, which has to do with the promotion and dissemination of intellectual products, which has cultural, social, educational, civic engagement aspects as its fulcrum, has a significant value, etc ... once made available to public affairs (from the perspective of the common good) the level of well-being of society increases.

4.2 CoEduca

CoEduca. Education at the center of the village, is a project launched in 2016 from a joint initiative of Alain Goussot, a professor at the University of Bologna, and of the Foggia Edizioni del Rosone Publishing House. After the first year, due to the premature death of Alain Goussot, this writer and Dimitris Argiropoulos (professor at the University of Parma) have been involved.

It is an initiative of co-education, of alliance between the scholastic-editorial-cultural-scientific fields for the construction of a network of active subjects and the establishment of an authentic *pedagogical agora*. The events promoted by CoEduca, in fact, are among the most diverse: workshops, presentations of books, meetings with authors, film forums, debates, and more, that take place in different contexts of the city of Foggia, such as city halls, universities, schools, libraries, auditoriums, squares, etc.

These events see the involvement of numerous public figures that support and put into action the idea of Goussot of creating a permanent educational community, allowing knowledge to escape places considered as repositories, instead, hosting it and helping it become part of the community, finding a way into the city fabric, thus achieving the progressive ideal dear to Paulo Freire.

Within the various initiatives, from the very beginning a significant space was assigned to the *cineforum* with secondary school students, who were able to attend screenings and participate with a high degree of involvement in the resulting moments of comparison and debate. Among the films screened in recent years we mention, by way of example, their significance in terms of pedagogical analysis: *La classe (Entre les murs*, Laurent Cantet, 2008) and *Quadrophenia* (Frank Roddam, 1979).

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, as we read in the manifesto of the Edizioni del Rosone that accompanies the initiative, "Education focuses on the person as a subject of relationships, desires, needs, culture and rights; it connects the individual to the collective, and to the community; it proposes to educate us in a new, more communitarian way of being together". Therefore CoEduca "wants to offer an opportunity, a moment of reflection to make it clear that collaboration, solidarity, transculturality and dialogue are at the base of the construction of a more just society [...] it wants to be an opportunity, a moment of reflection to make it clear that a community pedagogy can offer the tools for creating a cooperative togetherness and can open new horizons for humanity and future generations" (<http://www.edizionidelrosone.it/wordpress/?p=4564>).

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Knowledge Creation in Reflective Teaching and Shared Values in Social Education: A Design for an International Classroom

Jonas Christensen, Joachim Thönnessen, Bret Weber

Knowledge Creation in Reflective Teaching and Shared Values in Social Education: A Design for an International Classroom

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Abstract

Keywords:

Reflective Learning;
reflexive Learning; social
work education; cross-
cultural perspectives;
community of practice;
professional identity

This article is based on an international comparative social policy module held annually at Malmö University (Sweden) with partner universities from several countries. Our study examines the results of intra- and interpersonal dynamics among participants and lecturers, which we call "productive tension", in relation to overarching questions about knowledge acquisition and the importance of reflexivity and reflectivity in the learning process. Students and faculty create a "community of practice" (CoP) (Lave & Wenger 1991) that benefits from a continuous interactive environment and direct engagement. Our study uses a mixed method approach. The analysis considers qualitative data from interviews with the participating students and quantitative data from questionnaires. In this article, we focus on the productive tension inherent in the reflective and reflexive processes. Reflective and reflexive processes are identified that influence the students' experience of cross-border cooperation and their professional identity. Our study also demonstrates how the knowledge about "Social Work" as a profession can be broadened through international comparative teaching and learning. The main conclusion of this work is that reflective and reflexive learning processes in social work education enable participants to see and understand themselves from a broader perspective and strengthen their own professional identity.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Reflektives Lernen;
reflektierendes Lernen;
Lernprozesse in der
Sozialen Arbeit;
interkulturelle
Perspektiven,
community of practice;
professionelle Identität

Dieser Artikel basiert auf einem internationalen, vergleichenden sozialpolitischen Modul, welches alljährlich an der Universität Malmö (Schweden) mit Partneruniversitäten aus mehreren Ländern abgehalten wird. Unsere Studie untersucht die Resultate einer intra- und interpersonellen Dynamik unter den Teilnehmer/-innen und Dozent/-innen, die wir als „produktive Spannung“ bezeichnen, in Bezug auf übergreifende Fragen zum Wissenserwerb und zur Bedeutung von Reflexivität und Reflektivität im Lernprozess. Studentinn/-en und Dozent/-innen schaffen eine „Community of Practice“ (CoP) (Lave & Wenger 1991), die von einer dauerhaften, interaktiven Umgebung und einer direkten Beteiligung profitiert. Unsere Studie verwendet einen Ansatz mit gemischten Methoden. Die Analyse berücksichtigt qualitative Daten aus Interviews mit den teilnehmenden Studierenden und quantitative Daten aus Fragebögen. In diesem Artikel wird insbesondere die produktive Spannung thematisiert, die den reflexiven und reflektierenden Prozessen innewohnt. In dieser Studie werden reflexive und reflektierende Prozesse aufgezeigt, die die Erfahrung der Studierenden im Rahmen einer grenzüberschreitenden Zusammenarbeit und ihre berufliche Identität beeinflussen. In unserer Studie wird auch demonstriert, wie das Wissen über die Profession „Soziale Arbeit“ durch international vergleichendes Lehren und Lernen vergrößert wird. Die Hauptschlussfolgerung dieser Arbeit ist, dass reflexive und reflexive Lernprozesse in der Sozialarbeitspädagogik die Teilnehmenden befähigen, sich selbst aus einer breiteren Perspektive zu sehen und zu verstehen und ihre eigene berufliche Identität zu stärken.

1. Introduction

This article reflects on issues and lessons stemming from teaching an international course in a cross-border collaboration with partner-universities from several countries. Set in the environment of a recurrent meeting place, it presents an unfamiliar culture for the majority of

the students. The authors also assume the following conditions: Together, students and instructors, create an intentional *community of practice* (CoP) (Lave & Wenger 1991), a group of people who share a profession¹. Discussing international aspects of a topic like Child

¹In this article a detailed explanation of COP's is given in

section 2.2 "The Framework";

protection provides a comparative understanding of social policy. Professional skills are reinforced by a comparative understanding of policy systems, alternative possibilities, and the social work profession's role in policy formation.

This article goes further than a previous one (Christensen et al, 2017, pp. 15-20) by seeking to understand the role of reflectivity and reflexivity in emergent knowledge developed in the context of an international classroom. We want to show the impact of this knowledge on social work students' evolving professional identification. With the term reflective learning we mean the processes by which students engage with one another to discuss and learn from one another. In contrast, by reflexivity we mean the process by which students begin applying their emergent knowledge in a more spontaneous fashion. In this manner, the reflexive is almost contrary to the reflective. While the reflective tends to reinforce pre-existing beliefs, the reflexive is a manifestation of evolving understanding and an emergent profession identity.

Of specific relevance to this article, CoP's contribute to the understanding and development of capacities in connection to policy differences and shared values as it offers a reflective understanding to the meaning of cross-border meetings. We argue that knowledge acquisition among social work students' through cross-cultural meetings and professional identity formation in relation to their reflections, adds global and local (Glocal)² value to social work education. Knowledge acquisition through the stimulation of being in a new meeting place creates a new framework for learning about the social work discipline. For instance, in our CoP, we observed students reflectively focusing on differences between the social policy and practice environments from their home nations. Then, when faced with hypothetical, practice situations, they reflexively engaged in a shared, emergent, professional identity. In the end, this combination of the reflective and reflexive processes within the CoP enlightens students' understanding of policy, contributes to their developing professional identity, and this is all enhanced by trust building over a period of interaction while immersed in a cross-border context.

²Glocalization (a portmanteau of globalization and localization) is the "simultaneous occurrence of both universalizing and particularizing tendencies in contemporary social, political, and economic systems." The notion of glocalization "represents a challenge to simplistic conceptions of globalization processes as linear expansions of territorial scales. Glocalization indicates that the growing importance of continental and global levels is occurring together with the increasing salience of local and regional levels" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glocalization>)

³We do not pretend to be the first having the idea to bring these two elements together. Feucht et al (2017) write in their introductory article to a special edition of the „Educational

Psychologist“ on reflection and reflexivity in Teaching and Teacher Education: „However, reflection on its own does not necessarily guarantee practice that is informed by such reflection. We argue that one way in which we might support reflection for action is to focus on a process known as reflexivity“ (Feucht et al, 2017, 234); but we pretend to be among the first who transfer these ideas to learning and teaching in an international classroom; another difference between our view and the view of the Educational Psychologist is that we put our emphasis upon a sociological-interactional, i.e. non-psychological-epistemological perspective (as Feucht does);

Here, we aim to answer the following research questions: *How can reflective and reflexive knowledge creation processes be seen and emerge in the international classroom? How are these processes enhanced by the environment of a cross border CoP?* Through participant feedback we highlight the views and experiences of those students who attended the 2018/19 module of the international course. Our starting point in the definition of Glocal knowledge is that it is theoretical, practical, and processual. We show that understanding the concepts of reflexivity and reflectivity can be useful in understanding the students' knowledge construction.³ Our work encourages the students to develop their capacity for self-reflexivity as a part of their professional development.

One outcome of a previously published article (Christensen et al, 2017) was that students will become more critical and develop analytical skills and reflectiveness towards their own view of profession by communicating with each other and learn from each other in an international context. Further on, it was shown that Social Work is much bigger than what educators and students learn from their own education at "home", hence the article demonstrated that a continuous cross-border cooperation in Social Work Education, where teachers work closely together within permanent meeting places, provides a beneficial social context for students and teachers. In this, we showed that the involvement of a Community of Practice was essential as a support for open dialogue within and with outside perspectives. The main conclusion was that out of different learning outcomes, the environmental factor is the 'unique' contribution to knowledge acquisition, and that cooperation encourages the student's capacity for professional, social construction. More specifically, we concluded that prolonged, interactive, and direct engagement in place is essential to the social construction that is foundational to adult learning.

We employ a mixed-methods analysis of course interactions over a two-day period from the 2018/19 course module. Students were first asked to reflect upon, and to then teach one another about the social policy environment and the views of the social work profession in their home nations. This tended toward a focus on differences. Then,

Psychologist“ on reflection and reflexivity in Teaching and Teacher Education: „However, reflection on its own does not necessarily guarantee practice that is informed by such reflection. We argue that one way in which we might support reflection for action is to focus on a process known as reflexivity“ (Feucht et al, 2017, 234); but we pretend to be among the first who transfer these ideas to learning and teaching in an international classroom; another difference between our view and the view of the Educational Psychologist is that we put our emphasis upon a sociological-interactional, i.e. non-psychological-epistemological perspective (as Feucht does);

asked to address case studies, the students' interactions reflectively focused on shared identity, values, and even methods. The shift from reflective differences to reflexive commonalities was nearly seamless. Students submitted reflective group notes from these exercises, and then, days later, completed individual surveys including Likert scaled questions. The data was then transcribed, converted from qualitative to quantitative, and then coded and analyzed thematically to address the research questions. This article utilizes exemplar quotations from that data set to reinforce and illustrate the dominant responses.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1 Reflexivity and reflectivity - previous research

The study described in this paper utilizes a theoretical interpretative framework focused on reflexivity and reflectivity in the context of teaching and learning. The work of John Dewey, a pre-eminent educational theorist of the 20th century (Dewey 1934; 1938) is very important here. In his concise and powerful analysis of education, Dewey is critical of teaching methods that are "static" and not incorporating sufficient experiential learning. For Dewey, the main challenge to experience-based learning is to create fruitful experiences for the students. The educators' role in creating educative experiences is mainly to organize these experiences in progression to guide students' learning (Dewey 1938).

We explore the utility and value of some of Dewey's concepts in an adult learning context, and consider if they are sufficient for our purposes. Specifically, we consider whether reflexive and reflective processes adequately address and provide a sufficiently useful framework to describe the knowledge emergence that occurs in the transnational and local context of an international classroom. The following six phases of reflection, which clearly mirror the scientific method, consistently appear in Dewey's writing (Rodgers 2002, p. 851):

1. an experience;
2. spontaneous interpretation of the experience;
3. naming the problems or the questions that arises out of the experience;
4. generating possible explanations for the problems or questions posed;
5. ramifying the explanations into full-blown hypotheses;
6. experimenting or testing the selected hypothesis

As soon as one is in an experience, as well as after an experience, spontaneous interpretation of what is going on ensues. In the initial phases of reflective thought, this interpretation is involuntary. Things leap to mind (Rodgers 2002, p. 851). Reflection therefore refers to an activity in which an experience is recalled. It is a response that involves the conscious recall and examination of experiences, as a basis for evaluation and as a source for planning and action (Schön, 1983; 1987). It is important to

provide time in teaching for discussing students' views about the nature of social work and 'international' influences from their perspective. Building flexibility into curricula and assessments is also useful to allow students to focus on their home countries or others of interest rather than exclusively considering social work in the country in which they are studying (Rasell et al, 2019).

Knowledge creation through the development of mutually productive forms of collaboration between teaching and practice, has for a long time been an important issue for educators as well as practitioners in different sectors of working life (Inkpen 1996; Moen et al 2012). In the social sciences there is also along tradition of criticism of traditional teaching models, and a corresponding interest indifferent models of action-based, collaborative teaching (Bruffee 1993; Nevin 2009; Willingham 2007). In times of Wilhelm von Humboldt "education" meant the development of personal abilities and talents (Schultheis, 2008). In contrast, today's society places less emphasis on the abilities of the individual as such than on specific, verifiable achievements, which are determined according to a certain standard. The focus here is thus on the fulfillment of societal demands, rather than, as Humboldt's ideal would have it, to educate people individually.

Accordingly, traditional models of teaching tend to objectify the participants, and are too inflexible, closed, specialized, or of insufficient practical relevance, etc. (Svensson et al, 2002; Toulminen & Gustavsen, 1996; Gibbons et al., 1994). In contrast, Gärdenfors (2010) talks about meaningful learning from the viewpoint of informal and formal processes directed at learning to understand. This approach gives students strategies and tools to see new patterns. Or, in other words, teaching is about showing students, and motivating them to see, what is taken for granted. Pink (2011) argues that in order for motivation to be meaningful and sustainable over time, it must be based on the internal driving force. Pink differs between the internal driving force as something based on instinct, in the form of the more biological aspects, and the driving forces that the individual has conditionally. It must feel worthwhile and give the individual an inner satisfaction both to be able to carry out the task and to achieve the outcome. In addition, Pink distinguishes between performance and learning objectives and believes that regular performance targets encourage the individual to make it easy for themselves, while learning targets, to a greater extent, encourage the individual to perform better. The difference can also be described as the difference between deep and superficial learning. The notions of deep and superficial learning derive from the seminal work of Marton and Säljö (1976) on surface learning and deep approaches, and the work by Biggs (1987). According to Cohen et al. (2004), deep learning is promoted through applying knowledge, not just leaving it inert. Reconnecting

with Pink's thinking on superficial learning, Gärdenfors (2010) approach suggests that the deeper the understanding of the learning process, the more the students can generalise their knowledge.

The reflective approach nurtures the ability to (re) build and (re)elaborate creatively the pathways of new understanding. It implies paying attention to routine practices, which, through reflective analysis, assume a different meaning or are perceived under a new light (Martins et al 2015).

One way of expanding a reflective practice is to move towards a practice of reflexivity. Engaging in reflexivity requires critical thought and careful consideration followed by action rooted in understanding. Engaging in mindfulness and introspection with careful and open consideration to the complexity of situations and events that present themselves frequently generates reflexive practice. Where reflection is often individual, reflexivity is decidedly relational. Cuncliffe and Jun (2005) suggests that reflexive practice is guided by three key questions: Who am I and what kind of person do I want to be? How do I relate to others and to the world around me? How can I practice self-conscious and ethical actions based on a critical questioning of past actions and of future possibilities?

The educational theorist Palmer (1998) says that as teachers, "we teach who we are" (p.2) and that "good teaching can't be reduced to technique; good teaching comes from the identity and integrity of the teacher" (p.10). The teaching process asks us to pay attention to who we are and to have integrity with our inner world because whether we are aware of it or not, we share our values, beliefs and attitudes with our students. For this reason, reflexivity becomes „paramount as a process that goes beyond reflecting on the more mechanical aspects of practice to include deep attention to individual positioning within social contexts“ (Dressman, 1998).

„Reflexivity is an act of self-conscious consideration that can lead people to a deepened understanding of themselves and others, not in the abstract, but in relation to specific social environments also to foster a more profound awareness and of how social contexts influence who people are and how they behave. It involves a person's active analysis of past situations, events, and products, with the inherent goals of critique and revision for the explicit purpose of achieving an understanding that can lead to change in thought or behaviour“ (Danielewicz, 2001, p. 155-156).

Reflexivity is a movement from self-awareness to connectedness with other people. It invites students to not only develop a stronger sense of attentiveness to who they are and who they are becoming, but provides an opportunity

to also explore other worldviews. Following these deeper questions, leads to the realization that individual experiences are integral to perceiving the world and our connection to it. It is a process that includes attention to beliefs about ontology (the study of what it means to exist) and epistemology (the study of what it means to know). Reflexivity requires attention to an object, while at the same time attending to one's role in how that object is being constructed or constituted (Davies, 2004).

In turn, we also seek a more refined understanding of the best methods to facilitate the transformative experience of learning and professional development of millennial learners.

“I need to understand my own subjective influences (my beliefs, values and attitudes) on that which I am attending to (my topic). For example, if I see the glass as being half empty, what beliefs are at play for me? What about when I see it as half full? To be reflexive requires analysis of that which founded my beliefs and actions and requires a degree of action based on those findings” (Bray et al, 2000)

The practice of reflexivity can help us in developing a more complete awareness as teachers, or what Iba and Sakamoto (2011) calls *kizuki*, a heightening of cognitive, emotional, and collegial awareness in order to transform beliefs and assumptions about learning and teaching. This can enable teachers to develop and gain ownership over their own teaching and learning because *kizuki* is not merely given by someone but it is gained by the teachers themselves or by having mediation with others whether by design or by accident (Iba & Sakamoto, 2011).

2.2 The Framework

The modules have focused on comparative social policy studies involving social work students from around the globe. Colleagues from England, Germany and Sweden learn about one another's different welfare traditions, and their "very specific understanding of Social Work" as well as distinct teaching and learning approaches. Originating from two separate bilateral agreements, the module was eventually joined by students and faculty members from across Europe, Africa, Asia, and a group of scholars from Cuba. The 2017 module was the first to be joined by a group from the United States.

For the 2018/19 spring module, sixty-one students and eleven participating instructors came together. The total included eight Swedish students and five instructors, and students and instructors from the University of North Dakota (USA), the University of Lincoln, the University of Dundee and Northumbria University (UK), the University of Applied Science in Osnabrueck and the Catholic University of Applied Science in Muenich/Benediktbeuern

(Germany), and the University of Salzburg (Austria). In addition, during the second day, seventy-four Swedish social work students participated.

A previous evaluation of the Malmö module considered a perspective called Community of Practice. CoP derives from John Dewey's notions, but the specific concept was first proposed by cognitive anthropologists Lave and Wenger (1990) who defined CoP's as a group of people with a common area of interest or a common concern (Christensen et al, 2017, p. 15). Seeing the international classroom as a CoP led to consideration of how communities of practice evolve, and what their purposes and objectives are. Our CoP offers opportunities for open dialogue with outside perspectives, and a focus on the value of learning communities. That earlier study led to a sense that learning in groups, within an international context, and with prolonged real-time interactions both in and out of the classroom should be seen as a key. The empirical findings in this study indicate that international meetings are a key success factor, and that learning through the stimulation of being in a new meeting place and culture creates a particularly useful framework for learning in the International Social Work discipline. Previous knowledge is tied together with new experiences, and the combination provides understanding at a new, professional level of identity.

2.3 The history of our collaboration

In anticipation of the 2018/19 course module "Social Work: Social Policy and Welfare Studies" at Malmö University in Sweden, we as teachers and authors started meeting via Skype in 2017/18. The course is an independent course running since 2010 having around 50 Social-work students per year. Its curriculum aims to develop students' knowledge and understanding in relation to social policies within a European context, with a particular focus on the relevance for social work and their implications for social work practice. The meetings emerged from the collaborative teaching in the course over the two weeks of the CoP, along with a shared sense that our students were learning something unique that could only be achieved in the direct-contact interactions afforded by coming together for a focused period of time.

More specifically, during the 2017/18 module, the authors had noted the tendency for students to focus on differences between their national policy systems. Consequently, upon returning home, they were most likely to discuss how the social work profession was both structured and viewed *differently* in their respective countries. While this focus on differences tended to be the student's main take away, as instructors, we witnessed the students' shared, emergent professional values, perspectives, problem-solving approaches, and even methodologies.

The intention of this study is to explore the productive tension that developed amid this apparent contradiction. More specifically, we wished to better understand the emergent knowledge created by the unique circumstances afforded by the international classroom. Developing professional identity is a key aim of social work education (Wiles, 2017) and during our first planning session over Skype, we decided to engage an exercise to help us better understand how students construct knowledge in an international classroom, how that leads to their professional understanding and identity as social workers, and, ultimately, the broader implications for international social work education. Social workers are faced with new responsibilities, and it is important for the education to go beyond the national level (Healy, 2008). Nagy and Falk (2000) claim that the impact of ongoing global processes on the social work profession is dramatic and that reformulating the education to include more international and cross-border cultural content is needed. Whilst internationalization of Social Work is a contested idea, it is none the less seen as an evolving and indeterminate project (Harrison & Melville, 2004).

In preparation for the 2018/19 module, we had the students read *Social Work Education in an International Context: Learning from a Cross-Border Cooperation* (Christensen et al, 2017) a month prior to their coming together in Sweden. That article was authored by two of this study's authors along with Janet Walker, a social work educator from the University of Lincoln who had previously participated in the Malmö University module for six years. After completing the reading, students were asked to reflect on how the social work profession is structured in their home country and how it is seen and viewed in sense of status and reputation. Further, they were instructed to think about sharing these reflections with their colleagues during the 2018 module. Once they joined with other students in Malmö, they presented their thoughts to their new colleagues and reflected on the differences between their nation's professional systems. Later in the module, they met in mixed-national groups to consider various case studies as a way to reflect on their shared values, perspectives, and methodologies.

After the students completed their informal presentations, the initial reflective portion of the exercise, they were directed to "1. Write down that which was most important about your discussion; 2. Focus on differences: what were the most striking differences between the countries; and 3. What did you learn about your own [nation's social policy] system?". This effort to compare and contrast their different systems in a reflective process was documented by each group. Their notes became part of the data set that was later analyzed by the authors.

On the second day, students were put into new mixed-national groups, including the original five nations (with

students who participated in Round One), and new students from Sweden. On the second day, students completed a similar process from the first with the addition of reflexively addressing a case scenario. Due to the large number of Swedish students (who were interacting with the ‘international’ students for the first time), a morning session included half of the Swedish students, and the whole exercise was then repeated with the second half in the afternoon. The exercise on the second day included the new element of the case studies. The groups began with essentially the same process as the previous day (though this time including their new Swedish colleagues), but then after the reflections on differences they reflexively addressed various case studies. The groups were then asked to consider best processes to address the described situation in the case study; e. g. how in a professional way to make decisions out of priorities. Specifically, they were asked: “1. What is the solution to the presented problem? and 2. What are the shared skills, values, and methods across the different systems?” Again, both at the end of the morning session and at the end of the afternoon session, recorders in each group sought to capture the emergent discussions.

A few days later, students completed individual surveys including Likert scale questions. The Likert scale questions covered student learning of international social policy, reflections on how the course impacted their understanding, the relevance of studying abroad, and the value of the group exercises. Additionally, the survey included open-ended questions requesting general descriptions of what they were learning, how the course impacted that learning, the role of interactions with students from other nations, and what they would like to see changed or added.

A couple of days later, the authors gathered to reflect on their personal observations of what had occurred including analysis of the many pages of notes the students had produced. In a day-long session, the authors considered a variety of issues including their own personal, ongoing understanding of the policy differences between the professional systems in which they operate, and a reflective process of what they had learned from the classroom experience, especially in relation to teaching and learning. In addition to initiating the data analysis, they began articulating an outline for this article.

3. Research methodology

3.1 Methods and Empirical Data

We employed a mixed methods approach to the data analysis. We chose the method of Grounded Theory to

analyze students’ responses. We used Barney Glaser’s Basic Social Processes (BSP; 1978)⁴ where the focus is specifically on the importance of skill development in theoretical sensitivity for developing grounded theory. The analysis was triangulated by considering the qualitative data collected from the group notes, the individual survey data, the observations of the three instructors, and the coding of the data by an analyst brought into the process months after the module. Then, having identified the dominant themes, the authors developed the Grounded Theory approach further, i.e. included the use of exemplar responses to best illustrate the dominant findings. Finally, the responses were transcribed and entered into an Excel spreadsheet where coding allowed the transformation from qualitative data to quantitative data.

When undertaking Grounded Theory using Barney Glaser’s method the aim was to identify and develop the core category/-ies that best explains the topic under investigation that the participants in the study are grappling with and how they are attempting to resolve it. It should be noted (and Glaser discusses this at length) that not all core categories are BSP’s nor do they need to be. We are not always searching for BSP’s when doing GT. BSP’s must be durable over time as well as be relevant and patterned in the data as seen from the perspective of the participants. In any case the BSP’s should arise from the data.

Our research seeks to understand knowledge acquisition and how it is generated in the international classroom. Our empirical data consists of discussions initiated by specific questions between the students, written by the students (Tab. 1).

Tab. 1: Questions and Number of Statements

Qu e	Description	Statements
1	To what extent did Malmo social policy course enhance your understanding of international social policy? (Circle below with 1 = not at all, to 10 = a great deal)	49
2	Can you describe how the course impacted your understanding?	45
3	To what extent did Malmo social policy course enhance your understanding of your home country's social policy systems? (Circle below with 1 = not at all, to 10 = a great deal)	49

⁴Basic Social Processes (BSP’s) are pervasive, fundamental patterned processes in the organisation of social behaviours which occur over time and go on irrespective of the conditional

variation of place (Glaser, 1978). They do not have to solve the topic under investigation they only have to process it.

4	Can you describe how the course impacted your understanding?	45
5	How important was the opportunity to study in Sweden and to interact directly with students and professors from other systems? (Circle below with 1 = not at all, to 10 = a great deal)	49
6	In what ways did these interactions occur and do you have additional comments?	43
7	To what extent was the group exercise regarding system differences and shared solutions to case studies useful to your learning? (Circle below with 1 = not at all, to 10 = a great deal)	45
8	What worked well and could be changed	45
Ad d	Is there anything else you would like to add?	40
Total		410

To keep the theoretical considerations and the actual classroom situation closely related in the process of analyzing the data, we employed an approach exemplified in Williams et al (2011). In a mixed methods approach, the data was transcribed, and that process led to the development of a coding manual (Tab. 2).

Tab. 2: Coding Manual

Code	Description
N.---	Neutral Comment
NG.---	Negative Comment
P.---	Positive Comment
IDC	Learned Information from Different Countries
DOST	Time Spent in Discussion with Students from Other Countries
LC	Lecture Content
LD	Lecture Duration
TML	Lecture as a Teaching Method
TMI	Interaction/Group Work as a Teaching Method
GWL	Group Work Location
ISWL	International Social Work Learning/Policy

HCSWL	Home Country Social Work Learning/Policy
IPOC	Interactions with Persons from Other Countries
SSID	Swedish Student Involvement Duration
GDP	Gaining Different Perspectives
VRSW	Understanding the Role/Value of Social Work in Society
STR	Doing Same Learning Task Repeatedly
DIP	Depth of Information Provided/Real World Application
GCTA	Existence of Clear Course Goals and Topic Alignment Throughout Course
SWR	Application of Course Knowledge for Social Work Reform
OE	Overall Experience

The codes were applied to every single statement related to the questions asked (Tab. 3).

Tab. 3: Statements and Coding (questions 1-3, participant 9)

Question	Statement	Coding
1	I learned a lot about international social policy. I would have wished to get an overview in the beginning of the course and what the goal or aim of the course is	P.ISWL NG.GCTA
2	it was a refreshing of the things I already know about my country, it was not a lot of new information for me	N.HCSWL NG.IDC
3	it was very interesting to hear from Bret about the American system and from Daniel about comparative states. For me it was hard to follow Martinas class	P.LC NG.LC

The authors reflected upon the results and found the codes to be consistent with their classroom experience. With participant responses frequently containing multiple viewpoints, the conversion of the qualitative data facilitated the clustering of the descriptive codes. Then, refining the pattern codes and their relationship to one another led to a useful set of codes that were both “all inclusive and mutually exclusive” (Williams et al, 2011, p. 692).

3.2 Limitations

Limitations of the analysis include a lack of diversity in the coding (there was only a single coder) resulting in limited intercoder reliability. However, the emergent themes identified by the independent coder were quickly familiar to, and agreed upon by, the three instructors. Another limit in the study was the tendency for groups to rely on the students from the United States as note takers. While all course work was conducted in English, and all students and instructors were fluent English speakers, there was some hesitancy from those students for whom English was not a first language to take the responsibility of writing up the notes.

Most importantly to the instructors, the discussion we observed was much richer than what we found in the student recordings. Students generally appeared quite animated, focused, and active in the discussions, but then tended to submit only sparse notes. In relation to the first day, providing students with empty notebooks left the process too open-ended. While we did that intentionally, it proved insufficient. There are times that students prefer more specific guidelines and expectations. Additionally, the three questions may have served as useful prompts for the rich discussions, but they failed to provide sufficiently discreet categories for the process of recording the discussions. In summary, while the students seemed engaged and stimulated by the exercise and the ensuing discussion, without any sort of clear assessment or grading process, they put their effort into interacting with one another rather than expending effort into the process of capturing more than brief sentences or bullet points to describe their conversations. While this interactive, reflective learning was what we had intended, it yielded a less robust data set than we had hoped. Ultimately, we reached consensus that we would alter the reporting process in future classes, though we would not change much else in terms of the structure of the assignment. Future iterations of the exercise may have each student submit an individual report. However, the strength of the emergent themes in the current data set suggest that the findings would not be sufficiently distinct.

4. Results

The research questions for this study; *How can reflective and reflexive knowledge creation processes be seen and emerge in the international classroom? How are these processes enhanced by the environment of a cross border CoP?* focused on knowledge creation in the unique environment of our cross border CoP in relation to the concepts of reflexivity and reflectivity. Students were asked three questions referring to their experiences on the first day (Tab 4).

Tab. 4: Questions and Number of statements

Number of Statements	Question
17	1- What was most important in our discussion?
23	2- What were the striking differences?
20	3- What did you learn about your own system?
60	Total

The data from the first day of the exercise, gathered in the notebooks submitted by the five groups, was coded across thirteen different codes (Tab. 5). This included twenty comments referencing differences between the various international systems. The next two most common references were about social work education (fifteen), and training (fourteen). There were eleven comments about differences in the cost of social work training. The number of responses dropped from there with eight responses concerning child welfare systems and nine about the different roles and perceptions of social workers in society. Codes after that received four or fewer responses.

Tab. 5: Specification of Codification participant responses first day

Code	Description
CW	Child Welfare
VRSW	Value/Role Social Workers in Society
ED	Education for Social Work Degrees; formal schooling
TR	Training for Social Work; Practical Learning; Licensure
GFS	Government Financial System; Financial Aid
IS	Insurance System
HCS	Health Care System
PF	Personal Finances of Social Workers
CRS	Comparison referencing similarities
CRD	Comparison referencing differences
LRN	Stakeholders Learning from Each other (countries, individuals)
HP	Helping Professions cited
PH	Personal Health Issues of Social Workers' Coding

Due to the larger groups and the added exercise of reflexively addressing the case studies, the notebooks from the second day were coded across thirty-five distinct types of comments. The eight most common references were in relation to codes receiving from twenty-two to forty-six responses. These ranged from the shared approach of

“Client Centered Problem Solving” with forty-six, along with various policy or professional considerations (drug policy, 28; family counseling, 24; career paths, 24), or matters related to social work education (education systems in different countries, 37; cost of education, 22).

The fact that the practice value of ‘client centered problem solving’ was the most frequent reference supports our hypothesis that, when faced with practice problems in a reflexive process, the students would come together in terms of shared values and methods. For instance, responses included statements like: “Social work is human rights occupation. We need to stand up for the ones who need help and empower them to a better life.” and “We all had a similar approach in terms of skills, values, and methods in addressing the case scenario.” The next eight sets of references (with responses ranging from eighteen to fourteen) were primarily about specific practice considerations represented in the case scenarios. The remaining nineteen sets of comments received thirteen or fewer references with fourteen receiving fewer than ten.

The data from the forty-nine surveys included comments about both the reflective and reflexive exercises, as well as broader considerations about the CoP. The surveys included eight Likert-scale questions, as well as answers to open-ended questions that were coded across seventeen common themes.

Among the open-ended questions, 57.2% of the responses were positive about the experience. The 40.7% that were critical included, as noted earlier, frustrations about “doing same learning task repeatedly” and advocacy and complaints about “Swedish student involvement duration”. Otherwise, the top three sets of responses were in relation to “interactions with persons from other countries”, “interaction/group work as a teaching method”, “international social work learning/policy” and “learned information from different countries”.

Positive expressions from the comments were for example: “*The course helped me to gain a clear understanding by interacting with other students that experience day-to-day policies in their home country.*” And, “*This experience cannot compare to any other educational experience to date. Learning by experiencing will only deepen the understanding of material. If not for class interactions with other students, this would not have occurred.*” However, these positive comments were frequently accompanied by comments about their frustrations: “*To me, the opportunity to interact with students from different countries, was why I decided to take part in this course. That's why I was disappointed to only have one day with the Swedish students. However, I felt grateful for the opportunity to talk to all the other students.*”

5. Discussions

Most importantly to the instructors, the collaborative discussions we observed during both the reflective and

reflexive processes, was richer than what we found in the student recordings. Students generally appeared quite animated, focused, and active in the discussions, but then tended to submit only sparse notes.

In relation to the first day, providing them with empty notebooks left the process too open-ended. While we did that intentionally, it proved insufficient. There are times that students prefer more specific guidelines and expectations. The three questions served as useful prompts for the rich discussions, but failed to provide sufficiently discreet categories for the process of recording the discussions.

On the first day, the students seemed engaged and stimulated by the exercise and the ensuing discussion. However, without any sort of clear assessment or grading process, they put their effort into interacting with one another rather than expending effort into the process of capturing more than brief sentences or bullet points to describe their conversations. While this interactive, reflective learning was what we had intended, it yielded a less robust data set than we had hoped. Ultimately, we agreed we would alter the reporting process in future classes, though we would not change much else in terms of the structure of the assignment. Future iterations of the exercise may have each student submit an individual report. However, the strength of the emergent themes in the current data set suggest that the findings would not be sufficiently distinct.

The second day of the exercise included the most pressing needs for modification. While the second day utilized some of the process from the first day, the inclusion of Swedish students led to distractions and complaints rather than the richer experience we had intended. On the second day, the groups began with the same reflective process of teaching one another about policy and professional distinctions, and they were again asked to respond to the same three questions the groups had responded to on the first day. After engaging that reflective process, groups were then given case studies to reflexively address as a group.

The results on the second day can be quickly summarized in terms of the following three dynamics. The first two dynamics were not particularly fruitful in terms of student learning, but nonetheless instructive in relation to our study. Dynamic one included a degree of rebellion at being asked to answer the same three questions that had been addressed the first day. This was already simmering in the morning session, but then resulted in more explicit rebellion in the afternoon when most of the students were asked to answer the same questions for a third time. As instructors, we urged them to consider that the groups were new each time (since there were two different sets of Swedish students in the afternoon and in the morning), but this did little to assuage their complaints. The iterative process on day two - which we intended to nurture reflexivity - felt like busy work to the students. Due to a

lack of supervision and feedback from the instructors - we hoped to give them room for creative self-organization - the students rebelled at completing the same reflective exercise three times. As instructors, we failed to provide adequate context for reflexive thought, and we tried to rush a process that simply needs more time. It had taken multiple experiences for us to come to our own epiphany of their shared, emergent professional identity. We mistakenly thought we could provide a fast-track to a level of understanding that inherently resists being rushed. Further, by trying to create a 'scientific' situation with limited variables, our instruction stifled the larger contextual thinking necessary for reflexivity, and rather than facilitating and providing a guided opportunity we left students feeling angry and frustrated.

The second dynamic concerns the learning environment. Where the first day's discussions had enjoyed the accommodating setting of the collaborative learning classroom, discussions on the second day occurred in a tiring lecture room with rows of fixed, forward-facing seats. About a third of the groups were able to organize themselves in circles, by making use of uncomfortable, but moveable chairs in the stage area at the bottom of the room. The remaining groups found themselves sitting on the tiered landings alongside the fixed seats, or awkwardly facing backwards across the stationary rows.

Despite these disappointments inherent in the first two dynamics, the third dynamic was in some ways the most important feature of the two days. Despite complaints about repetitive assignments, the groups focused on the work of solving the case studies. Despite the previous focus on differences, the groups generally, and quickly, came to a consensus about the best approach for addressing the problems in the case studies. It was in this reflexive process that they most dramatically demonstrated an emergent professional identity with shared values, perspectives, and methods.

6. Conclusions

We show how reflective, collaborative cross-border collaborations with students in teaching processes has the strong potential to improve understanding of the social work profession irrespective of cultural, legislative, or political status in partner countries. The experience of learning in different countries further promotes reflection on different perspectives and the relevance of context through exposure to different educators as well as different systems and cultural norms, including events with practitioners and study visits to practice settings providing direct exchange and first-hand experience. The 'international' in our social work course then comes not just from theoretical analysis, but stems intensively from interaction and mobility; from working with new colleague-students, studying at different universities, travelling to different countries, and being exposed to different teaching styles.

The creation of a "Community of Practice based environment" is an essential part of a reflective teaching model. In the process of creating this environment, an individual and collaborative understanding and learning is established, in which the students simultaneously become more open-minded towards their own professional understanding. When students meet in a cross-border collaboration, different kinds of exchanges take place, with social, academic and cultural dimensions. An extension of the CoP can therefore be defined as the theory of Community of Learning and Practices (CoLP) which suggests that campus-based learning in groups could be a key for professional development. Designing a community of learning and practices will renew and develop the cross-disciplinary partnership perspective in social work education.

It is to say that universal challenges in social work call for a focus on internationally shared knowledge. Development of reflective learning processes and activities to support the understanding of this will therefore be more crucial. It is through encounters between people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and frameworks that we are challenged in our notions, not least in learning environments and educational contexts. In theory, teaching is a process in which knowledge is integrated with the surrounding environment, where the learning of specific knowledge or methods go hand in hand. It is difficult to distinguish from the development of the student's own professional identity and actions. Factors such as diversity of meetings with unique users and collaboration between students (and colleagues) are very important in the professionally experienced "meaningfulness". To conclude, reflective and reflexive learning processes in social work education enable participants to see and understand themselves from a broader perspective and strengthen their own professional identity.

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Belongingness and maladaptive schemas: A wellbeing group intervention program for high-school teachers

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Belongingness and maladaptive schemas: A wellbeing group intervention program for high-school teachers

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Abstract

Keywords:

social connectedness;
mental health education;
teachers' wellbeing; early
maladaptive schemas.

Belongingness has been related with several positive aspects in the life of an individual, including academic and psychosocial success. The current paper aims to review the theoretical foundations of belongingness and to present the results of the implementation of a 2-months wellbeing-based program targeting the development of belongingness for high school teachers in a private school in Romania. The targeted variables were the social connectedness (as a measure of social belongingness), social assurance, and, as a moderator variable, the number of maladaptive cognitive schemas. The results indicate that the number of cognitive maladaptive schemas did moderate the intervention effect. Also, the efficiency of the wellbeing-training program in the direction of improving the social connectedness (belongingness) was supported by the data.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

soziale Verbundenheit;
Aufklärung über
psychische Gesundheit;
Wohlbefinden der
Lehrer; frühe
maladaptive Schemata.

Zugehörigkeit wurde mit mehreren positiven Aspekten im Leben eines Individuums in Verbindung gebracht, einschließlich akademischem und psychosozialen Erfolg. Das vorliegende Papier zielt darauf ab, die theoretischen Grundlagen der Zugehörigkeit zu überprüfen und die Ergebnisse der Umsetzung eines zweimonatigen Wohlbefindungs-basierten Programms zur Entwicklung der Zugehörigkeit von Hochschullehrern an einer Privatschule in Rumänien vorzustellen. Die Zielvariablen waren die soziale Verbundenheit (als Maß für die soziale Zugehörigkeit), die soziale Sicherheit und als Moderatorvariable die Anzahl der schlecht angepassten kognitiven Schemata. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Anzahl der kognitiven maladaptiven Schemata den Interventionseffekt moderierte. Auch die Effizienz des Wohlfühl-Trainingsprogramms zur Verbesserung der sozialen Verbundenheit (Zugehörigkeit) wurde durch die Daten gestützt.

1. Introduction

The concept of belongingness in educational settings has been highlighted in literature as a good predictor of academic and psychosocial success (Slaten et al., 2016; Poulton, Caspi, & Milne, 2002; Wadsworth et al., 2001). A significant number of studies indicate that people who experience belongingness have higher levels of indicators such as: well-being, self-esteem, optimism, executive memory, transition through life, as well as lower levels of stress (Begen & Turner-Cobb, 2015; Slaten et al., 2016; Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Belongingness in schools has also been considered by some researchers (Rowe, 2011) to be crucial for the healthy development of students and adolescents. In terms of general definition, the sense of belongingness in schools is considered the degree to which the student feels respected, accepted, and supported by teachers, colleagues, and other members of

the school community. Specifically, Willms (2000) defines school belongingness as a psychological construct related to attachment to school, supported by feelings of acceptance and appreciation from others. Other researchers (Osterman, 2000; Hamm & Faircloth, 2005) associate the definition of school belongingness with aspects such as: purpose in the community, commitment, and positive interactions with others.

2. Theoretical foundation

The concept of *social connectedness* is often used to describe the feeling of belongingness; connectedness is understood by most authors as referring to the connections that the student has within the school (Libbey, 2004), connections that should be characterised by an increased

level of trust and reciprocity. Connectedness, in the context of defining the sense of belongingness in schools, also refers to a low level or the absence of social conflict (such as bullying), tolerance to cultural diversity, and to a climate that promotes conflict prevention and management (Kawachi & Beckmann, 2000). The Full Frame Initiative (2013) defines social connectedness as the level at which a person has and perceives a sufficient and diverse number of relationships, which allow the individual to provide and receive information, emotional and material support, to create and develop a sense of belongingness and to foster development. Hence, one can infer that social connectedness, along with the construct of belongingness, and social assurance, are important aspects of physical, emotional, and mental health. The feeling of connectedness can increase longevity and improve the functioning of the immune system, while lack of social connectedness can be more threatening to health than variations of the blood pressure, obesity and smoking (Chuter, 2019).

Social connectedness is also important in educational contexts. While the beneficial effects on learning and other cognitive aspects have long been known, research in the neuroscience field (Anderman, 2002) shows that the feeling of belongingness and the feeling of connectedness, have a profound effect on the accumulation and optimal use of knowledge and new skills. When both students and members of the school environment have weak social connections, learning is limited due to reduced executive functions (Chuter, 2019).

Another concept frequently identified as a variable associated with belongingness is *social assurance*. Social assurance as a psychological construct was coined by Lee and Robbins (1995), in their study aiming to assess belongingness. The authors developed two scales to that end: *Social Connectedness and Social Assurance* (1995). Social assurance is associated with the trust and security that a person feels towards other people (Lee & Robbins, 1995). In particular, the construct signifies the need to be assured by others in social situations. Often, people use social assurance to deal with anxiety or other unwanted psychological diseases (Schmitt, 2009).

Considering the information in literature regarding social connectedness, we consider it important that teachers develop a better understanding of what it means to experience a sense of belongingness from the perspective of the social connectedness concept. In line with this, we consider that is crucial to provide teachers with the necessary tools and context with which to make effective plans in order to support and improve the relationships they have with the students, as well as with the other adults in their lives and in the school environment. Regarding the development of belongingness in association with interpersonal relationships, another variable that it was taken into consideration in this study is early maladaptive schemas, which are known in the literature to have an

important role in the functionality of social life of individuals (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003).

Jeffrey Young (2003) introduced the concept of *early maladaptive schemas* (EMS) as an extension of cognitive therapy (Beck, 1967). EMS are defined as general themes or patterns about oneself and the relationships with others, which are developed in childhood or adolescence, are elaborated throughout life and are dysfunctional to a significant extent in the life and relationships of an individual (Young, Klosko & Weishaar, 2003). At the same time, they are patterns imposed by others on the experience or reality of the individual to help him explain his reality, mediate his perceptions and guide his answers (Young, Klosko, & Weishaar, 2003, *apud* Dumitrescu & Rusu, 2012). EMS are often the basis for conflicts in relationships with friends, colleagues, life partners, or other adults (Dattilio, 2005, *apud* Dumitrescu & Rusu, 2012). In adulthood, early maladaptive patterns can be activated by daily events, which people unconsciously perceive as similar to the childhood traumatic events, generating negative / uncomfortable emotions when activated (Young, 2003). The major objective in the case of Schema Therapy (Young, 2003) is that through the therapeutic and psycho-educational process, individuals develop a Healthy Adult Mode, so that they can take care of aspects related to work/profession, responsibilities, commitments, satisfactory relationships, healthy sex life, hobbies, pleasure and joy.

3. Research methodology

General objectives and hypotheses

Following the analysis of the literature presented above, the aims of this paper are: (1) To test the effectiveness of a group psychological intervention programme (pilot study) in terms of increasing teacher belongingness, analysing two variables - social assurance and social connectedness; (2) To investigate the relationship between early maladaptive schemas and the evolution of the feeling of belongingness. According to the stated objectives, the following hypotheses will be tested:

1. After the implementation of the wellbeing programme for teachers, i.e. "*Development of belongingness among teachers*" (DBT), the participants will report higher values of the variable social assurance.
2. After the implementation of the DBT programme, the participants will report higher values of the variable social connectedness.
3. An increased number of maladaptive schemas (Young, 2003) will be associated with lower values of the variables social connectedness and social assurance following the implementation of the DBT programme.

Research participants and design

The research was conducted on a convenience sample of 25 participants, aged between 25 and 47 years, including both females (17) and males (8). At the time of DBT program implementation, all participants were teachers at Transylvania College in Cluj-Napoca, Cluj County, Romania, some of whom also had administrative and coordination responsibilities, being part of the school's management team (internally called "Heads of Faculties"). Some of the participants were bilingual (Romanian / English), and some of them were native English speakers. The time frame for this study was 5 months, from February to June 2019.

Research tools

Young Questionnaire, Short Form 1 (YSQ - S3; Young, 2007)

To evaluate the early maladaptive schemas, Young and Brown (2003) developed the Cognitive Schema Questionnaire (CSQ, Young Schema Questionnaire, Short Form 3; YSQ-S3; Young & Brown, 2007). The short form of the CSQ has 75 items and measures 15 of the early maladaptive schemas. The questionnaire has participants evaluate on a 6-point Likert scale how well each item describes them (1 = "totally untrue", 6 = "it describes perfectly"). The short version allows the calculation of scores for the following schemas: Emotional Deprivation (ED), Abandonment / Instability (AB), Mistrust / Abuse (N/A), Social Isolation (SI), Defectiveness / Shame (DS), Failure (FA), Dependence / Incompetence (DI), Vulnerability to harm (VH), Enmeshment (EM), Subjugation (SB), Self-Sacrifice (SS), Emotional Inhibition (IE), Unrealistic Standards (US), Entitlement/ Grandiosity (ET), and Insufficient self-control (IS).

Social Connectedness Scale (SCS; Lee & Robbins, 1995)

The scale is composed of items from all three categories of belongingness proposed by the researchers (Lee & Robbins, 1995): connectedness (4 items), affiliation (3 items), company / fellowship (1 item). The items portray a general emotional distancing between oneself and others that can be experienced among friends or close colleagues, as shown by the item "Even among my friends, there is no sense of brotherhood / sisterhood", or by "I don't feel like I belong to someone or to a group". The name of the scale reflects, according to the authors, the relationship between the items (in a negative direction) and the direction of evaluation of the items (from 1 = "strong agreement" to 6 = "strong disagreement"). Therefore, high scores reflect an increased sense of connectedness and social belongingness. In literature, the alpha Cronbach's coefficient for the Social Connectedness Scale is .91.

Social Assurance Scale (SAS; Lee & Robbins, 1995)

Items in this scale highlight the need for safety and assurance, from at least one or more people, in order to have

a sense of belongingness. This is exemplified by the items: "I am more relaxed when I do things with other people and my life is incomplete without a friend next to me" and "It is difficult for me to use my skills and talents without someone next to me". The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the Social Assurance Scale is .77.

The Social Connectedness and Social Assurance questionnaires were translated into Romanian and verified for the comprehension of the terms by two experts in psychology. As all participants were speakers of English, but only some of them spoke both English and Romanian, the questionnaires were made available in both languages. A version of the item in English with its translation into Romanian was included in each questionnaire.

Research design

An experimental design with repeated measurements (pre- and post-test evaluations) was used in this study. The two dependent variables that were evaluated are social connectedness and social assurance. The independent variable was the intervention / pilot programme, with the two phased of data collection (pre- and post-intervention).

Procedure

In the first phase, the participants received an email from the school principal informing them about the introduction of a pilot programme, i.e. "Development of belongingness among teachers" (DBT) programme. The intention of the wellbeing program was to normalize and integrate the differences between people / colleagues, in order to increase the feeling of trust, security, and belongingness. Furthermore, in order to observe the changes in the belongingness variable, the two scales, the social assurance scale and the social connectedness scale were used. These two scales were applied in the first and the last group meeting.

The 8 group meetings within the wellbeing pilot programme aimed to develop specific skills: maintaining and improving relationships at work, empathic listening, managing conflicts and difficult conversations, containing and validating the discomfort of others (colleagues, parents, students), the relationship between mind, emotions, and behaviour etc. In the first part of the meetings, the participants were recommended a series of books and videos, as educational bibliography. The topics covered within the DBT programme were: trust, wellbeing, feedback, resilience, emotions, mindfulness, interindividual differences, early maladaptive patterns, gratitude, and compassion.

The process of completing the questionnaires included in the DBT programme was carried out after the participants were informed about what the study entails and what will be expected from them. After a brief introduction, the participants received a document that they used to give their informed consent to participate. The option to use a

code instead of a name was also presented, in case they wished to remain anonymous. It was also offered the opportunity to withdraw from the programme at any time they wished was also offered.

4. Results

The collected data were analysed with SPSS version 22. The descriptive analysis of the data (collected pre- and post-intervention) is presented in Table 1. For the variable social connectedness, an increase was observed from a pre-intervention average value of 4.01 ($\pm .62$) to a post-intervention average value of 4.66 ($\pm .34$). As indicated in table 1, for the variable social assurance, an increase from pre- to post-intervention in the average value was observed, i.e. from 2.97 ($\pm .78$) to 3.14 ($\pm .64$).

Table 1. Descriptive analysis of the data (pre- and post-implementation of the DBT programme).

Variables/ instruments	Minimum value	Maximum value	Average	Standard deviation
Connectedness (pre- intervention)	2.75	5	4.01	0.62
Social assurance (pre- intervention)	1.63	4.63	2.97	.34
Connectedness (post- intervention)	3.88	5	4.66	.34
Social assurance (pre- intervention)	1.88	4.25	3.14	.64
Number of cognitive maladaptive schemas	2	8	4.77	2.1

The next step in the descriptive data analysis was to test the assumption of normal distribution of the data. According to Cohen (2008), skewness value should be within the range ± 0.8 and the kurtosis value should be within the range ± 3 . In the case of our data, the skewness value for the variable connectedness (post-intervention phase) was -1.2, so it was not placed in the admitted range of variation. To address this issue, the data were transformed by using the log10 formula (maximum score + 1 – data).

The first hypothesis states that there will be significant differences between the pre- and post-intervention values of the variable social connectedness, i.e. the social connectedness scores are expected to increase after the training program. The second hypothesis states that there will be significant differences between the pre- and post-intervention values of the social assurance variable, i.e. increased values after the training program. For the first two hypotheses, a multivariate analysis of variance model (MANOVA) was used, where the independent variable was the time of intervention with two levels (pre- and post-

intervention), and the dependent variables were the social connectedness and the social assurance. The first stage of MANOVA analysis is the testing of the assumption of sphericity (i.e. sphericity is the condition where the variances of the differences between all possible pairs of within-subject conditions are equal), by using the Mauchly test of sphericity. In the case of our data set, there are only two levels of the independent variable, so the information regarding the assumption of sphericity could not be extracted. We further proceeded with the multivariate analysis, which indicates whether the tested model is a significant one. The results indicated a significant model ($F=367.54$, $p = .000$), with an effect size of .970. The difference between the average values pre- and post-intervention for the variable social connectedness was significant ($F = 765.2$, $p = .000$), which indicates that the first hypothesis was confirmed by the findings. The analysis of the pre- and post-intervention values of the variable social assurance yielded no significant difference ($F = 2.056$, $p = .165$). Hence, the second hypothesis was not confirmed by the data.

The third hypothesis states that the number of early maladaptive schemas moderates the effect of the intervention, meaning that the impact of the DBT training program on the increase of social connectedness (3a; Fig. 1) and on the increase of social assurance (3b; Fig. 2) is lower in the persons with higher number of maladaptive schemas. For testing this hypothesis, the MEMORE SPSS macro was utilized (Montoya, *in press*), which was developed for testing the moderation models in the cases of repeated measures experimental design.

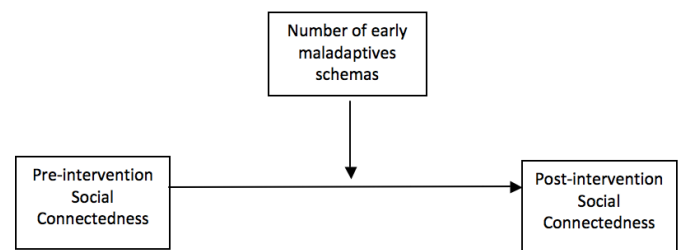


Figure 1. The first moderation model within the third hypothesis, i.e. 3(a)

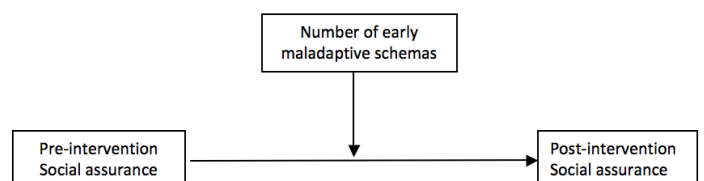


Figure 2. The second moderation model within the third hypothesis, i.e. 3(b)

In the first moderation model (Fig. 1), the pre- and post-intervention conditions for the social connectedness were introduced as repeated measures variables, while the number of maladaptive schemas was included as moderator variable. In the second moderation model for the third hypothesis (Fig. 2), the pre-intervention and post-intervention conditions for social assurance were introduced as repeated measures variable, while the number of cognitive maladaptive schemas was included as moderator variable. The moderation effect was tested with a bootstrapping procedure, which was settled at a value of 5000, following the method described in Freedman (1981). To avoid multicollinearity, the variables included in the moderation models were centered (Aiken & West, 1991).

For the first proposed moderation model, the analysis indicates that, at a low level of the number of the cognitive maladaptive schemas, the moderation effect is statistically significant (effect = 3.9, $p = .000$, 95% CI [2.97, 4.8]). At a medium level of cognitive maladaptive schemas, the effect is also significant (effect = 3.7, $p = .000$, 95% CI [3.1, 4.4]), while at a high level of the number of the maladaptive schemas, no significant effect was obtained (effect = 3.6, $p = .000$, 95% CI [2.6, 4.5]). Hence, the third hypothesis, i.e. the number of cognitive maladaptive schemas will moderate the intervention effect, was confirmed. In other words, the efficiency of the wellbeing-training program in the direction of improving the social connectedness (belongingness) was supported by the data. Because the direct effect was not a significant one regarding the pre- and post-intervention for the variable social assurance, the conditional effect was not tested.

5. Discussion and conclusions

This paper presents the pilot implementation of the "*Development of belongingness among teachers*" (DBT) program, which was completed in 2019. The DBT program had the duration of five months and it included 25 pre-university teachers from a private high school in Cluj-Napoca, Romania. The research questions that shaped the study were: What is the effect of the DBT programme in terms of evolution of the feeling of belongingness among the participating teachers? What are the implications of early maladaptive schemas in terms of the evolution of belongingness?

Starting from these research questions and based on a generous theoretical support, the implementation of the programme, as well as the data processing, brought some findings that we consider that they can contribute to a deeper understanding of the analysed constructs. Specifically, the results indicate that the difference between pre- and post-test measurements for the social connectedness variable was statistically significant. Thus, the first hypothesis, which stated that there would be a significant difference between the pre- and post-intervention levels of social connectedness, was confirmed.

Hence, the DBT programme was effective in increasing the social connectedness variable among the participants. Although a slight increase was indicated by our data, the difference between pre- and post-test measurements for the variable social assurance was not statistically significant. Thus, the second hypothesis, which stated that there would be a significant difference between the pre- and post-intervention levels for the social assurance variable, was not confirmed. This result suggests two aspects at the level of interpretation. The first is that the DBT programme does not specifically address the development of social assurance, and the second aspect could be considered a limitation of this study, namely that the questions in the social assurance questionnaire were not completely appropriate for the structure and purpose of the programme.

An element of uniqueness of this study is represented by the investigation of the association between the number of early maladaptive schemas and the development of the sense of belongingness. Our study supports the importance of analysing the impact of early maladaptive schemas in the context of interpersonal relationships between teachers and those involved in the educational process, such as students, colleagues, parents and principals. Based on the results presented in this paper, the third hypothesis, according to which the number of early maladaptive schemas present in a person will moderate the effect of the intervention on increasing belongingness, was confirmed. Among the early maladaptive schemas that appeared to have a significant impact on the evolution of the feeling of belongingness, the following were noted: Abuse / Mistrust, Emotional Deprivation, Deficiency / Shame, Social Isolation, Unrealistic Standards. In other words, the participating teachers who had these early maladaptive schemas, recorded smaller differences in post-testing, regarding the evolution of the feeling of belongingness.

More specifically, this means that participants who have high scores in these early maladaptive schemas (score above 3) will have difficulty developing a sense of belongingness (Young & Brown, 2007). For example, according to the descriptions of the maladaptive schemas (Young & Brown, 2007), they might feel the following: that others are manipulating them, that they have hidden intentions, respectively (Abuse / Distrust); that close people, such as colleagues, will not be able to offer them emotional support when they need it (Abandonment / Instability); that their colleagues might judge, criticise / gossip about them and are not able to validate them (Deficiency / Shame); that they are isolated from the rest of the world, because they are different from their colleagues (Social isolation), and that they should express a certain image and performance in the community of colleagues, parents, and students, otherwise they will criticize them (Unrealistic standards). The quantitative results regarding the confirmation of the third hypothesis are also supported by the qualitative personal observations during the

individual psychological counselling sessions, in which teachers with early maladaptive schemas among those mentioned, were less willing to develop the therapeutic relationship, especially in the first phase of the project.

Our results are in line with other investigations presented in the literature, in which belongingness is associated with higher levels of well-being, self-esteem, a more positive and optimistic state, a better memory, transition to a better life, lower stress levels (Begen & Turner-Cobb, 2015; Slaten et al., 2016), better physiological functionality (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; Jetten, Haslam, Haslam, & Branscombe, 2009). In terms of future directions of research, we would like to address the evolution of early maladaptive schemas in the context of the future implementation of the DBT program. Knowing the unfavourable impact of early maladaptive schemas in an individual's life, a decrease in scores in certain schemas might indicate an increase in the quality of life and an improvement in the individual's relationships, in this case, the teacher, and, later on, the student. Therefore, through the future implementation of the programme presented in this paper, we could follow the evolution of early maladaptive schemas, with the expectation that they, or part of them will show a decrease in scores. In order to better understand how we can increase belongingness by taking into account the association between this variable and the number of early maladaptive schemas, a greater volume of quantitative and qualitative research is needed. Our results point towards the need of development and implementation of well-being programmes for pre-university, and of sharing examples of good practices within the academic and the one of the mental health practitioners, i.e. programs with clear beneficial effects on the participants' mental health, social behaviour, decision making, performance and other aspects of quality of life.

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Interculturality Between Formal and Non-formal Education in Italy

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Interculturality Between Formal and Non-formal Education in Italy

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Abstract

The paper focuses on the educational and cultural needs of adult migrants, in order to overcome a uniquely paternalistic view of immigration. Focusing on the educational and cultural needs affects, in fact, the quality of the experience of integration. Within this proposal the adoption of an intercultural mediation strategy can play an important role also with reference to the context of cultural services.

Keywords:

interculturality,
immigration, educational
and cultural needs

Zusammenfassung

Das vorliegende Papier konzentriert sich auf die Bildungs- und Kulturbedürfnisse erwachsener Migranten, um eine einzigartig paternalistische Sichtweise der Einwanderung zu überwinden. Die Konzentration auf die Bildungs- und Kulturbedürfnisse betrifft in der Tat die Qualität der Erfahrung der Integration. Innerhalb dieses Vorschlags kann die Annahme einer interkulturellen Vermittlungsstrategie auch in Bezug auf den Kontext kultureller Dienstleistungen eine wichtige Rolle spielen.

Schlüsselworte:

Interkulturalität;
Immigration; Bildungs- und
Kulturbedürfnisse

1. Introduction

From a general point of view, it can be affirmed that two processes today have a significant impact on society and, consequently, on education: the strong and pervasive changes in technology and the migratory processes that affect the entire planet in different ways and forms.

In this paper we will attempt to re-read the situation of the multicultural society in Italy, in light of a broader interpretation of the notion of non-formal education understood in the sense of natural education: education that happens without anyone intentionally taking part.

2. About the migration processes in Italy

With reference to the migration processes underway and, in particular, to the problems posed by the presence of immigrants in today's society, it can be said that regardless of what school or training one does or does not attend, dynamic and pervasive educational processes are already in place. When people who belong to different cultures meet, fields of tension are inevitably produced- characterized by integration and distinction, fusion and separation, inclusion and exclusion, etc. What happens then? To answer this question, it may be useful to refer to the notion of lifelong education. "The notion of lifelong education can be useful if it is taken to mean 'ongoing natural education in

progress': with which we would highlight that the 'social contexts' of life and work educate positively, continuously, and affect our values, structure our habits, and induce our behaviors. What is particular about these educational processes is that they take place in the form of 'hidden curricula' and that little or no widespread social control is exercised over them. This has effects on everyone. As regards immigrant workers in Italy, it follows that, in general, the only educators they meet, real ones, who actually 'teach' their values and behaviors, are those with whom immigrants are closest in contact with: police officers, landlords, bosses, passers-by and sometimes, if they are lucky, a teacher, a trade unionist, a service provider, or a volunteer. [...] Since the relationships between subjects are always endowed with both socio-affective and cognitive formative efficacy, in the sense that they provide information, transmit knowledge and suggest behavior, it must be inferred that, in Italy, not only are educational projects that intentionally pursue the goal of a multicultural society entirely absent, but there are, on the contrary, projects that, in more or less hidden forms, operate in a diametrically opposite way" (Susi, pp. 28-29).

3. Work – at the center of the migration path in Italy

It can therefore be stated that the participation of immigrants in society and the Italian labor market to a large extent shows the characteristics of what was defined by Maurizio Ambrosini as *subordinate integration*. Immigrants are accepted in the workplace on the basis of the idea that the role assigned to them is to do the jobs which Italians no longer aspire to do, with the implicit corollary that, if more interesting occupations become available, Italians have an indisputable right of priority. However, work is at the center of the migration path. An essential role in the meeting between Italian labor demand and immigrant supply is played by so-called “ethnic networks”, i.e. the networks of support and mutual help between immigrant relatives and compatriots. In a market that is difficult to analyze and in some cases deregulated, the spread of information relating to job vacancies, sponsorship, and socialization at work happens through contact with people linked by personal relationships and emotional bonds. Many immigrants point out that often an Italian citizen must introduce them because otherwise employers may be wary. The intersection between supply and demand of labor almost always passes, therefore, through informal channels. Often there is no possibility for immigrants to “become a professional” and immigrant workers often move and change employers. Migrants face a situation of poor social and professional upward mobility. Immigrants find themselves in a system of “arrested professional growth” and even those with high levels of education undergo a process of decline and professional downgrading in Italy. Immigrants, in fact, are not such weak individuals (they often have solid professional experience and medium to high educational qualifications), but they become so in the Italian society and labor market that reserve the lowest positions for them. There is a gap between human capital possessed and professional levels of integration that serves neither the direct stakeholders nor, in the medium to long-term, the host country. What may appear to be successful integration, often, in the eyes of the person concerned, feels unsatisfactory and is seen as an unsuccessful fall-back. The result is a subjective experience that, especially in the most prepared and efficient individuals at work, takes on the tones of frustration, dissatisfaction and, in some cases, condemnation.

There is a sort of “ghettoization” for immigrants who seem forced to remain anchored in the lower segments of the labor market. Furthermore, “in the frame of mind of employers and more general of public opinion, provenance [*immigrants’ national origin*] quickly becomes an indicator of a worker's ability to enter into certain occupational areas” (Caritas-Migrantes, 2006, p. 48). This is how the so-called “ethnic specializations” are formed, which are often recorded in local labor markets and which, in some cases, imprison workers by pre-defining their fields of integration. It is necessary to work to break these “vicious circles” and release the positive energies that immigration brings with

it. Such a change will be possible not only through targeted training activities, but above all through strong political action that contributes to the evolution of the demands of employers and entrepreneurs.

It should be noted, however, that in some Italian situations, while relatively few in number, numerous initiatives have been implemented and interesting projects have been tested in this direction. Their aims include integration through orientation, balance of competences, insertion and job reintegration, and projects that help foreigners through linguistic literacy courses with particular attention to the most vulnerable people, especially women, who often rejoin their husbands later, and have no opportunity to enter the community.

However, there is a lack of information on these initiatives reaching potentially interested foreign citizens. In this regard, greater information and awareness-raising action through the media (television, radio, newspapers, etc.) and through less traditional channels (meeting places, immigrant associations, etc.) would also be useful.

Furthermore, it seems that there is limited willingness on the part of foreign citizens to invest in their own training, also because it is often difficult and tiring after a “hard” day's work, to take part in a training course that may also take place very far from one's home.

As regards the possibility of involving immigrants in their direct training actions, it is important to underline that:

1. it is essential to launch a public information and awareness campaign, based on the consideration that there is no communication between the existing offers (in some cases plentiful) and the interested parties;
2. the coordination of efforts must be strengthened - in the sense of both a network system and the organization of supply chains - the lack of which prevents optimal use of resources;
3. the existing supply often proposes the same methods (organizational, methodological and didactic) that have contributed to determining the processes of removal and exclusion from the training courses.

The main critical elements that characterize the situation of immigrants, which have emerged in the context of specific research on these topics, can be identified in the following points (The considerations made refer to results emerging from studies conducted by the author of this article. See in particular: M. Fiorucci, *The analysis of the training needs of the adult population in Municipalities I and IX*, in “Lifelong learning: the supply and demand of training in the Municipalities I and IX”, vol. 2, FSE Project “Launch of the city system for Adult Education and the establishment of Local Committees”, Department Office for Educational and School Policies, Municipality of Rome, Rome 2007, pp. 4-84; M. Fiorucci, W. Bonapace (editor), *Immigration: integration dynamics and paths of inclusion in Valle d'Aosta*, Regional Institute of Research of Valle d'Aosta, Aosta 2007):

- poor control of the Italian language in the initial phase of integration;
- bureaucratic and legal impediments often linked to their legal status;
- different perspectives related to country of origin and family status strongly influence the migration patterns and condition the “migratory plans” (very short, short, medium and long term) of the individuals;
- limited time (impossible to reconcile education time with time spent at work and at home);
- the lack of a family network to compensate for the lack of care services (a problem of immigrant mothers who are unable to attend any educational activities due to lack of available child care).

4. Interculturality in formal and non-formal contexts

Considering the relationship between immigrants and host societies more generally, and in light of the different “levels of belonging that the current system of citizenship provides, of the three elements (civil, political and social) that describe them, according to the well-known outline of Marshall, belonging to a society, in concrete situations, there is ‘the attribution of certain rights to immigrants that form the package of citizenship, but not others’ (Sgritta, 1993, p. 12). It is above all in the political sphere that the separation between citizens and immigrants is most evident and frequent; between individuals with full rights and those excluded from participation in the electoral process, the elaboration of policies and the implementation of administrative and governmental decisions which, all too often, affect them directly. In developed countries, legal immigrants enjoy conditions substantially similar to the rest of the population in civil and social spheres. But even in these cases, where the law, as in Italy, ensures equality of civil rights and access to public services, it remains to be seen whether and to what extent this legal recognition is able to allow for effective equality in living conditions and utilization of the various opportunities offered by society. Ultimately, there are two sides to the problem: one regulatory, in the recognition of the same rights as citizens, and the other, in verifying the gap that separates real conditions of immigrants from those of other groups in society. From this perspective, the immigrant situation will move from one extreme, with exclusion, due to legal or social discrimination, to another, that of full integration, as a consequence of effective equality of opportunities and conditions with the local population” (Bonifazi, 2007, pp. 216-217).

Immigrants in Italy enjoy what can be defined as *relative citizenship*. It is perhaps not enough to see the different positions present within society exclusively in terms of racism or lack thereof: this is a dichotomy that is in some ways overly reductive, given that “the range of positions is, in fact, much broader and that positions on immigration can be determined, even on an exclusive or predominant basis, based on considerations of a completely different nature; for example, the advantages or disadvantages (real or presumed) that the presence of foreign workers can present to individuals or the different social groups to which they belong. In fact, the way in which the local population sees and rationalizes immigrants, or outsiders, does not depend on deep psychological concepts or on the existence or not of ethnic prejudices alone, but also on how these ‘outsiders’ move (or are thought to move) within society, the conflicts that have brought about their presence, how the situation is presented by the mass media and political pundits, and by how the public administration manages the phenomenon.

Ultimately, an approach that seeks to take into account all the aspects linked to immigration appears more worthwhile, since it takes the examination of the problem to a more direct level, better rationalized and certainly more immediately applicable at the time of political and administrative implementation” (Bonifazi, 2007, pp. 196-197).

Local authorities, public services (educational, social, health, etc.), trade unions, non-profits and associations, each in their own way, over the last few years have all promoted policies, implemented projects and applications, and developed practices which, while not always innovative, have nevertheless highlighted how it is increasingly necessary to work both on the side of interculturality and towards the recognition of equal opportunities between natives and foreigners. The “intercultural opening of services, in addition to aiming for practical goals, also seeks to awaken the awareness that in everyday professional life we must actively confront interculturality, proving that we are ready to deal with ways of seeing that are also completely different from our own. A process with positive effects for all, both locals and foreigners” (Luatti, 2006, p. 7).

The context of the emerging Italian situation is one of great variety in terms of local policies, intercultural resources, and innovative practices. Alongside the structures and services that have been involved in migration from the very beginning, and where the theme of interculturality has had the chance to soak in, there are other services that, due to resistance and rigidity, face longer delays on the path to adaptation of operating methods to try to respond to increasingly complex users. These services, however, need to be adequately supported (in both economic and staffing terms) by the Government and institutions to improve their responses and to act in the main

reference areas of integration dynamics (economic, social, cultural, political and demographic). For the immediate future it is a question of improving and reinforcing what has already been achieved, passing from a reactive vision (of response to emergencies and essential needs) to a proactive perspective, which meets people (in their homes and at work) as a whole, through a system of services throughout the territory, guaranteeing the right of citizenship while addressing the cultural needs and active participation of the immigrant population in view of “full integration”.

Today, more than 40 years after Italy’s transformation into a country of immigration, it is necessary to take a different view of individuals of foreign origin no longer as bearers of needs, but as bearers of rights. The central aspect today is represented by intercultural dialogue, but as we have said, dialogue requires conditions of possibility, a condition of relational symmetry that is currently non-existent, and that is the possibility of expressing one’s own subjectivity, one’s own needs, one’s desires, interests and equal rights.

Interculturality, to avoid remaining simply rhetorical, is essentially a political task, intertwined as it is with cultural conflicts, socio-economic differences, diversity management, migrant rights, democratic development and the promotion of equality of rights between all citizens. There is intercultural dialogue if there is a *de facto* symmetry between migrants and non-migrants: today there is a condition of relative citizenship of migrants who pay the price of “subordinate integration”. This condition undermines the notion of dialogue, making it clear that it is necessary to overcome both “miserable” and “utilitarian” visions of migration, that is, two reductionist visions that move between paternalism and economic functionalism and that tend to reduce migrants to predefined categories by the host countries. Therefore, hierarchical, assimilationist and asymmetrical visions must be overcome in order to assume a co-educational perspective open to the direct presence of migrant cultures, inaugurating an innovative path of “dialog-based education” that is built together, through relationships founded on the basis of equality, reciprocity and responsibility. This will be possible through action aimed at:

- *honoring the linguistic and cultural heritage which migrants bring*, giving citizenship to multilingualism as a resource, supporting and expanding the associations of migrant communities as agents of intercultural mediation and overcoming the concept that cultures and identities are static realities, on the one hand, or folklore, on the other. Too often, in fact, misinterpreted intercultural education is conditioned by an allegorical, essentialist and relativistic vision of glorification of cultural differences as such, rather than by a constructivist view of cultural diversity and the search for citizenship and social cohesion. Cultural diversity can only be conceived in terms of identity (hybrid and mutable) built socially through social interaction and

not as naturally inherent (inevitable and unchanging) to a person or a group. The philosopher Kenan Malik clearly highlighted the risks of an essentialist vision of culture and identity: “Multiculturalists and forerunners of the clash of civilizations share the basic assumptions about the nature of culture, identity and difference. Both consider the main social divisions as the result of a cultural matrix or civilization. Both view cultures, or civilizations, as homogeneous entities. Both insist on the crucial importance of cultural identity and the preservation of this identity. Both perceive the conflicts emerging from non-negotiable values as unresolvable” (Malik, 2016, p. 86);

- *giving visibility to the educational and cultural needs of migrants, not just to their basic needs* (reception), focusing on the theme of intercultural mediation as a perspective that also takes into account the role of the so-called “second generation” of immigration. Here we consider the question of the scholastic, educational and professional orientation of this “second generation” that represents not only a crucial part of the migration phenomenon, but also a challenge for social cohesion and a factor of transformation of Italian society. Dealing with the “second generation” means first and foremost thoroughly investigating how the social composition of a country is being redefined. Italy, for example, is a country historically characterized by profound diversity, and within which regional and local identifications have played a very important role. It is with the “second generation” that some fundamental obstacles to social integration come to the fore that were hidden or postponed for first-generation immigrants, who were in a homecoming phase. In the context of immigrant populations, the very birth and socialization of the “second generation” represents a decisive moment for the awareness of their status as minorities now established in a different context from that of the original society. With them, needs arise for the definition, re-elaboration and transmission of their cultural heritage, as well as models of family education. Therefore, these young people live in a condition of “double identity” or “double belonging” and must be prevented from turning into a “double absence” (Sayad). The young people of the “second generation” are “natural cultural mediators”, but there must be the conditions for their support and empowerment in schools, associations and society, starting from the juridical recognition of Italian citizenship by reforming the obsolete legislation founded on the right of blood;

- *strengthen networks between schools, adult education centers, and community centers intended as connection spaces that favor critical reflection on educational practices and on the development and implementation of intercultural activities* that are not only addressed to migrants and the “second generation”, but to the whole population in a real intercultural perspective, first of all rethinking school and education as a privileged place

for intercultural mediation. School is one of the key elements of a process of integration that connects the scholastic success of the children of immigrants, the professional and social integration of families, as well as being the “place” given to cultural differences in our society. To facilitate the transition from a situation of multiculturalism, with the simple coexistence between different cultures, to an authentic situation of integration, acceptance and exchange, schools must promote meeting and favor situations of connection with others. The intercultural approach is an indispensable way to respect and value diversity in search of common values that allow us to live together. This new vision of relationships between people who belong to different cultures should modify and transform the structure of school and teaching organizations, teaching and training methods, assessment methods, relationships between teachers, pupils and families in and outside of school, and provide a perspective from which to approach knowledge and the disciplines. Intercultural education is one of the indispensable tools for facing the challenge of a multicultural society through the construction of paths of recognition of pluralism and diversity in reciprocity. In essence, it is now clear that today it is impossible to speak of integration without more consciously encouraging the goal of bringing about a new reality - an intercultural reality - within which schools, institutions and the Italian society all have to face one another. In doing so, they must question the methods and knowledge with which they examine their relationships with the more than 5 million migrant citizens who today live, work, study, grow and age in our country.

Intercultural education requires a constant commitment in schools and at all levels of society within the framework of *lifelong learning* processes of individuals and communities. This approach is neither natural nor obvious and, on the contrary, represents an intentional educational project and a process that must be consciously carried out day by day and that requires attention and competence on the part of all participants. “Intercultural education is part of the great tradition of Italian democratic pedagogy and has among its main objectives social justice and equal opportunity regardless of an individual’s history or origin. Intercultural strategies avoid separating individuals into autonomous and impermeable cultural worlds, instead promoting debate, dialogue and even mutual transformation, to make coexistence possible and to face, with the tools of pedagogy, the conflicts that may arise” (Fiorucci, Pinto Minerva, Portera, 2017: 618).

An intercultural perspective and ingenuity represent indispensable assets for an education adapted to the times, capable of educating people aware that they are living in a global and complex world, where the encounter with cultural differences is now the norm.

From a general point of view, it can be affirmed that two processes today have a significant impact on society

and, consequently, on education: the strong and pervasive changes in technology and the migratory processes that affect the entire planet in different ways and forms.

In this paper we will attempt to re-read the situation of the multicultural society in Italy, in light of a broader interpretation of the notion of non-formal education understood in the sense of natural education: education that happens without anyone intentionally taking part.

With reference to the migration processes underway and, in particular, to the problems posed by the presence of immigrants in today's society, it can be said that regardless of what school or training one does or does not attend, dynamic and pervasive educational processes are already in place.

It can be stated that the participation of immigrants in society and the Italian labor market to a large extent shows the characteristics of what was defined by Maurizio Ambrosini as *subordinate integration*. Immigrants are accepted in the workplace on the basis of the idea that the role assigned to them is to do the jobs which Italians no longer aspire to do, with the implicit corollary that, if more interesting occupations become available, Italians have an indisputable right of priority. However, work is at the center of the migration path. An essential role in the meeting between Italian labor demand and immigrant supply is played by so-called “ethnic networks”, i.e. the networks of support and mutual help between immigrant relatives and compatriots. In a market that is difficult to analyze and in some cases deregulated, the spread of information relating to job vacancies, sponsorship, and socialization at work happens through contact with people linked by personal relationships and emotional bonds. Many immigrants point out that often an Italian citizen must introduce them because otherwise employers may be wary. The intersection between supply and demand of labor almost always passes, therefore, through informal channels. Often there is no possibility for immigrants to “become a professional” and immigrant workers often move and change employers. Migrants face a situation of poor social and professional upward mobility. Immigrants find themselves in a system of “arrested professional growth” and even those with high levels of education undergo a process of decline and professional downgrading in Italy. Immigrants, in fact, are not such weak individuals (they often have solid professional experience and medium to high educational qualifications), but they become so in the Italian society and labor market that reserve the lowest positions for them. There is a gap between human capital possessed and professional levels of integration that serves neither the direct stakeholders nor, in the medium to long-term, the host country. What may appear to be successful integration, often, in the eyes of the person concerned, feels unsatisfactory and is seen as an unsuccessful fall-back. The result is a subjective experience that, especially in the most prepared and efficient individuals at work, takes on the

tones of frustration, dissatisfaction and, in some cases, condemnation.

There is a sort of “ghettoization” for immigrants who seem forced to remain anchored in the lower segments of the labor market. Furthermore, “in the frame of mind of employers and more general of public opinion, provenance [*immigrants’ national origin*] quickly becomes an indicator of a worker's ability to enter into certain occupational areas” (Caritas-Migrantes, 2006, p. 48). This is how the so-called “ethnic specializations” are formed, which are often recorded in local labor markets and which, in some cases, imprison workers by pre-defining their fields of integration. It is necessary to work to break these “vicious circles” and release the positive energies that immigration brings with it. Such a change will be possible not only through targeted training activities, but above all through strong political action that contributes to the evolution of the demands of employers and entrepreneurs.

5. Practical possibilities to involve immigrants in training actions

It should be noted, however, that in some Italian situations, while relatively few in number, numerous initiatives have been implemented and interesting projects have been tested in this direction. Their aims include integration through orientation, balance of competences, insertion and job reintegration, and projects that help foreigners through linguistic literacy courses with particular attention to the most vulnerable people, especially women, who often re-join their husbands later, and have no opportunity to enter the community.

However, there is a lack of information on these initiatives reaching potentially interested foreign citizens. In this regard, greater information and awareness-raising action through the media (television, radio, newspapers, etc.) and through less traditional channels (meeting places, immigrant associations, etc.) would also be useful.

Furthermore, it seems that there is limited willingness on the part of foreign citizens to invest in their own training, also because it is often difficult and tiring after a “hard” day's work, to take part in a training course that may also take place very far from one's home.

As regards the possibility of involving immigrants in their direct training actions, it is important to underline that:

1. it is essential to launch a public information and awareness campaign, based on the consideration that there is no communication between the existing offers (in some cases plentiful) and the interested parties;

2. the coordination of efforts must be strengthened - in the sense of both a network system and the organization of supply chains - the lack of which prevents optimal use of resources;

3. the existing supply often proposes the same methods (organizational, methodological and didactic) that have contributed to determining the processes of removal and exclusion from the training courses.

The main critical elements that characterize the situation of immigrants, which have emerged in the context of specific research on these topics (The considerations made refer to results emerging from studies conducted by the author of this article. See in particular: M. Fiorucci, *The analysis of the training needs of the adult population in Municipalities I and IX*, in “Lifelong learning: the supply and demand of training in the Municipalities I and IX”, vol. 2, FSE Project “Launch of the city system for Adult Education and the establishment of Local Committees”, Department Office for Educational and School Policies, Municipality of Rome, Rome 2007, pp. 4-84; M. Fiorucci, W. Bonapace (editor), *Immigration: integration dynamics and paths of inclusion in Valle d'Aosta*, Regional Institute of Research of Valle d'Aosta, Aosta 2007) can be identified in the following points:

- poor control of the Italian language in the initial phase of integration;
- bureaucratic and legal impediments often linked to their legal status;
- different perspectives related to country of origin and family status strongly influence the migration patterns and condition the “migratory plans” (very short, short, medium and long term) of the individuals;
- limited time (impossible to reconcile education time with time spent at work and at home);
- the lack of a family network to compensate for the lack of care services (a problem of immigrant mothers who are unable to attend any educational activities due to lack of available child care).

Considering the relationship between immigrants and host societies more generally, and in light of the different “levels of belonging that the current system of citizenship provides, of the three elements (civil, political and social) that describe them, according to the well-known outline of Marshall, belonging to a society, in concrete situations, there is ‘the attribution of certain rights to immigrants that form the package of citizenship, but not others’ (Sgritta, 1993, p. 12). It is above all in the political sphere that the separation between citizens and immigrants is most evident and frequent; between individuals with full rights and those excluded from participation in the electoral process, the elaboration of policies and the implementation of administrative and governmental decisions which, all too often, affect them directly. In developed countries, legal immigrants enjoy conditions substantially similar to the rest of the population in civil and social spheres. But even in these cases, where the law, as in Italy, ensures equality of civil rights and access to public services, it remains to be

seen whether and to what extent this legal recognition is able to allow for effective equality in living conditions and utilization of the various opportunities offered by society.

Ultimately, there are two sides to the problem: one regulatory, in the recognition of the same rights as citizens, and the other, in verifying the gap that separates real conditions of immigrants from those of other groups in society. From this perspective, the immigrant situation will move from one extreme, with exclusion, due to legal or social discrimination, to another, that of full integration, as a consequence of effective equality of opportunities and conditions with the local population” (Bonifazi, 2007, pp. 216-217). Immigrants in Italy enjoy what can be defined as *relative citizenship*. It is perhaps not enough to see the different positions present within society exclusively in terms of racism or lack thereof: this is a dichotomy that is in some ways overly reductive, given that “the range of positions is, in fact, much broader and that positions on immigration can be determined, even on an exclusive or predominant basis, based on considerations of a completely different nature; for example, the advantages or disadvantages (real or presumed) that the presence of foreign workers can present to individuals or the different social groups to which they belong. In fact, the way in which the local population sees and rationalizes immigrants, or outsiders, does not depend on deep psychological concepts or on the existence or not of ethnic prejudices alone, but also on how these ‘outsiders’ move (or are thought to move) within society, the conflicts that have brought about their presence, how the situation is presented by the mass media and political pundits, and by how the public administration manages the phenomenon.

Ultimately, an approach that seeks to take into account all the aspects linked to immigration appears more worthwhile, since it takes the examination of the problem to a more direct level, better rationalized and certainly more immediately applicable at the time of political and administrative implementation” (Bonifazi, 2007, pp. 196-197).

Local authorities, public services (educational, social, health, etc.), trade unions, non-profits and associations, each in their own way, over the last few years have all promoted policies, implemented projects and applications, and developed practices which, while not always innovative, have nevertheless highlighted how it is increasingly necessary to work both on the side of interculturality and towards the recognition of equal opportunities between natives and foreigners. The “intercultural opening of services, in addition to aiming for practical goals, also seeks to awaken the awareness that in everyday professional life we must actively confront interculturality, proving that we are ready to deal with ways of seeing that are also completely different from our own. A process with positive effects for all, both locals and foreigners” (Luatti, 2006, p. 7).

The context of the emerging Italian situation is one of great variety in terms of local policies, intercultural resources, and innovative practices. Alongside the structures and services that have been involved in migration from the very beginning, and where the theme of interculturality has had the chance to soak in, there are other services that, due to resistance and rigidity, face longer delays on the path to adaptation of operating methods to try to respond to increasingly complex users. These services, however, need to be adequately supported (in both economic and staffing terms) by the Government and institutions to improve their responses and to act in the main reference areas of integration dynamics (economic, social, cultural, political and demographic). For the immediate future it is a question of improving and reinforcing what has already been achieved, passing from a reactive vision (of response to emergencies and essential needs) to a proactive perspective, which meets people (in their homes and at work) as a whole, through a system of services throughout the territory, guaranteeing the right of citizenship while addressing the cultural needs and active participation of the immigrant population in view of “full integration”.

Today, more than 40 years after Italy’s transformation into a country of immigration, it is necessary to take a different view of individuals of foreign origin no longer as bearers of needs, but as bearers of rights. The central aspect today is represented by intercultural dialogue, but as we have said, dialogue requires conditions of possibility, a condition of relational symmetry that is currently non-existent, and that is the possibility of expressing one's own subjectivity, one's own needs, one's desires, interests and equal rights.

6. Conclusions

Interculturality, to avoid remaining simply rhetorical, is essentially a political task, intertwined as it is with cultural conflicts, socio-economic differences, diversity management, migrant rights, democratic development and the promotion of equality of rights between all citizens. There is intercultural dialogue if there is a *de facto* symmetry between migrants and non-migrants: today there is a condition of relative citizenship of migrants who pay the price of “subordinate integration”. This condition undermines the notion of dialogue, making it clear that it is necessary to overcome both “miserable” and “utilitarian” visions of migration, that is, two reductionist visions that move between paternalism and economic functionalism and that tend to reduce migrants to predefined categories by the host countries. Therefore, hierarchical, assimilationist and asymmetrical visions must be overcome in order to assume a co-educational perspective open to the direct presence of migrant cultures, inaugurating an innovative path of “dialog-based education” that is built together, through relationships founded on the basis of equality,

reciprocity and responsibility. This will be possible through action aimed at:

- *honoring the linguistic and cultural heritage which migrants bring*, giving citizenship to multilingualism as a resource, supporting and expanding the associations of migrant communities as agents of intercultural mediation and overcoming the concept that cultures and identities are static realities, on the one hand, or folklore, on the other. Too often, in fact, misinterpreted intercultural education is conditioned by an allegorical, essentialist and relativistic vision of glorification of cultural differences as such, rather than by a constructivist view of cultural diversity and the search for citizenship and social cohesion. Cultural diversity can only be conceived in terms of identity (hybrid and mutable) built socially through social interaction and not as naturally inherent (inevitable and unchanging) to a person or a group. The philosopher Kenan Malik clearly highlighted the risks of an essentialist vision of culture and identity: “Multiculturalists and forerunners of the clash of civilizations share the basic assumptions about the nature of culture, identity and difference. Both consider the main social divisions as the result of a cultural matrix or civilization. Both view cultures, or civilizations, as homogeneous entities. Both insist on the crucial importance of cultural identity and the preservation of this identity. Both perceive the conflicts emerging from non-negotiable values as unresolvable” (Malik, 2016, p. 86);

- *giving visibility to the educational and cultural needs of migrants, not just to their basic needs* (reception), focusing on the theme of intercultural mediation as a perspective that also takes into account the role of the so-called “second generation” of immigration. Here we consider the question of the scholastic, educational and professional orientation of this “second generation” that represents not only a crucial part of the migration phenomenon, but also a challenge for social cohesion and a factor of transformation of Italian society. Dealing with the “second generation” means first and foremost thoroughly investigating how the social composition of a country is being redefined. Italy, for example, is a country historically characterized by profound diversity, and within which regional and local identifications have played a very important role. It is with the “second generation” that some fundamental obstacles to social integration come to the fore that were hidden or postponed for first-generation immigrants, who were in a homecoming phase. In the context of immigrant populations, the very birth and socialization of the “second generation” represents a decisive moment for the awareness of their status as minorities now established in a different context from that of the original society. With them, needs arise for the definition, re-elaboration and transmission of their cultural heritage, as well as models of family education. Therefore, these young people live in a condition of “double identity” or “double belonging” and must be prevented from turning

into a “double absence” (Sayad). The young people of the “second generation” are “natural cultural mediators”, but there must be the conditions for their support and empowerment in schools, associations and society, starting from the juridical recognition of Italian citizenship by reforming the obsolete legislation founded on the right of blood;

- *strengthen networks between schools, adult education centers, and community centers intended as connection spaces that favor critical reflection on educational practices and on the development and implementation of intercultural activities* that are not only addressed to migrants and the “second generation”, but to the whole population in a real intercultural perspective, first of all rethinking school and education as a privileged place for intercultural mediation. School is one of the key elements of a process of integration that connects the scholastic success of the children of immigrants, the professional and social integration of families, as well as being the “place” given to cultural differences in our society. To facilitate the transition from a situation of multiculturalism, with the simple coexistence between different cultures, to an authentic situation of integration, acceptance and exchange, schools must promote meeting and favor situations of connection with others. The intercultural approach is an indispensable way to respect and value diversity in search of common values that allow us to live together. This new vision of relationships between people who belong to different cultures should modify and transform the structure of school and teaching organizations, teaching and training methods, assessment methods, relationships between teachers, pupils and families in and outside of school, and provide a perspective from which to approach knowledge and the disciplines. Intercultural education is one of the indispensable tools for facing the challenge of a multicultural society through the construction of paths of recognition of pluralism and diversity in reciprocity. In essence, it is now clear that today it is impossible to speak of integration without more consciously encouraging the goal of bringing about a new reality - an intercultural reality - within which schools, institutions and the Italian society all have to face one another.

Intercultural education requires a constant commitment in schools and at all levels of society within the framework of *lifelong learning* processes of individuals and communities. This approach is neither natural nor obvious and, on the contrary, represents an intentional educational project and a process that must be consciously carried out day by day and that requires attention and competence on the part of all participants. “Intercultural education is part of the great tradition of Italian democratic pedagogy and has among its main objectives social justice and equal opportunity regardless of an individual’s history or origin. Intercultural strategies avoid separating individuals into

autonomous and impermeable cultural worlds, instead promoting debate, dialogue and even mutual transformation, to make coexistence possible and to face, with the tools of pedagogy, the conflicts that may arise” (Fiorucci, Pinto Minerva, Portera, 2017: 618).

An intercultural perspective and ingenuity represent indispensable assets for an education adapted to the times, capable of educating people aware that they are living in a global and complex world, where the encounter with cultural differences is now the norm.

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focus mainly on intercultural education with particular reference to the issues of intercultural mediation and migrant literature. It also deals with social pedagogy, general pedagogy, adult education, analysis of cultural needs, quality of education and education in organizations.

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Corporate Social Responsibility for Education

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Corporate Social Responsibility for Education

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Abstract

Keywords:

corporate social responsibility (CSR); responsibility in the field of education; educational benefits of social responsibility projects.

The present article tackles the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in the educational field, from the perspective of the projects achieved in collaboration with the educational institutions and companies and projects focused on the improvement and updating the background of the school units. The necessity to implement projects in the field of education by private companies and public firms is justified by the existence of certain financial deficits in the educational system. The study of documents and of national and international specialised materials in the CSR field reveals the requirement to consult schools in establishing the action directions but also the involvement of the business environment in the adaptation of the educational programs to the needs of the labour market. By means of an inquiry-based questionnaire, applied online to a number of 50 representatives having different levels and profiles within educational institutions in the Western area, both from the rural and the urban environment, we have gathered examples of good practice in assuming the implementation of the social responsibility projects in the field of education, in the Western area of Romania.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

sozialen Verantwortung von Unternehmen (CSR); Verantwortung im Bildungsbereich; pädagogische Vorteile von Projekten der sozialen Verantwortung

Der Artikel befasst sich mit dem Konzept der sozialen Verantwortung von Unternehmen (Corporate Social Responsibility, CSR) für den Bildungsbereich aus der Perspektive von Projekten, die in Zusammenarbeit zwischen Bildungseinrichtungen und Unternehmen durchgeführt werden und sich auf die Verbesserung und Modernisierung der Verhältnisse in Schulen konzentrieren.

Die Notwendigkeit Projekte im Bildungsbereich durch private und öffentliche Unternehmen durchzuführen, ist durch das Bestehen bestimmter finanzieller Mängel im Bildungssystem gerechtfertigt.

Die Untersuchung nationaler und internationaler Fachdokumente und -materialien im Bereich CSR weist auf die Notwendigkeit sich mit den Schulen in der Festlegung der Handlungsrichtungen zu beraten, als auch, das engere Einbeziehen der Wirtschaftsvertreter im Anpassungsprozess der Bildungsprogramme an die Anforderungen des Arbeitsmarktes, hin.

Durch die Umfrage, die auf einem Online-Fragebogen basiert, welcher 50. Vertretern von Bildungseinrichtungen aus dem westlichen Landesteil, mit unterschiedlichen Bildungsniveaus und Profilen, sowohl in ländlichen als auch in städtischen Gebieten angewendet wurde, werden Beispiele guter Praxis in der Umsetzung von Projekten der sozialen Verantwortung im Bildungsbereich im Westen Rumäniens angeführt.

1. Introduction

The community must adopt “a strong position in favour of learning, school assumes the connection with the community and both admit the fact that school is not the only organisation which has responsibilities towards the little ones” (Senge, 2016a, p. 490). Social responsibility of companies - *Corporate social responsibility (CSR)* is a concept focused on the treatment of companies and institutions in a responsible and ethical way (Hopkins, 2016, p. 16). Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is a business model which is self-adjusted and which helps a company to be socially responsible towards it, towards the

interested parties and towards the public (www.investopedia.com). In this paper, the denomination of institution is to design all the state or private scholar entities (kindergartens, schools, universities etc.).

2. Theoretical foundation

The concept was used for the first time in 1953 by the phrase *social responsibilities* (SR). Although the authors have tried to state a clearer and more complex definition of the concept, in the specialised literature there is a large terminological variety. We highlighted the analysis made

by: Philip Kotler, Muhammad Yunus, Michael Hopkins, Michael Porter, which are centred on the fact that CSR means to obtain a profit in moral conditions, next to the community.

Philip Kotler (2005, pp 8-20) defines the concept of CSR as being an engagement in order to improve the living standard of the community. In his opinion, the well-being of society is described in different forms: corporative social responsibility, civic responsibility of the company, corporative charity, corporative donations, relation with the community, business community, development community, corporative responsibility towards education, global civic spirit, corporative social marketing.

Muhammad Yunus (2008) considers that the term social responsibility is built on a foundation of good intentions, although many firms are focused on profit, sometimes unscrupulously obtained by exploiting the human resource. The moment the corporations choose to do a good deed for society, this must be promoted at maximum in order to bring an extra image. By the involvement of CSR, the firm is closer and more attentive to the needs of society. Sustainability, responsibility and transparency are the CSR principles of a corporation which prepares the firm for a clean, healthy and solid future, protecting the natural resources and health of their clients and employees.

Michael Porter (2007) asserts that some firms can contribute in the sustainable development; others are focused on more charity actions. He mentions that it is very important not to make confusions between charity and CSR, because the donations can be done by the economic actors, for a certain social cause, they are just a small component in the complex concept of CSR and the companies are interested in the adoption of a CSR regulated behaviour, as a component part of the organisational strategy in order to become more competitive.

The social responsibility in the field of education and the important role it plays were mentioned in 2006, in the document of the European Commission *Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council and the European Economic and Social Committee, implementing the partnership for growth and jobs: Making Europe a pole of excellence on corporate social responsibility* (Brussels, 22.3.2006, COM, 2006). The social responsibility of the companies in the field of education is approached from many perspectives: either centred on the education of employees, by the introduction of the concept in the school curriculum, research projects consortium between the educational units and companies, or focused on the improvement and updating of the environment in the school units.

3. Research methodology

Starting from the premises of CSR extension for the benefit of the educational environment, the purpose of this

study is to highlight the actions and projects of CSR existing/to be extended in the educational environment. An observatory research was conducted having as objectives: the identification of the degree of the teachers 'acquaintance with the notion of social responsibility of companies; the identification of the initiated actions and of the projects proposals of social responsibility of the companies for education; emphasizing the benefits of CSR. The investigation methods used are: the study of documents and of national and international specialised materials in the targeted field; the inquiry questionnaire for the teachers. The method of the inquiry based questionnaire is a method of investigation in which the research instrument is the questionnaire, supposing a "set of structured questions in a certain succession and in a logical order, addressed in written form to the investigated subjects" (Stan, 2020, p. 629).

The questionnaire, containing a number of 15 questions was applied to a number of 50 representatives having different levels and profiles within educational institutions in the Western area, both from the rural and the urban environment. As regards the content, the factual/administrative questions have aimed aspects connected to age, level of education and the post occupied (closed questions); the opinion questions permitted the identification of subjective aspects – opinions, attitudes referring to the necessity, experience and use of CSR projects in education (open and mixed questions). We have obtained a number of 47 valid answers.

4. Results

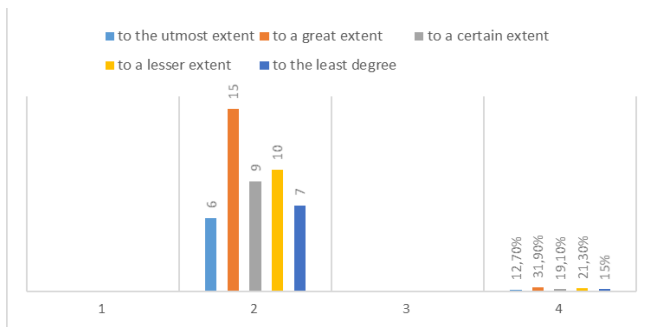
The study of documents has emphasised the existence of several endeavours for the development of CSR culture. As a consequence of the financial and social crisis in 2008, the tensions in the business and social environment extended. This led to an increase in the number of firms that have changed their organisational culture becoming ethical, with automatic involvement on the educational units as well (Seto-Pamies & Papaoikonomou, 2016), which started to be consulted regarding the choice of CSR direction, so that the actions of the institutions would be sustainable. The educational institutions, besides the basic, socio-economic and cultural knowledge must put emphasis more on the development of skills for the civic participative involvement. Involving the business environment in the establishment of the curricula can help the educational environment in several directions: alignment of educational programs to the labour market demands, endowment of research laboratories etc, the CSR programs contributing to the reconnection of the economic success with the society progress (Camilleri, 2016).

The data obtained by applying the questionnaire were registered and measured by counting and ordering. The data processing supposed the systematization and presentation

in tables and statistical graphics based on which the quantitative and qualitative interpretations were achieved.

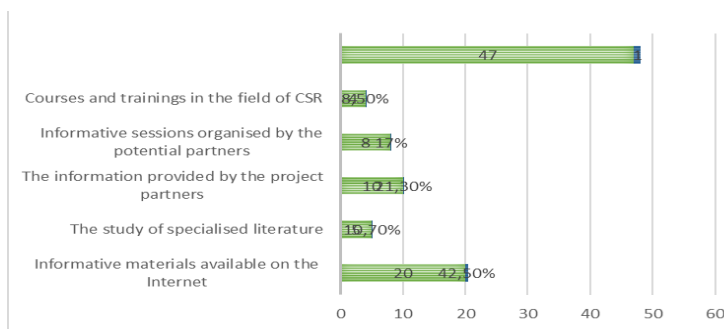
The results obtained reflect the degree of acquaintance with the notion of social responsibility of companies: of the total of 47 collected answers, a number of 21 answers emphasizes a high or very high acquaintance degree with this concept, 9 answers reveal a superficial knowledge of the term, while 17 answers are limited to little or very little knowledge of the concept (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. The acquaintance degree with the notion of social responsibility



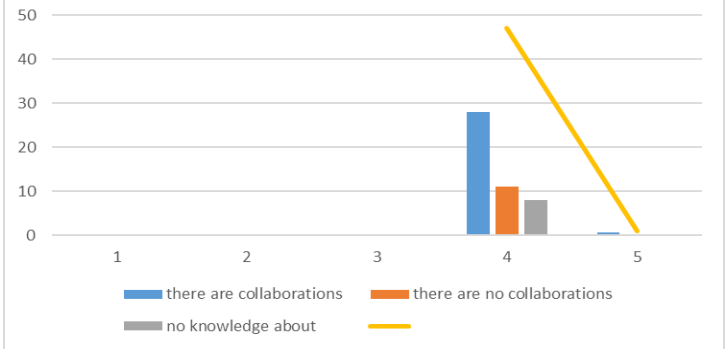
One of the questions addressed has aimed the assignation of the main sources of information in the field of CSR. Most respondents inform themselves first of all by accessing different materials available on the Internet (42,5). The second way of information (in the frequency order of answers) is represented by the information received from the partners of the implemented projects (21,3%), followed by the information in the sessions organized by the potential partners (17%) - Fig. 2).

Figure 2. The sources of information in the field of CSR



We consider that it is important to present the degree of involvement of school units in the development of activities and CSR projects in collaboration with different companies as part of the social responsibilities of the last ones. A number of 22 respondents have stated that they have collaborated with certain companies for the implementation of CSR projects, 10 respondents do not have knowledge about such collaboration, while a number of 5 respondents have mentioned the fact that there were no collaborations (Fig. 3).

Figure 3. The existence of collaborations with companies



The activities achieved in collaboration with different companies, CSR projects in which there were involved the educational institutions have aimed mainly the following directions-fields (prioritising obtained after the answers centralisation, with minor differences of frequency between the aspects identified) – Table 1:

Table 1. CSR Projects in Western area of Romania

CSR Activities/Projects	Proposed	Implemented
Sponsorships of the events developed in the institution	✓	✓
Partnerships, practice tutorials, internship	✓	✓
Environment projects, green campaigns	✓	✓
Contributions to the organization of olympics/local/regional/national contests	✓	✓
Projects which contribute to the improvement of community life	✓	
Projects dedicated to parents (Parents school)	✓	
Projects which contribute to the improvement of community life	✓	
Projects which aim hygiene and health	✓	
Financial education programs	✓	
Projects dedicated to the staff formation	✓	
Projects which propose the combat of discrimination	✓	
Projects dedicated to the formation of didactic staff	✓	

The didactic staffs participating in the study have identified the obvious benefits and improvement that the CSR projects can bring to the educational environment:

- the connection of young people to the economical-social reality
- the diversification of the offered programs
- the stimulation of students' creativity
- the identification of the real problems in the educational environment
- endowment with didactic equipment and materials necessary for the appropriate development of activities
- studying some fields that the school curriculum does not cover
- collaboration firms – schools in the starting of projects useful for society
- entrepreneurial education taught in schools by firm managers
- partnerships and projects outside school for students and teachers
- formation of open mentalities (for teachers, community)
- supporting continuous formation of didactic staff
- updating schools
- creation of a coherent framework of good practice.

5. Conclusions and discussions

The study aimed to follow the evolution tendency of CSR projects in the Western area. The results obtained have emphasized the existence of projects achieved by school institutions. For the benefit of the educational environment, it is required that the CSR projects should be focused on sustainable activities, with long term positive effects and which can be gradually extended to more educational institutions. The awareness of the benefits that the CSR projects can bring to the educational field determines preoccupations in the sense of expanding collaborations with the aim of increasing the quality in the educational system. It is imperative that the corporate and community social responsibility as regards education focuses on a rise in the number of projects that would support the development of educational components of interest for the respective geographical area. This would take place in the context of assuming responsibility for education while considering the three activity systems involved in this process, “embedded in one another”: the class that learns (teachers, students, parents), the school that learns (school inspectors, headmasters, leaders and administrator), the community that learns (community members) (Senge, 2016b, pp.26-35).

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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Middle School Students' Opinions Regarding Their Educational Experience during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Middle School Students' Opinions Regarding Their Educational Experience during Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

Keywords:

Covid-19 Pandemic; online education; students' opinions

The Covid-19 Pandemic has affected everyone's life. The main activity fields of each society were strongly impacted by the different measures imposed by authorities in order to limit and prevent the extension of this new disease. Students are one of the vulnerable categories, influenced significantly by this situation since one of the social distancing measures implemented in most countries refers to school closure and classes suspension. The transition to online education undertaken in this context was a temporary solution, a quick fix, and its long-term implications need to be studied within further research. We asked a small group of middle school students to share their thoughts, feelings and opinions regarding their educational experiences during the pandemic. Students shared valuable aspects that need to be taken into consideration in order to optimize future distance learning approaches, but also the ones specific to traditional education. Rethinking education has become one of the major present goals, since education has profound, long-term implications over all other fields of the society.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Covid19 Pandemie;
Online-Bildung;
Studenten Meinungen

Die Covid-19-Pandemie hat das Leben aller Menschen beeinflusst. Die Haupttätigkeitsbereiche jeder Gesellschaft waren stark von den verschiedenen Maßnahmen der Behörden betroffen, um die Ausweitung dieser neuen Krankheit zu begrenzen und zu verhindern. Die Studenten sind eine der gefährdeten Personengruppen, maßgeblich beeinflusst durch diese Situation, da sich eine der in den meisten Ländern umgesetzten Maßnahmen zur sozialen Distanzierung auf die Schließung von Schulen und die Suspendierung von Klassen bezieht. Der Übergang zur Online-Bildung in diesem Zusammenhang unternommen war eine vorübergehende Lösung, eine schnelle Lösung, und ihre langfristigen Auswirkungen müssen im Rahmen weiterer Forschungen untersucht werden. Wir haben eine kleine Gruppe von Mittelschülern gebeten, ihre Gedanken, Gefühle und Meinungen zu ihren Bildungserfahrungen während der Pandemie mitzuteilen. Die Schüler teilten wertvolle Aspekte, die berücksichtigt werden müssen, um zukünftige Fernlernansätze zu optimieren, aber auch diejenigen, die für die traditionelle Bildung spezifisch sind. Das Umdenken der Bildung ist zu einem der wichtigsten gegenwärtigen Ziele geworden, da Bildung tiefgreifende, langfristige Auswirkungen auf alle anderen Bereiche der Gesellschaft hat.

1. Introduction

The 2019-2020 school year had a quite special course of events in Romania. The activities scheduled for the second semester of this school year (especially from March until June 2020) have been strongly altered by the pandemic caused by coronavirus, declared by the WHO in early March 2020. As in other countries affected by this situation, in Romania all educational institutions were closed, and the activities that the students carried out in a formal context were further carried out from home, through technology, in the online version, with various changes and adaptations needed in this context. This new situation characterized in Romania mainly the urban areas, where the access to technology is easier, but also the final classes, which were to take the graduation exams.

Taking into consideration the fact that this situation may be prolonged indefinitely due to the contagion of Covid-19 infection and may lead to major changes in the subsequent implementation of all educational activities, as well as the fact that the measures described above were taken in a very short time, without any preparation of all factors affected by these changes, we considered appropriate to investigate the opinions of a group of middle school students (N = 19) regarding this unusual period. The three months in which the students carried out school activities in the online version represent a long time for these teenagers, who move from one school cycle to another and undergo a unique period in their development. As mentioned by the Romanian Academy (2020), secondary

school stage is the stage of strengthening general culture and it is *located between the first steps of literacy and learning basic operations in the first years of school and the specialization that starts with the entrance to high school*. The effects that all these last-minute changes have on middle school students, from a social, psychological and academic point of view, must be addressed so that the negative impact is reduced as much as possible.

The social distancing measures imposed in this context have affected the entire population, especially vulnerable groups such as children. Thus, we aimed to identify the students' point of view on how they carried out school activities in the online version, with everything that this approach involved, the way in which the assessment was carried out, their opinions on the results they achieved during this period, and their wishes and projections for the next school year. The investigated group consisted of middle school students, in their last year of this cycle of education (8th grade) from a school located in the urban area. These students were the first who returned to school after the closure in order to take their final exams (in Romania 8th graders have to pass the National Exam in order to get to high school; the exams consist in written tests at mother tongue and mathematics). These exams took place under special conditions, imposed by the coronavirus epidemic. In this context, we asked students to describe their feelings and opinions regarding the assessment in special context with a lot of new rules.

This study shows that students are one of the groups significantly affected by this pandemic, and their feelings and thoughts about the situation they experienced are easily overlooked by decision makers. The social, psychological and academic effects that this period had on adolescents, but also on other students should be seriously taken into consideration. The transition to online education due to the pandemic caused by the coronavirus has been chaotic, insufficiently organized, and its previous context and long-term consequences must be carefully addressed in various future studies dedicated to this topic.

2. Theoretical foundation

Over time, all educational systems have undergone numerous transformations, visible in the roles and functions of institutions involved in education and due to constant attempts to adapt to changes imposed by the evolution of society and its needs. The differences between educational systems are not only noticeable over time, but also between different countries, in the context of the same historical interval. These contrasts are due to the different cultural background, the political, religious system, philosophical and pedagogical influences, which determine the emergence and promotion of different ideologies. The literature that studied until now these changes in the educational systems emphasizes the importance of their open and flexible nature; it is necessary for the educational

system to be able to adapt to the evolution of society (Chiș, 2005). Ensuring the effectiveness of an educational system, its modelling to the specifics of the society in a certain period, represents a complicated, provocative approach, because it is dependent on a large number of factors. In the first months of the year 2020 the transformation of education systems has been largely driven by the pandemic caused by coronavirus. Thus, the transition from face-to-face activities to online, digital education took place and everything that characterizes distance learning was used, as a result of the closure of many schools and the suspension of direct educational activities (Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020). Thus, a new distinct perspective of pedagogy appeared at the beginning of the year 2020. Distance learning or online education does not represent something new in the field of pedagogy, but the importance granted to them in the curriculum design is.

The educational system in Romania is organized hierarchically, corresponding to the Comenian organization, by classes and lessons. The educational activities are carried out both in traditional and modern ways (in the classroom, using different didactic strategies, starting with the well-known whiteboard until the modern interactive board and digital devices, depending on the equipment existing in each classroom) (Basilaiu & Kvavadze, 2020). Within this context, students have the duty to attend classes daily, based on a fixed weekly schedule. The study program and curriculum are common, mandatory elements that include standard requirements, valid for all students. In the second semester of the 2019-2020 school year, the transition to exclusive online education was made in the Romanian educational system. Starting with March 11, 2020, all schools were closed and the Ministry of Education recommended *conducting support courses for students, assisted by technology*. The suspension of face-to-face educational activities was subsequently extended until the end of the school year, in June 2020. Only 8th and 12th grade students returned to school after the end of the school year (June-July 2020) in order to take their graduation exams. These assessments were carried out under special conditions in order to comply with all measures required by the authorities to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus infection. Thus, there has been a forced decentralization of education, further conducted as a form of technology-mediated home-schooling (Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020). These transformations did not take place only in the Romanian education system, but in most countries of the world, and, according to UNESCO (2020), affected over 60% of the students worldwide.

The transition to on-line activities determined a decrease in the allocated time for each activity (classes of maximum 40 minutes), so that the time spent by students in front of the screens does not have major negative effects on their health. Also, the access of students and teachers to the

internet and computer, tablet or smartphone has become essential, and the limitations in access to education have been accentuated in the case of students coming from disadvantaged backgrounds or those with various disabilities. Significant difficulties were also noted in this respect by young children (pre-schoolers and young schoolchildren), who became dependent on adults for access to educational content and processing it. Regarding the participation of students in online courses, it should be noted that this was variable, without reaching 100% participation.

The changes made in the educational system in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic had the role of protecting the population and preventing and limiting the spread of infection with this virus, but also the role of continuing the educational process in order not to freeze the school year. In this period characterized by the transformation of education from traditional to online format in just a few days, many schools have benefited from the support of companies such as Microsoft, Google, Zoom or Amazon, which have rapidly expanded their educational services and offered free access for conducting online educational activities (Basilaia & Kvavadze, 2020; Williamson, Eynon & Potter, 2020). Also, in order to carry out the educational process as efficiently as possible after the closure of schools and the suspension of courses, UNESCO (2020) issued 10 recommendations, which address the main aspects involved in the transition to online education: selecting solutions according to existing availability, ensuring learning and access to learning for all categories of learners, protecting privacy and data security, building networks / communities to prevent any difficulties that students may face, planning distance learning, training and supporting teachers and parents for using digital technologies, avoiding overloading students through the use of all means available to them, limiting the number of applications and platforms used, making regulations for distance learning, getting direct feedback from students, minimal involvement of parents in the assessment process, adjust the time allocated to online teaching activities, creating communities to support students to overcome certain learning difficulties.

On the other hand, UNESCO (2020) draws attention to the adverse effects of school closures, which affect mainly students, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, and their families. The negative consequences refer mainly to the field of education, but also to other aspects of students' lives, namely: interruption or reduction of learning and development opportunities; poor nutrition; confusion, stress and frustration for teachers; the inability of parents to support students in achieving online education; challenges in conducting optimal online education from the technical point of view; difficulties for working parents in caring for their children (children spend a lot of time alone, which can lead to deviant behaviors); increasing the school dropout rate; increased cases of violence against minors and

exploitation of children; social isolation of children and adolescents; difficulties in assessing students.

Other influential international organizations that have tried to facilitate online education and support states affected by the epidemic are the World Bank and the OECD. The latter described the epidemic period as *a crisis of human capital development, and the pandemic as an opportunity to experiment new educational models and new ways of using face-to-face learning activities* (OECD, 2020). Conducting online activities that involve formation and training of different skills, which require demonstrations, direct models of action, repeated exercises, directed, supervised corrections were one of the major challenges of achieving education in this manner.

In the literature we find references to the need of preparing countries regarding education in a context of pandemic. Jester, Uyeki and Jernigan (2018) discuss about preparing states to respond to a pandemic starting from the situation of pandemic that took place in 1918. Although there is currently increased capacity for prevention, monitoring, diagnosis and treatment, health and governance systems around the world are insufficiently prepared for the impact of a pandemic. Even if children are not a category severely affected by the coronavirus infection, they can become a source of its transmission, which was one of the main reasons for closing schools in most countries of the world (Abdulmir & Hafidh, 2020).

Other studies show that school closure for a long period can have significant negative effects on students' physical and mental health. The existing organized structure in the case of face-to-face educational activities involves opportunities to make physical effort, reduce the amount of daily consumed calories, reduce the time spent in front of the screens and adjust the sleep-wake schedule (Brazendale et al., 2017). In the case of isolation of adolescents at home, all these aspects can become problematic and can lead to serious health problems. Another particularly important, but often neglected, issue is the psychological impact of school closure on children and adolescents. Prolonged isolation causes frustration, boredom, fear, irrational thoughts, lack of face-to-face contact with other colleagues, friends and teachers, lack of personal space at home, financial difficulties of the family (Wang et al., 2020). Thus, *the psychological impact of the quarantine is wide-ranging, substantial and can be long-lasting* (Brooks et al., 2020).

Another perspective refers to the digital competencies required by online education (Williamson et al., 2020). It must be borne in mind that the current generations of students are the generations of young people who grow up surrounded by digital technology, the digital natives (Prensky, 2001). Obviously, there is a gap between the degree of exposure to technology and the ability of these students to use it in a rational way, beneficial to their social and professional development and integration, as well as

between the opportunities and risks involved in using technology. However, online education can be a response for these generations to the need to adapt education to the evolution of society. Thus, the locus of control of pedagogy must be rethought, restored, taking into account the attraction of current generations of young people to new technologies and involving not only educators, but the entire community (Selwyn et. al., 2020).

3. Research methodology

Within our exploratory research we aimed to gain insightful, in-depth information. The research method selected for this study was a questionnaire-based survey. The main reasons for selecting this approach were: rapid administration, adjusted to the current specific situation (taking into consideration that face-to-face meetings are limited because of the pandemic), possibility of ensuring anonymity for subjects, fact that facilitates obtaining honest answers. The questionnaire included 20 items, 18 of them were open-ended questions and the other two required demographic information.

The present survey aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What do students think about online education during Covid Pandemic in Romania?
- How did their schooling process take place during this special period?

We set out to investigate the opinions of a group of eighth graders through open-ended questions, because students are the main beneficiaries of the educational act and in the attempt of optimizing educational processes opinions of all involved actors are very important. Education must respond to their needs. Even when conducted online and under special conditions the main goals of all educational actions refer to the well-being, health and happiness of every child (Walker, 2018). We considered eighth graders mature enough to provide valid, worthwhile opinions regarding the education process during the Covid Pandemic and their experience regarding their schooling during this period. Another reason that supports our option for questioning students refers to the fact that few studies have focused before on students satisfaction with online education, particularly in the situation of transition from traditional approaches to online teaching and learning (Smart & Cappel, 2006).

The questionnaire was developed and completed online. The participants (N=19, 11 girls and 8 boys) were eighth graders from George Cosbuc School, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, learning in the same class. The average age of these students was 14 years old. They all live in the city and have good access to internet.

In Romania, the eighth graders must take the National Exams as they finish the middle/lower-secondary education (gymnasium). In the 2019-2020 school year the eighth

grade students were the first students, who returned to school in order to take their final exams. These assessments were held in Romania in special conditions, imposed by the Covid Pandemic. All students involved in the present study passed these exams and will begin high school (9th grade) in autumn 2020.

The data collected in July 2020 using the mentioned questionnaire focused on the following aspects:

- students' thoughts and feelings regarding the school closure
- students' opinions regarding online classes
- students' opinions regarding advantages and disadvantages of online schooling
- students' opinions regarding their educational achievement during the pandemic
- students' opinions regarding the conduct of their final exams
- students' wishes and expectations for the next school year.

The questionnaire included a relative high number of questions. Although this aspect may discourage respondents, we chose this structure in order to find out as much relevant information as possible. We chose to include open-ended questions since we aimed to investigate opinions, thoughts and feelings. Thus, the respondents had the freedom to express themselves in relation to the investigated topic as they wished. The obtained answers were categorized and qualitatively analysed.

4. Results

We were happy to see that all students answered all questions of each questionnaire and returned the file with the answers to the researcher. The results were gathered around the main aspects aimed by the questionnaire and will be presented for each established category.

4.1. Students' thoughts and feelings regarding the school closure

At the beginning the students thought that school closure is a good, interesting, entertaining idea and felt happy to stay at home. They viewed this time as a break or vacation, were happy that they will no longer have to do so much homework, get rid of traditional tests, sleep longer in the mornings and will have the possibility to eat healthier and have their meals at proper times. They hoped to feel more comfortable to learn from home. They thought online schooling is an interesting method and felt happy to have more time to focus their learning on the exam subjects, to study in their own rhythm, to take notes as they wished, to make their own daily schedule, since there were less classes online compared to the schedule at school. But, as the days passed and the school suspension has been prolonged, they started to feel sad, exhausted, disappointed and realized that online schooling is not beneficial for them. Their wish for

attending traditional school and meeting their friends was very strong. They started to miss a lot of aspects characteristic to traditional, face-to-face schooling. They also discovered that online education involves certain difficulties and remarked the advantages of face-to-face education for their academic progress.

4.2. Students' opinion regarding online classes

Students mentioned using the following systems and applications for digital learning: Microsoft Teams, Google Classroom, Discord, Zoom, Skype, Google Meet, 8x8 VideoMeetings, WhatsApp, Edmodo. Being already familiar with Microsoft Office helped students in using this platforms and applications. They got used to them easily, along the way, using the instructions available on each program and sometimes asking colleagues, parents or teachers to clarify certain aspects.

Some students mentioned that it was hard at the beginning to organize themselves so that they did not miss any meeting or homework. Other difficulties that students faced during online schooling referred to: problems in sending materials to the teacher, finding worksheets and loading them on the platform after being solved and not knowing if the teacher received them (teachers started confirming receiving homework files after students asked them); receiving less information compared to the classes at school and being hard to access and process it; difficulties in getting used to the long time spent before the monitor and being tempted to do something else and not to concentrate in class; feeling unsure and tired because of the daily schedule since some meetings were announced, cancelled or postponed only few minutes before. Students also mentioned having problems with the internet connection, but they also mentioned this as a problem of some teachers as well. They observed that teachers were also unfamiliar in using online teaching. So, their first classes were more attempts in establishing a good connection to these applications and getting used to this new way of teaching and learning and communicating with their teachers. At the beginning students only had classes in a few subjects, but along the way, they met all their teachers and had classes in each subject. Students enjoyed that at the beginning they made lots of revisions lessons, so that this was not so difficult for them and could get used to the new way of schooling.

Although, online classes were less demanding (less homework or exercises), looser, the rhythm less intense, the teachers more understanding than at school, no student liked online schooling more than traditional education. They said they didn't understand the content transmitted by teacher, at school being simpler to keep up with the teachers explanations and that in online context there has been a lot of dictation. They felt the lack of explanations in going through some materials and making exercises in class, even though teachers posted a lot of files in order to

counterbalance the lack of direct communication. The atmosphere in online classes is more silent and relaxed than the one at school, but less accessible for understanding the information because one has to deal alone with everything (information + procedures required by the platform).

Students also remarked that online education is not suitable for all school subjects, more specific not all subjects fit to the online learning platforms. They mentioned some relevant examples regarding this aspect: it takes a lot to write certain equations in Word at Mathematics or Chemistry; Discord program is not suitable for Mathematics; teaching geometric bodies in space is difficult to do online; digital mind maps at Chemistry are hard to complete. Students think that subjects related to hard sciences are difficult to be taught online, because they need a lot of explanations, but subjects that are related to the humanistic field, such as foreign languages, for example, are easier to be taught online, because teachers and students can benefit from using a lot of online materials, such as films, music etc. Students also identified the lack of practical aspects during online classes in certain subjects (for example not being able to see an experiment relevant for certain contents).

4.3. Students' opinion regarding advantages and disadvantages of online schooling

Students were able to identify a series of advantages and disadvantages of online schooling, starting of course from their own experience. Although all students specified that they prefer traditional, face-to-face education, at school, they were able to be objective enough to name the positive and negative aspects of online education.

The advantages of online education mentioned by students are:

- each student works in his own rhythm and can establish his own working style while spending a long time at home
- students are more comfortable at home (not having to get dressed for school, having the possibility to sleep and eat properly, spending more time with their family)
- students are safe at home and not exposed to the virus
- students can retrieve certain aspects in different subjects in order to get better and to develop their knowledge.

Regarding the disadvantages, students mentioned the following aspects:

- it is hard for students to have the same attitude during online classes compared to traditional schooling
- students encounter problems in understanding the new information and the requirements of teachers
- students are more tempted in not being focused on class
- students encounter technical difficulties

- teachers don't have control over their students during classes
- it is difficult for teachers to involve students during class
- lack of social contact (student-student, student-teacher)
- students don't have equal chances in attending online education
- students learn less and their learning motivation decreases.

4.4. Students' opinion regarding their educational achievement during the pandemic

Regarding the assessment conducted during the period of online schooling the students mentioned that they felt it less demanding compared to what happens at school. They got grades for their answers during the online classes, for the worksheets they had to send to teachers after completing them individually and independent in a certain time, for projects and essays. They also got tests during the online classes in some cases. They were assessed for all subjects and for all their activity and work during this special period, but they felt that online schooling affected not only their grades, but also their knowledge and achievements. Although students considered that the grades were obtained easier and were better compared to the ones in school, they felt that at school it is more efficient to learn new things.

During the quarantine students had more time for individual study, focusing on the difficult aspects of the subjects and could improve their work style. Although, in an online context a lot of students felt unsure regarding the procedures they used to solve certain tasks, and sometimes they missed the teachers feed-back. They expected feedback related not only to the final result, but also regarding the steps they used in order to solve certain requirements. Also, some students think they sometimes focused more on the procedures imposed by the online application or platform they used and less on the subject or content they had to learn.

4.5. Students' opinion regarding the conduct of their final exams

The final exams in Romania were conducted in a special manner this year. Students had to wear masks during the entire session and had to pass the epidemiological triage. The students involved in the present study viewed this as an interesting experience, but not necessary in a good way. Only one student was comfortable from the beginning with all this measures. The rest felt disappointed, stressed, scared due to the many new rules involved in the exam situation. Some students mentioned that wearing a mask during the exam was weird and uncomfortable for them. Others said that when they found out they will have to wear a mask during the entire exam they started preparing at home for this aspect. They wore a mask and solved exercises at home in order to get used to concentrate on the content and not on

wearing the mask, until they could do this for two hours (the time for each exam session). Except this training in wearing a mask they used the quarantine time to study more for their exams, to get better at the aspects they did not master very well.

Regarding the content they had to learn for the exams, they felt lucky, since some themes were eliminated from the exam curriculum due to the school closure.

When they found out that they will have to go to school to sustain their exams some students felt happy for having the possibility to return to school and see their colleagues, even from a distance.

4.6. Students' wishes and expectations for the next school year

All students wish to go to school next school year, even if this implies respecting strict sanitary rules and wearing a mask. They mentioned aspects they missed a lot in the last months, like sitting in the bench, meeting their colleagues or writing exercises on the blackboard. All students think they can get used to the new rules imposed in the Covid-19 Pandemic situation and hope that the number of sick people will decrease, so that they can go back to school at least for part of the classes and in small groups. Their opinion is that they can learn better and easier at school. They mentioned that during the time spent at home due to the quarantine, they realized how important school is for them and how much they enjoy going to school to learn new things and meeting their colleagues and teachers in person. They affirmed it is valuable to see your friends and to be able to meet your new colleagues and establish new friendships with them.

If they had to continue next year with online schooling, the students proposed the following changes in order to optimize online education: establishing a fix schedule for their classes with established breaks, since their experience was pretty chaotic from this point of view; introducing an online school regulation; giving tablets to all students; conducting all classes for all subjects using only one platform or application suitable to all subjects; establishing rules regarding the time spent by students in front of the screen and the time spent by them preparing their homework (not overloading students with homework); supporting students with drafts of the studied content that students can go through before the video conference with teachers; working more on worksheets with teachers during the video conference. The questioned students propose online schooling as an addition to the traditional schooling, used only in special situations and for short periods of time.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

Taking into consideration the results presented above we can conclude that authorities need to focus their activity on a safe return to school for students. Even if the students involved in this study do not represent a significant group

for the approached topic, we can affirm that their opinions are worthy of consideration in order to optimize the educational process for the specific needs of teenagers. Their strong wish to return to school is complementary to the specific of their development stage. Teenagers go through main cognitive, social and physical changes, they are eager for knowledge, curious, trying to develop their independence and identity. Having only online interactions with their peers for a longer time can impact their development and their achievements of all kinds. Missing out on social connections and networks is a difficulty encountered by all students that suffered from school closure in the last months and this impacts their educational achievements as well.

Regarding students opinions about online schooling, we can observe that what students expressed is consonant with the vision of the Romanian Academy (2020), namely that *online education cannot constitute a goal in itself for the Romanian world, but it must be an effective means of completing and supplementing – in special cases, when absolutely necessary - what direct education, in classrooms, laboratories, amphitheatres, etc., cannot achieve.*

During the period of school suspension and online education, students gained skills that help them use diverse instruments for knowledge and communication. Although the switch to online education was chaotic in practice, the skills students gained can be used in the future for special situations like missing out school. The school has the responsibility *to develop students' disposition and capacity to learn in multiple environments, using various sources of information* (Albulescu, 2003, p. 176). The situation created by the Covid-19 Pandemic demonstrated that the human capacity to adjust rapid to new, unknown situations should be one of the most important educational objective.

We conclude that education, and especially online education must be a matter of concern for all actors involved in the educational process. Guidance and support should be provided, in the form of different counseling programs and training sessions, to students of any age in order to encounter such situations as the present one with great capacity of adjustment, but also to teachers, parents and other actors involved directly in all educational actions. So far online education has demonstrated to be challenging, with several facets, both positive and negative ones. Its quality needs to be profound approached in future studies.

Our study has some limitations, regarding the sample of involved participants, their unilateral perspective and the few research methods used in the current situation. Another limit refers to the specific of the qualitative approach, namely the reduced validity of the obtained results. Further studies can analyze more profoundly students' opinions related to online education, involving a larger sample of

participants, but also more diverse research methods and instruments. Another aspect that can be approached by future studies refers to the long-term effects of the transition to online education due to the Pandemic.

Appendix

Questionnaire regarding students' opinions about online schooling during Covid-19 Pandemic

Through this questionnaire we wish to found out your opinion regarding your experience with online schooling during the Covid-19 Pandemic and the changes that appeared in this period (school closure, on-line classes and assessment etc.). The questionnaire is anonymous and will only be used within a pedagogical study. Feel free to share your thoughts, feelings and opinions, mention anything you find relevant regarding your experience during this special period.

1. Which was your first thought when you found out about school closure?
2. Which were the educational platforms/applications you used in this period for online schooling?
3. How did you learn to use these platforms/applications?
4. What did you like about online schooling?
5. Did you encounter any difficulties? If yes, how did you overtake them?
6. How were the first online classes? How do you find this way of teaching and learning in comparison with the traditional one?
7. How did the assessment process take place?
8. Do you think your academic results would have been different if the schools would not have closed and you would have gone to school as usual?
9. Were there any changes that appeared in online classes? What did these changes refer to?
10. Was it easier or harder to go through the contents of the subjects online? Why?
11. Do you think that online learning platforms and applications are suitable for all school subjects? Did you note any differences regarding this aspect?
12. Which are, in your opinion, the main advantages of online education?
13. What about the disadvantages?
14. Would you change something at online education? What and why?
15. Would you prefer to go to school next semester, even if this means that you are more exposed to the illness and you have to respect a lot of new strict regulations or do you want to continue online schooling? Why?
16. Do you think that online schooling has affected your grades? Why?
17. How did you find the final exams conducted in

special conditions? (Describe how you felt when you found out that you will take the exam under special regulations, how did you prepare for the exams, how did the exam take place and anything more you find relevant).

18. What are your wishes for the new school year?

19. Gender M F

20. Age

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Curriculum Design for Building and Developing the Social-Emotional Skills of Preschoolers

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Curriculum Design for Building and Developing the Social-Emotional Skills of Preschoolers

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Abstract

Keywords:

social - emotional skills;
understanding emotions;
emotional regulation

The present study investigates the theoretical, methodical and practical aspects which emphasize the importance of the formation and development of social and emotional skills during early years, which have a major impact over children's long-term growth, while also assuring their adjustment in society, the cut down of unwanted behaviours and provides social and emotional well-being for the preschooler.

The steps dedicated for the pedagogical experiment have had the purpose of verifying the efficacy of the application of the project - The Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo - SE)- and was targeted towards building and growing said skills for the last year preschoolers. The results of the research revealed that the efficiency of applying a curriculum based on building and developing the social and emotional skills of preschoolers. We conclude that the study gave promising results on the prevention and reduction of undesirable behaviors, the identification of emotions, tolerance to frustration, relaxation through deep breathing techniques, methods of controlling anger and destructive behaviors among preschoolers. The comparative results presented in this study reinforce the findings of other international studies (Merrell et al., 2008), according to which the implementation of The Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo - SE) contributes to reducing undesirable behaviors, children being modeled in a positive way, having a positive social attitude, managing to easily adjust their emotions.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

sozial - emotionale
Kompetenzen;
Emotionen verstehen;
emotionale
Regulierung

Die vorliegende Studie untersucht die theoretischen, methodischen und praktischen Aspekte, die die Bedeutung der Bildung und Entwicklung sozialer und emotionaler Kompetenzen in den ersten Jahren hervorheben. Diese Kompetenzen haben einen großen Einfluss auf das langfristige Wachstum der Kinder und gewährleisten gleichzeitig ihre Anpassung an die Gesellschaft, reduzieren unerwünschter Verhaltensweisen und sorgen für soziales und emotionales Wohlbefinden des Vorschulkindes.

Die für das pädagogische Experiment vorgesehenen Schritte hatten den Zweck, die Wirksamkeit der Anwendung des Projekts „Lehrplan für die Entwicklung sozialer und emotionaler Fähigkeiten“ (DeCo-SE) zu überprüfen, und zielten darauf ab, diese Kompetenzen für Vorschulkinder im letzten Jahr des Kindergartens aufzubauen und auszubauen. Die Ergebnisse der Forschung zeigten die Effizienz der Anwendung eines Lehrplans, der sich auf dem Aufbau und der Entwicklung der sozialen und emotionalen Fähigkeiten von Vorschulkindern basiert. Wir fassen zusammen, dass die Studie vielversprechende Ergebnisse zur Prävention und Reduzierung unerwünschter Verhaltensweisen, zur Identifizierung von Emotionen, zur Toleranz gegenüber Frustration, zur Entspannung durch Tiefatmungstechniken, zu Methoden zur Kontrolle von Wut und zu destruktivem Verhalten bei Vorschulkindern lieferte. Die in dieser Studie vorgestellten Vergleichsergebnisse bestätigen die Ergebnisse anderer internationaler Studien (Merrell et al., 2008), wonach die Implementierung des Lehrplans für die Entwicklung sozialer und emotionaler Fähigkeiten (DeCo - SE) zur Reduzierung unerwünschter Ereignisse beiträgt; also Kinder werden positiv modelliert, haben eine positive soziale Einstellung und können ihre Emotionen leicht anpassen.

1. Introduction

Understanding and managing social emotions - interacting and relating with same-age children, building positive relationships, being assertive and responsible - can be learned and developed at any age, but the advantages are bigger if the development strategies are applied at an earlier

age. Children are using their acquired social and emotional skills during everyday activities, especially when they have to socialize with other people (Ilovan et al., 2016; Scridon & Ilovan, 2015, 2016). Kids that benefit from well-built social and emotional skills will be able to form and keep

friendships, while also having a positive attitude about learning and social events (Dulamă et al., 2015; Ilovan et al., 2018). These types of children are accepted in their group of friends and they adapt easily because they are more confident and have a bigger chance of academic success than others. On a long term, these kids will be able to develop and maintain long-lasting friendships, they will be efficient parents, will be able to find and keep a job, to work with others and be mentally and physically healthy.

The development of the new educational project implies new approaches and concepts that are meant to facilitate the evolution of contemporary didactics (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2015; Dulamă, Ilovan & Magdaş, 2017; Dulamă et al., 2019), so that these tactics will enforce a major evolution for the actual educational strategy. Therefore, we are talking about the interest we show in the process of social and emotional skills growth. The theme of the project is subsumed under actual methods of holistic approach in regards to scientific knowledge and it proposes to present well-documented pedagogical solutions for the optimization of the national curriculum. The importance of this project is magnified by the necessity of reorganizing the actual curriculum through formulating final ideas that would help the development of the social and emotional skills, in accordance with the European skills.

2. Theoretical foundation

A feature of early intervention is the cultivation of the child's social and emotional skills. They can support and guide the child in certain moments of his/hers life when he or she could be full of negative emotions, so that, in the end, they have positive social relationships (Denham & Weissberg, 2004). According to researchers Doll, B. & Lyon, M.A. (1998) and Matsen (2001), preschoolers, regardless of their background, can be taught how to adapt and mobilize for school success and to combat potential difficulties that may arise.

Early intervention programs that target the child's social and emotional development largely eliminate the risks and adversities that preschoolers and their families may face throughout their lives (Matsen, 2001). Daniel Goleman (1995), in his paper, anticipated that programs that focus on enhancing emotional intelligence during preschool years, will help prevent any problems that may occur in children. Understanding our own emotions and other people's emotions, the capacity to control those emotions and behaviours, but also the collaboration between peers and teachers offers the security the child needs. Children need to be able to cooperate, to follow instructions and be attentive. Based on what we've already mentioned, we could say that the development of curriculum projects is essential for the future academic success of a certain child.

The reconfiguration of the actual curriculum, with an emphasis on the introduction of social and emotional skills in order to actualize it, represents an important step in this study. The draft curriculum we propose aims to improve, explain and to use in the educational activities in kindergarten the most appropriate techniques and strategies for training social and emotional skills, in a way that leads to the development of theory and practice social and emotional education in kindergarten. This research has been conducted due to the necessity of finding practical solutions to the flaws of the actual curriculum. The fundamental aspects of our proposed curriculum are centered on the development of the social and emotional skills. Salovey & Sluyter (1997) offer a revised version of the definition of emotional intelligence, stating that this implies the ability to identify, understand and express emotion in a clear way; the ability to use or generate feelings, to understand and to control them, with the aim of promoting development both emotionally and intellectually.

3. Research methodology

The research had the purpose to verify the efficacy of the curriculum project named *The Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo - SE)*, based on the growth of indicated skills during the last year of kindergarten. The goal of the research is to test the efficacy of the curriculum project. Therefore, we decided to conduct a comparative analysis on the results we got from applying this curriculum, alongside the curriculum for children aged 3 to 6-7 years.

Enforcing the *Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo - SE)*, which emphasizes educational strategies and techniques that help eradicate unwanted behaviours, while it also solves interpersonal problems, communication, interaction and relationship problems, it manages to significantly influence the growth of social and emotional skills of preschoolers in their last year at kindergarten. It is assumed that there are notable differences between the scores obtained from the experimental sample and the control sample, during the teacher-preschooler relationship scale (STRS), after the curriculum was implemented. The teacher-preschooler relationship scale (STRS) is designed to be used in the assessment of children aged 3 to 8 years. A well-known tool in the United States, for assessing the preschool-educator relationship, is the This is a self-assessment tool consisting of 28 items developed according to the model of attachment theory (Waters & Deane, 1985) and based on a research of the literature on the study of teacher-child interaction.

Table 1. **Research variables**

The independent variable of the research	The dependent variables of the research	
Implementing a part of the <i>Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum</i> to last year preschoolers	<i>The degree of emotional development is quantified by:</i>	<i>The degree of social development is quantified by:</i>
	understanding and expressing personal emotions understanding emotions regulating emotions	social relationships pro-social behaviour rule compliance

During our research, we proposed a sample of 146 preschoolers. The preschoolers were selected on the account of their age, kindergartens, teachers, class, gender. The research was conducted in 3 kindergartens from Tîrgu-Mureş.

While selecting the content sample, we've taken into consideration the fact that the experiment was going to take place during a whole day (during personal development, games and didactic activities). The content sample complied with the 3 to 6-7 years old rule. The method used during the experiment followed the curriculum entirely. The only interventions that took place were in the implementation of specific development and growth of social and emotional skills. The goal of this phase was to identify the initial level of social and emotional behaviors to 6-7 years preschoolers, both in the experimental and the control samples.

The teachers who were involved in the research participated first in a formative course called "*Techniques and strategies used for the formation and development of social and emotional skills for preschoolers*". During the course, which took place at Casa Corpului Didactic Mureş, the teachers were taught different strategies to help with the development of social and emotional skills (identifying emotions, frustration tolerance), fixing unwanted behaviors and fixing problems between peers. The strategies were taught exclusively through direct instruction and roleplay.

The teachers were given the curriculum project in order to get familiarized with its contents before being officially implemented. In January 2017, the curriculum project was implemented to the experimental sample. It contained 10 themes that approached the emotional well-being of preschoolers. The measuring data contained The teacher-

preschooler relationship scale (STRS; Pianta, 2001).

In order to validate the curriculum project, it is necessary to utilize two types of groups or samples, an experimental one and a control one. For the experimental group, we will implement the formative program and emphasize the differences between the two steps of the evaluation, while also investigating the control sample.

The data processing was done in different steps, while taking into account certain necessities in regards to verifying scientific criteria translated from Anglo-Saxon literature: faithfulness analysis, factorial confirmation analysis, power analysis, descriptive analysis and comparative analysis.

In order to obtain the correct validation of the intervention program, a few comparison steps had to be followed. The first type of comparison (in-between subjects) uses the "t" parameter for independent samples in order to measure the value of means obtained by the experimental sample and by the control sample. Just like we mentioned in the hypothesis, we are expecting the means to be similar before the implementation of the curriculum, because the children have been selected aleatorily.

The project *Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo - SE)*, that we are proposing wants to promote the most adequate techniques and formation strategies for social and emotional skills. Children who experiment stimulating learning techniques socially and emotionally are capable to identify their own emotions and of other people, and to use their cognitive abilities to solve conflictual situations.

The strategies and techniques of social and emotional education, intervention, represent methods through which the teacher can learn the children the necessary abilities in order for them to develop harmoniously. The practice we discuss is an important resource that will help the kindergarten teacher with the implementation of the project. Other studies show that the first five years of life are extremely important in the development of social and emotional abilities. The relationships they have with their own peers and with the adults are of utmost importance for the development of their own identities and feeling of belonging. Therefore, the teacher plays a significant role by promoting the social and emotional abilities, both during childhood and afterwards.

The formative experimental phase focused on creating and implementing the curriculum project in the experimental sample. The principles of the intervention plan were: the preschoolers were to be guided by teachers authentically and quality-based; the teachers were to facilitate the process of learning holistically by planning, projecting and implementing relevant learning experiences; preschoolers should be engaged actively through games in

order to develop their own social and emotional skills.

Based on the curriculum project, the teachers carefully planned the acquisitions of these abilities during daily activities and games with their children. Knowing and understanding the way children develop and learn can help the teachers to plan and facilitate important learning experience for the children. The activities were thought and implemented in such a way that the children were able to form their own self-consciousness, strong suits and skills.

During this project, each type of activity aimed to regulate emotions and teach children how to have positive interactions with their peers, while also emphasizing learning strategies for social and emotional skills.

Table 2. Social and emotional skills promoted in project *Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo - SE)*

General skills	Specific skills
<i>Developing one's self-consciousness</i>	Identifying one's needs, strong suits, preferences and dislikes Identifying and understanding emotions Cultivating a positive self-image Creating the concept of national identity
<i>Regulating one's emotions and behaviors</i>	Expressing and regulating emotions positively, without hurting anyone Regulating pro-social behaviour: the knowledge of the fact that their actions can have positive and negative results; understanding the need to control impulsive actions or thoughts; discussing the proper ways to control impulsive actions; the ability to control negative and positive actions. Understanding the needs of their peers and finding constructive solutions to control emotions
<i>Manifesting pro-social, diversity accepting behaviors</i>	Admitting the fact that each person is unique (their thinking, race, looks) Manifesting respect towards others Identifying emotions and being emphatic towards other people's emotions
<i>Communications, interaction and relating with others</i>	Being attentive towards others Cooperation between peers Making friendships Being articulate
<i>Assuming responsibility for one's actions</i>	Analyzing possible outcomes of problems Analyzing the results and consequences of their own actions Reflecting over one's choices

4. Results

In order to obtain the correct validation of the intervention program, a few comparison steps had to be followed. The first type of comparison (in-between subjects) uses the "t" parameter for independent samples in order to measure the value of means obtained by the experimental sample and by the control sample. Just like we mentioned in the hypothesis, we are expecting the means to be similar before the implementation of the curriculum, because the children have been selected randomly.

After the implementation of the curriculum, in the final phase, regarding the experimental sample, we are expecting higher levels of social and emotional skills, and lower behavioral problems. The insignificant differences in between the experimental and control samples are considered essential and mandatory for the final results, mainly because the different levels found during the final phase might not be related to the initial phase and therefore not to the implemented curriculum. The second type of comparison uses the same "t" parameter, but this time it refers to the pair samples or associated ones, and it compares preschoolers from the same samples before and after the implementation of the curriculum. We are expecting a higher level of social and emotional skills for the experimental sample and a decrease in problematic behavior. As for the control sample, in which case there wasn't implemented any formative program, only the usual curriculum, we are expecting slight changes, but not of big importance. The absence of differences in the control sample is important, because if there were any bigger differences, even without implementing the curriculum, the project would be useless.

Analyzing the values of the comparison indices, both for the independent samples and for the pair samples, for the two samples, it can be said that the implemented program for increasing social skills is efficient. Even though the initial level of social competencies is located in the area of high functionality, yet its level increases under the influence of the formative program, the children described by high social skills and the tendency to be extremely pleasing to colleagues and adults is even more evolving. In the case of the control group, without the influence of the training program, the situation remains unchanged, the differences between the final and the initial phase being insignificant in this case. In this situation we can discuss the confirmation of the specific hypothesis formulated and the rejection of the hazard or chance hypothesis, the results obtained due to the implemented training program. Thus, the inferential approach demonstrates the effectiveness of the formative program.

Table 3 Pair samples scores (baseline - final) and materiality thresholds for the experimental group in the case of Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)

Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)	Initial results Percent	Final results Percent
<i>Conflict</i>	19,65	16,66
<i>Closeness</i>	32,94	41,66
<i>Dependency</i>	9,984	8,516
Total score	62,56	66,84

Table 4 Pair samples scores (baseline - final) and materiality thresholds for the control group in the case of Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)

Student Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS)	Initial results Percent	Final results Percent
<i>Conflict</i>	21,46	21,71
<i>Closeness</i>	31,93	32,13
<i>Dependency</i>	10,70	10,89
Total score	64,10	64,74

The comparison of paired samples for the *experimental group* is significant for all types of child-educator interaction: *Conflict* ($t = 4,575$; $p < 0,01$), *Closeness* ($t = 6,932$; $p < 0,01$) = $5,959$; $p < 0,01$). In the case of the *control group*, no significant values of the comparison indices for any component of the evaluated pedagogical relationship are identified. The values of the comparison indices and the significance thresholds in this case are: *Conflict* ($t = 1,435$; $p > 0,05$), *Closeness* ($t = 1,430$; $p > 0,05$) (05).

It is also confirmed in this case the effectiveness of the implemented program, the relationship between children and educators being considered less negative or conflictual, educators perceiving children as less furious and unpredictable and consequently feeling safer, confident in professional skills and more less exhausted by the sustained effort to manage conflict situations.

At the "*Closeness*" scale the values increase after the formative program implementation, the relationship between children and educators being closer and warmer, communication being more efficient and more supportive behavior. On the "*Dependency*" scale, the significant drop in the level represents important steps that children do in their effective way of educating them. It increases self-confidence, the ability to make optimal decisions, and relieves the educator of the exaggerated attention he has to give. We also discuss in this situation the confirmation of

the specific hypothesis and the rejection of the hazard or chance hypothesis.

The whole methodological approach is preserved in the case of the assessment of emotional competences by educators, the average values in the bar graphs, comparisons and the relevant significance thresholds being verified in this way.

We consider the overall hypothesis of our work to be the application of *Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo-SE)* that valorizes strategies and techniques of socio-emotional education (identification of sentiments, tolerance to frustration), intervention strategies in modeling undesirable behaviors and strategies to solve interpersonal problems (relaxation through deep breathing techniques, methods of anger control and destructive behaviors) significantly influence the formation of social and emotional skills of large group preschoolers.

5. Discussions

The strategies for training the social and emotional behaviors, proposed through the training program named *Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo-SE)*, were based on: knowing the child's strengths, his / her preferences in terms of activities and play; positive and respectful interactions with the child's feelings, the ability to calm the child quickly, respect for cultural differences, the ability to listen to the child's ideas, encouragement to express feelings, providing explanations when the child's program undergoes some changes, shaping a certain behavior, encouraging the child's independence and accountability.

The research undertook the effects of the curriculum project implementation, and the obtained results revealed that the behavioral problems of preschoolers diminished significantly, while those in the control group did not undergo any changes.

6. Conclusions

The comparative results presented come to reinforce the findings of other international studies (Merrell, 2010, Merrell et al., 2008), according to which the implementation of *Development of Social and Emotional Skills Curriculum (DeCo-SE)* contributes to reducing undesirable behaviors, children being modeled in a positive way, having a positive social attitude, managing to easily adjust their emotions. These results underscore once again that the program is pragmatic and confirms the hypothesis formulated by us.

Relations between educators and preschoolers have improved overall in all aspects, proving the effectiveness of the curriculum project which was implemented. In addition, the level of conflicts dropped significantly in the groups where the curriculum project was applied, while in the control groups the level of conflict increased. It can be said

that by participating in the activities included in the curriculum project, preschoolers from the experimental group have been given the opportunity to exercise control of their own emotions in an environment where they feel comfortable, which has led to a significant increase in the levels of social skills and emotional and a reduction in behavioral problems.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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Correlation between school dropout and gross domestic product in the emerging countries of Central and Eastern Europe

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Correlation between school dropout and gross domestic product in the emerging countries of Central and Eastern Europe

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Abstract

Keywords:

school dropout; gross domestic product

By school dropout is meant leaving the educational system, regardless of the reached level, before obtaining a qualification or a complete professional training or before the end of the study cycle started (Doron & Parot, 2006). Although there are numerous researches on school dropout, we consider that it is necessary to study the relationship it has with the level of development of a country, in order to identify new causes and possible solutions to this phenomenon. In this study we included seven emerging countries of Central and Eastern Europe: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary. Thus, we analyzed the correlation between the annual gross domestic product and the school dropout rates in the mentioned countries. The data were extracted from the European Commission's Eurostat database and entered into the SPSS and then analyzed using the Forward prospective procedure. This research revealed the existence of significant negative correlation between the level of development of a country and the school dropout rate in the countries included in the analysis, in female, but also insignificant or weakly significant correlations between the mentioned variables in males.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Schulabbrecher;
Bruttoinlandsprodukt

Mit Schulabbruch ist gemeint, das Bildungssystem unabhängig vom erreichten Niveau zu verlassen, bevor eine Qualifikation oder eine Berufsausbildung abgeschlossen wird oder bevor das Ende des Studienzyklus beginnt (Doron & Parot, 2006). Obwohl im Zusammenhang mit Schulabbrüchen zahlreiche Forschungsarbeiten durchgeführt werden, halten wir es für erforderlich, die Beziehung zum Entwicklungsstand eines Landes zu untersuchen, um neue Ursachen und mögliche Lösungen für dieses Phänomen zu ermitteln. In diese Untersuchung wurden sieben Schwellenländer in Mittel- und Osteuropa einbezogen: Bulgarien, die Tschechische Republik, Polen, Rumänien, die Slowakei, Slowenien und Ungarn. Daher haben wir die Korrelation zwischen dem jährlichen Bruttoinlandsprodukt und der Abbrecherquote in den genannten Ländern analysiert. Die Daten wurden aus der Eurostat-Datenbank der Europäischen Kommission extrahiert, in das SPSS eingegeben und anschließend nach dem Forward Prospective-Verfahren analysiert. Diese Untersuchung ergab das Vorhandensein signifikanter negativer Korrelationen zwischen dem Entwicklungsstand eines Landes und der Abbrecherquote in den in die Analyse einbezogenen Ländern bei Frauen, aber auch unbedeutende oder schwach signifikante Korrelationen zwischen den genannten Variablen bei Männern.

1. Introduction

In the process of becoming human, in order to develop the harmonious and balanced personality of the child, there are involved, as we find in the Romanian literature, three major factors: heredity, environment and education. Cosmovici & Iacob (1999) define the education as "a specialized activity, specifically human, that meditates and diversifies the relationship between human and his environment, favouring the development of a man through society and society through man."

Although in terms of the evolution of the individual, education represents only a third of the total of the listed factors, it cannot be put on a secondary plan, all the more

removed. Given the importance of the education in the child development, sometimes presented as a guiding factor in this regard, we want to highlight some theoretical aspects related to school dropout and its effects on the development of human personality.

By school dropout is meant leaving the educational system, regardless of the reached level, before obtaining a qualification or a complete professional training or before the end of the study cycle started (Doron & Parot, 2006). From the same bibliographic source, we can deduce two causes to which school dropout is attributed: the inability of the educational system to adapt to the requirements of

certain categories of children; the affective and intellectual characteristics of some students; the negative, indifferent attitude of the parents towards schooling, the attitude left as a “legacy” to the children (Doron & Parot, 2006). It is absolutely necessary to add in this list the material difficulties of a family, especially in the case of large, disorganized or single-parent families.

School dropout is a problem that society has faced since ancient times and is not a new issue. However, it involves from all angles of analysis, a loss: from a psychological, economic, social, cultural and moral point of view, both for society and for the individual. In order for this problem to be solved, it is necessary to analyze different aspects of society that can lead to an increase in the school dropout rate.

This paper has the following structure: section two - theoretical foundation, section three - research methodology, section four - empirical results, section five - conclusions and discussions.

2. Theoretical foundation

Following the analysis of research in the literature, we found a series of information related to school dropout in Romania and other European countries.

Apostu et al. (2015) highlights, following the analysis of data on the pre-university education system in Romania, a school dropout rate in primary and secondary education in the school year 2012-2013 of 1.4%, meaning 24.4 thousand students. Also, in this category we find differences by areas of residence and we observe a higher percentage of school dropout in rural areas, compared to urban areas. In high school the percentage of school dropout is higher, of 2.8% and the data show a higher percentage of school dropout in boys, compared to girls. In post-secondary education and foremen, in the school year 2012-2013 there was a school dropout rate of 8.9%, with a higher share of the male population than female.

Andrei et al. (2011) analyzes the differences between European Union countries in terms of school dropout rates. In this paper, several factors have been identified that determine the maintenance of a high level of school dropout in some analyzed countries: the number of pupils/students that a teacher has, the share of education expenditures and the unemployment rate. The research result shows a positive correlation between the school dropout rate and the number of pupils/students per teacher and a negative correlation between the school dropout rate and the share of education expenditures.

Regarding early school leaving in the European Union, Gyonos (2011) identified a rate of 14.9% in the Union in 2008. Although there are countries below the 10% threshold proposed by the Union to be reached in 2020 (Croatia, Poland, Slovenia, the Czech Republic or

Slovakia), there are countries where this rate is well above the proposed threshold: Turkey 46.6%, Malta 39%, Portugal 35.4%, Spain 31.9%. In Romania, in 2008, the early school leaving rate was 15.9%.

There is research in which we find, in addition to statistical data on dropout, some proposed solutions to reduce school dropout. Vîrlan & Dița (2018) propose the elaboration of a psycho-socio-educational intervention program that includes a series of complex activities of training and psychological counselling and the involvement of parents in these intervention programs, in order to reduce the problem of school dropout. Following the training experiment, the authors concluded that such a program is useful and necessary to be implemented in schools in our country.

In a research (Jigău et al., 2011) that included five schools with the common feature of the high dropout rate, it was proposed, among the measures to improve school dropout, to promote a climate of support and assistance measures for those schools that face the studied phenomenon, as well as the elaboration of a course support and a training program for the persons involved in the reporting of school dropout situations.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Hypothesis

In this paper we aim to analyze the existence of a correlation between the school dropout rate by gender, and the level of development of emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe. We assume that there is a significant negative correlation between the two variables mentioned above.

The hypothesis from which we start are the following:

1. There is a negative significant correlation between the school dropout rate for males and the level of development of emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
2. There is a negative significant correlation between the school dropout rate for females and the level of development of emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

3.2. Research data and procedure

This research used annual data, from 2002 to 2019, from seven emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe, using as variables the school dropout rate x_1 , and the level of development of countries x_2 , expressed by gross domestic product. The data were extracted from the European Commission's Eurostat database, for the following countries: Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland and the Czech Republic.

For the purpose of analyzing the collected data SPSS was used. In order to highlight the existence of a relationship between the two mentioned variables, we will use the simple Pearson correlation coefficient (R) between the two variable. Data analysis using the Pearson correlation coefficient assumes the existence of a relationship between two variables, in a straight line. It is used when we want to find out to what extent two given variables are associated, if there are relationships between them (Howitt & Cramer, 2010). The value of Pearson coefficient can vary between +1 (positive correlation), and -1 (negative correlation), and the value 0 implies the absence of a correlation between the values of the entered variables (Vasile, 2014). To avoid the tendency of R to overestimate the correlations between variables, we will consider the coefficient of determination R^2 .

We will further exemplify the procedure used for data processing. Firstly, we entered the data, taken from the Eurostat database, for each selected country, in SPSS. Then, we calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient and R^2 for the two variables included in the research.

Table 1. Calculation of the Pearson coefficient and R^2 for the variables

Country	Male			Female		
	R	R^2	Sig.	R	R^2	Sig.
Bulgaria	-0.082	0.672	0.000	-0.854	0.728	0.000
Czech Republic	0.458	0.210	0.028	0.001	9.904E-7	0.498
Poland	-0.470	0.221	0.049	-0.564	0.318	0.015
Romania	-0.772	0.596	0.000	-0.780	0.608	0.000
Slovakia	0.268	0.072	0.141	0.486	0.236	0.041
Slovenia	-0.464	0.216	0.026	0.161	0.026	0.262
Hungary	-0.123	0.015	0.314	0.184	0.034	0.233

Further, we interpreted the resulting output. For the model to be accepted, we consult the Sig. value (level of significance or probability) which must be less than or equal to 0.05. We then observe the sign of the Pearson correlation coefficient, which indicates the direction in which the variables vary, the nature of the relationship. Finally, we will appreciate how strong the correlation is. We will analyze the extent to which the variables are correlated, based on the coefficient of determination R^2 . The higher the value of R^2 , the more significant the linear regression will be considered.

After interpreting the output, we made the dispersion diagrams by placing the two variables, the level of development of countries on the X axis and the school dropout rate on the Y axis. Finally, we interpreted the

resulting output. These two last steps are detailed in the next section.

4. Empirical results

In this research we took into account the school dropout rate relative to the level of development of the following emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe: Romania, Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Slovenia, Poland and the Czech Republic. The variables used in the analysis is the gross domestic product, and the dropout rate, in males and females. The data used refer to the period 2002-2019 and were extracted from the European Commission's Eurostat database.

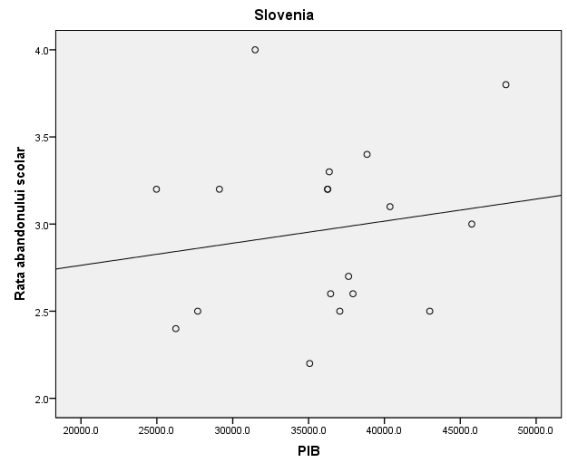
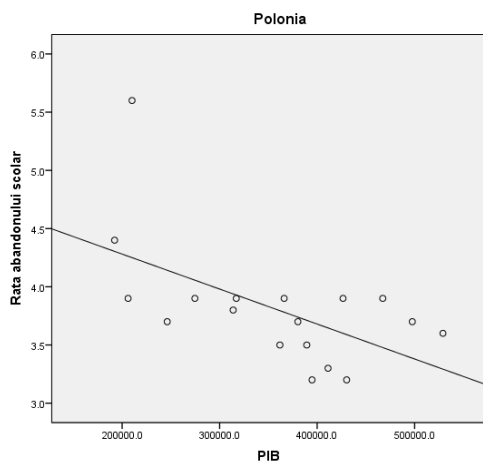
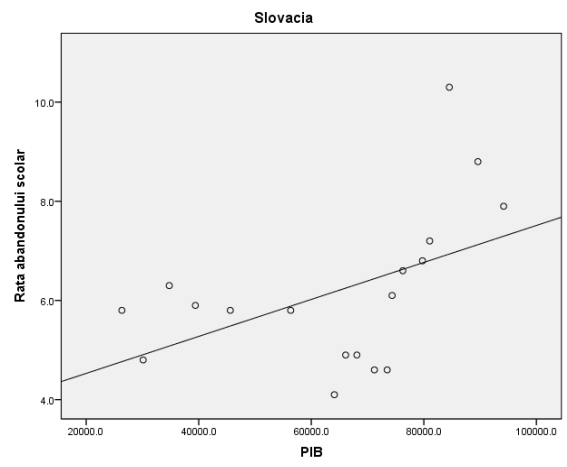
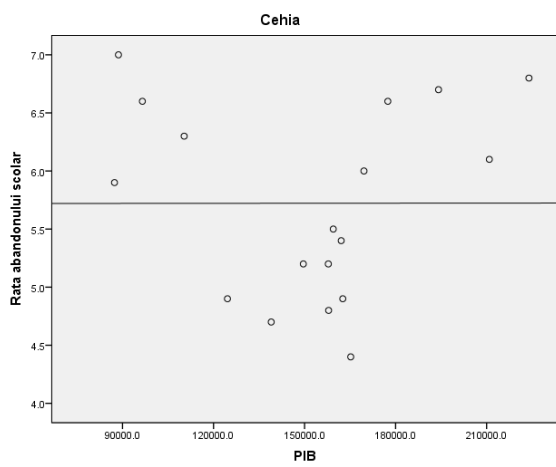
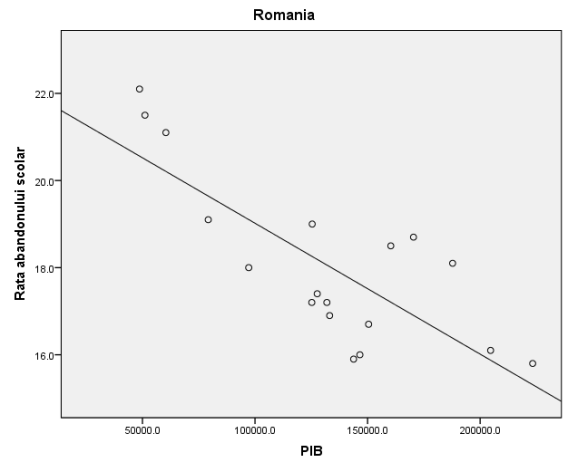
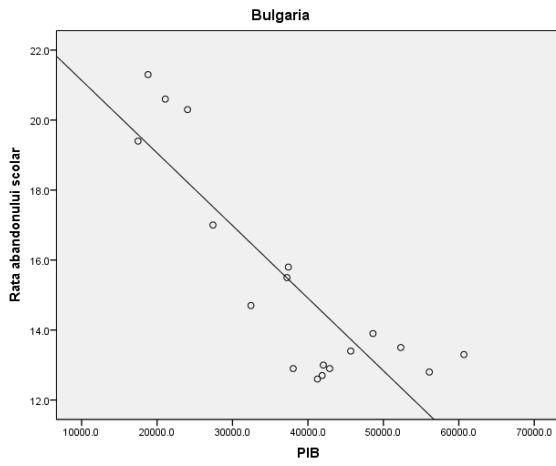
Analyzing the data collected regarding the countries included in this research, significant differences can be observed between them both in terms of school dropout rate and in terms of annual gross domestic product.

Our goal is to identify a correlation between the two variables mentioned, namely dropout rate and the level of development of a country seen in terms of gross domestic product.

The reason for choosing the countries in this research is given by the geo-political context that affected the social life of individuals. These satellite countries belonged to the communist bloc, and the late accession to the European Union is given precisely by the applied political regime. The establishment of late European norms that take into account the regulation of various aspects related to the functioning of the education system is a determining factor in the school dropout rate.

In Figure 1 we can observe the correlation between the dropout rate for females and the gross domestic product, in the countries included in our analysis. The possibility of a negative correlation between the x1 variable "dropout rate" found on the Y axis and the x2 variable "gross domestic product" exposed on the X axis is analyzed. The correlation tables obtained indicate, as can be seen below, a negative association between the two variables, with the exception of the Czech Republic, as well as in the case of Slovenia and Hungary.

Results show that in three of the seven countries included in the research, namely the Czech Republic, Slovenia and Hungary, there is no relationship between the two variables included in the analysis. In two other countries in our analysis, Poland and Slovakia, it can be seen that, although there is a correlation between the variables, it is weakly significant, the determining coefficient R^2 having a value of 0.318 in the first country and 0.236 in the second country, meaning that the x1 variable expresses in a proportion of only 31.8%, respectively 23.6% the variation of the x2 variable. The most significant associations between variables are registered in Bulgaria, with R^2 equal to 0.728 and Romania, where R^2 is equal to 0.608.



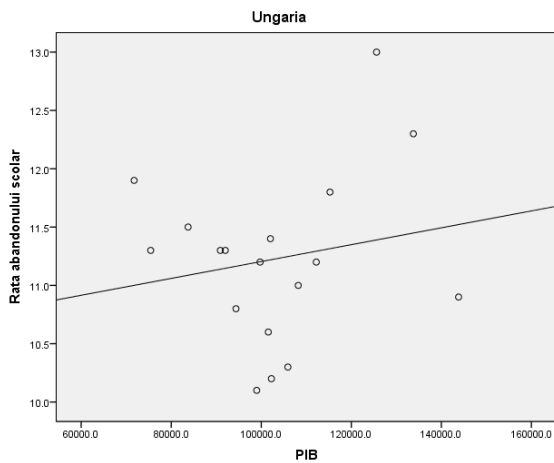


Figure 1 - Correlogram of the school dropout rate among females

Source: Processing of the author according to the information provided by the Eurostat database

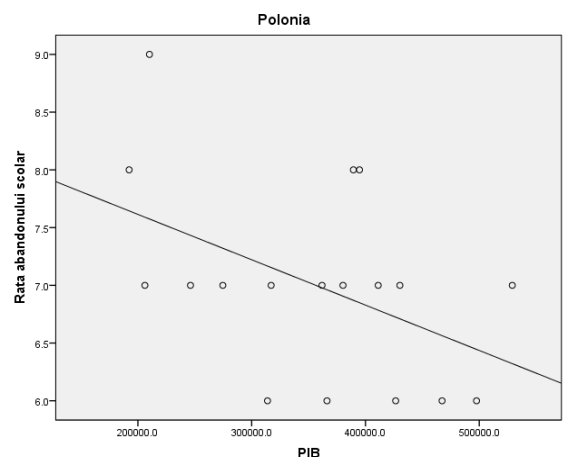
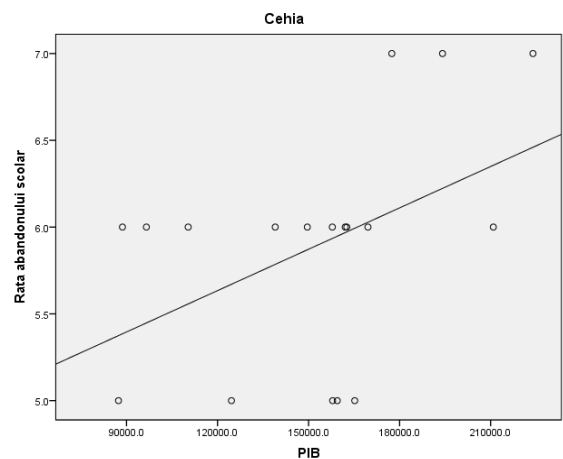
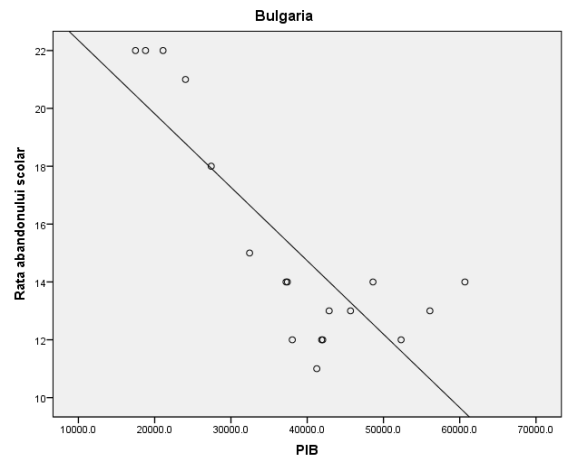
In Figure 2 we can observe the correlation between the dropout rate for males and the gross domestic product, in the countries included in our analysis. The possibility of a negative correlation between the x2 variable “dropout rate” found on the Y axis and the x1 variable “gross domestic product” exposed on the X axis is analyzed. The correlation tables obtained indicate, as can be seen below, a negative association between the two variables, with the exception of the Czech Republic, as well as in the case of Slovenia, Slovakia and Hungary.

Results show that, unlike the analysis performed on females, in four of the seven countries included in the research, namely the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia and Hungary, there is no relationship between the two variables included in the analysis.

In Poland it can be seen that, although there is a correlation between the variables, it is weakly significant, the determining coefficient R^2 having a value of 0.221, meaning that the x1 variable expresses in a proportion of only 22.1% the variation of the x2 variable. The most significant associations between variables are registered in Bulgaria, with R^2 equal to 0.672 and Romania, where R^2 is equal to 0.596.

The results obtained can be explained by the fact that an increase in a country's gross domestic product leads to a greater capacity for state investment in key areas, including education. Thus, through the financial support provided by the state, there is the possibility of solving certain problems, both of the school, such as supplies provided to children, auxiliary materials needed in the teaching-learning process,

technological equipment, and the community, such as financial support for families facing financial problems or psychological counselling for children in situations that may make it difficult to continue the learning process, problems which determine the appearance of the school dropout phenomenon.



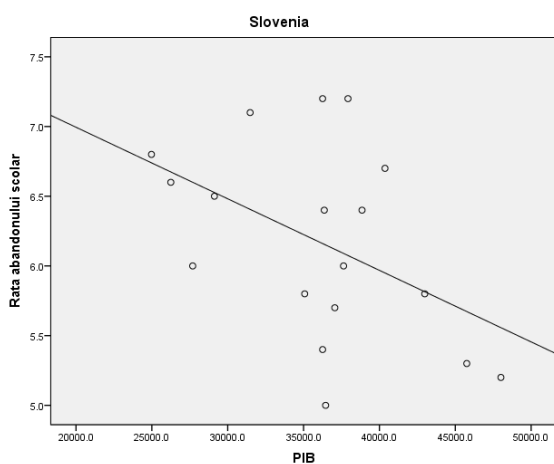
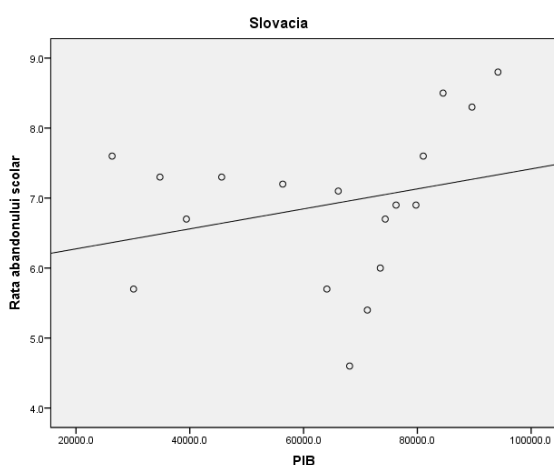
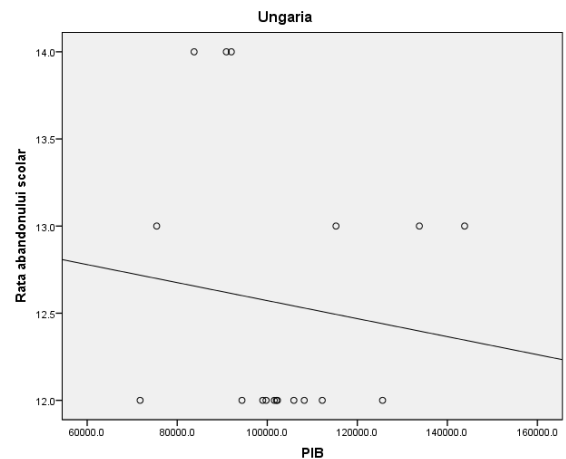
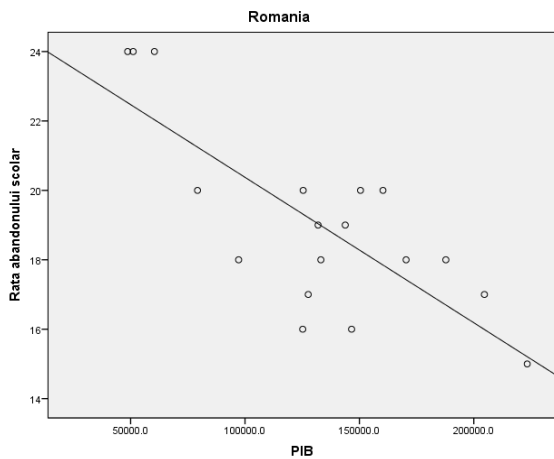


Figure 2. Correlogram of the school dropout rate among males

Source: Processing of the author according to the information provided by the Eurostat database.

5. Conclusions and discussions

Following this research on the correlation between the dropout rate and the level of development of emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe we can conclude that the first hypothesis, which states that there is a significant negative correlation between the dropout rate in males and the level of the development of emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe, is refuted, because in four of the seven countries involved in the study there are insignificant or weakly significant correlations between the variables involved in the analysis. Unlike the first hypothesis, the second hypothesis, which states that there is a significant negative correlation between the dropout rate for females and the level of development of emerging countries in Central and Eastern Europe, is confirmed, because there are significant and strongly significant correlations in four of the seven countries included in the analysis.

This research has its practical applicability through the potential to identify, based on the results, some factors that influence school dropout nationally or at the level of other countries, as well as to identify possible solutions to improve the dropout rate. Although various solutions or ways have been identified over time to prevent and reduce the number of students leaving school, they have proved their effectiveness to a small extent precisely through the results obtained, namely an increased school dropout rate. This is a phenomenon that is intended to be eliminated as much as possible because it causes adverse effects, from the individual level to society. Among the best known effects of dropping out of school is the inability of the individual to integrate into the labour market that causes individual financial problems, but this phenomenon can also create negative effects at the psychological level.

Regarding barriers to research, we identified access to real school dropout data, which may be limited for fear of the individual being judged, the school, and the community of being in an unfavourable light by comparison with other schools or communities. This is explained by the fact that any human being tends towards success, towards personal and professional achievement, at a certain level, depending on abilities. School dropout indicates, to a certain extent, an inability of the individual to achieve that level of success proposed voluntarily or involuntarily. School dropout comes, at the same time, with a stigma from the entourage or society, and for this reason the individual tends to hide or avoid this subject.

Due to the small volume of information in the literature regarding the correlation between the level of development of emerging countries and the school dropout rate, we consider that the contribution of this paper is considerable in this regard and can be the basis for future research through the results.

Authors note:

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Practical Five-Level Model for Activist Pedagogy and Promoting Active Citizenship: Film Study in Israel as a Test Case

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Practical Five-Level Model for Activist Pedagogy and Promoting Active Citizenship: Film Study in Israel as a Test Case

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Abstract

Keywords:

active citizenship; activist pedagogy; activist teachers; five-level model for application of activist pedagogy in teaching.

This article presents a practical applicable model for teachers in all high school subjects who chose the teaching profession to educate future generations using activist teaching promoting active citizenship and a progressive liberal world view. The five-level model addressing the activist pedagogy practice developed in the 21st century, helps empower and develop teachers' professional abilities operating in education as social change agents. The model was developed as part of broad research into the need to train teachers using the activist pedagogical approach. The study emphasizes the model's significant contribution to learning teaching skills to promote socio-political awareness in the activist approach developed in light of contemporary pedagogy promoting active citizenship. The article details all model stages and curriculum in high school film studies as a test case. Film studies began with seven film courses as a unique study system in 1992 and reached 400 courses in 2019, as part of mainstream studies in both the Arts and Social Division at the Israeli Ministry of Education, a meteoric growth of about 15 film courses per year. The article is based on interview analysis including an interview with a film study inspector who was among the founders of film studies in Israel, documents, literature review and researcher's experience in the field. By revealing the practical and applicable model for teaching and learning using the activist pedagogical approach, the study proposes innovative theoretical conceptualization of a film educational program which has been in operation for thirty years.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

aktive Bürgerbeteiligung; Aktivismus-Pädagogik; Lehrkräfte als Aktivisten; fünf-Stufen-Modell zur Anwendung der Aktivismus-Pädagogik beim Lehren.

Dieser Artikel stellt ein praktisch anwendbares Modell für Lehrkräfte an weiterführenden Schulen vor, die ihren Beruf gewählt haben, um aktive Bürgerbeteiligung und eine fortschrittliche, liberale Sichtweise bei jungen Generationen mithilfe von Aktivismus als Lehrmethode zu fördern. Das Fünf-Stufen-Modell setzt an der Methode der Aktivismus-Pädagogik an, die im 21. Jahrhundert entwickelt wurde. Es unterstützt Lehrkräfte dabei, ihre professionellen Fertigkeiten in ihrer Rolle als Träger sozialen Wandels im Bildungswesen zu stärken und weiterzuentwickeln. Das Modell wurde im Rahmen weitreichender Forschung zum Bedarf der Weiterbildung von Lehrkräften in der Aktivismus-Pädagogik entwickelt. Diese Arbeit betont den Beitrag, den das Modell zum Erlernen von didaktischen Fertigkeiten hat, die das soziopolitische Bewusstsein mithilfe der Aktivismus-Methodik fördern. Diese wurde im Zuge der zeitgenössischen Pädagogik entwickelt, zu deren Zielen gehört, aktive Bürgerbeteiligung voranzubringen. Im Artikel werden die Stufen des Modells detailliert beschrieben und der Lehrplan der Filmwissenschaften an weiterführenden Schulen als Testfall vorgestellt. Die Filmwissenschaften bestanden 1992 zunächst aus sieben Filmkursen eines spezifischen Unterrichtssystems. 2019 sind es 400 Kurse, die Teil des regulären Schulsystems im israelischen Bildungsministerium sind. Das bedeutet ein rasantes Wachstum von etwa 15 neuen Filmkursen pro Jahr. Im Artikel werden Interviews analysiert, unter anderem mit einem Prüfer der Filmwissenschaften, welcher dazu beitrug, die Filmwissenschaften in Israel zu etablieren. Außerdem wird einschlägige Literatur aufgearbeitet und die praktische Erfahrung von Forschern auf dem Gebiet miteinbezogen. Es wird vorgeschlagen, das filmwissenschaftliche Bildungsprogramm, welches seit nun 30 Jahren existiert, innovativ-theoretisch zu konzeptualisieren, indem das praktisch einsetzbare Modell vorgestellt wird, um mit Methoden der Aktivismus-Pädagogik lehren und lernen zu können.

1. Introduction

Activist pedagogy has developed over recent decades in western democracies. Since the beginning of the 21st

century, research books on the topic have been published emphasizing activist teachers or activist teaching, mainly in

Australia, Canada and the U.S.A. (e.g. Catone, 2017; Frey & Palmer, 2014; Marshall & Anderson, 2008; Sachs, 2003; 2016). Borrowing from the language of film photography one can say that the activist pedagogical camera uses zoom-out filming to photograph educational means promoting democratic social justice, human rights, equality, humanist education, civic education, global education, education for multiculturalism, political education, education to fight for the climate, and other educational approaches in the spirit of a progressive and liberal world view.

The importance of educating for activism and active citizenship has increased in recent years, in light of research indicating a number of worrying phenomena such as unwillingness to be involved in politics among graduates of education system, decreased voting percentages among young people, strengthening value of individualism distancing young people from civic involvement. Nevertheless, research has also shown that teachers who have chosen to teach active civic involvement and an activist orientation have influenced their students, and it appears that there is a positive correlation between education for active citizenship and future concern with social justice, and involvement in public activity (Asuti, 2019; Veugelers, 2019).

This article presents activist pedagogy and its link to promoting active citizenship, reveals the five-level model to integrate activist teaching-learning in all subject as well as analysing, with the model's help, a case studying film studies in the Israeli education system.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Active Citizenship Education

Ancient and modern philosophers assumed that active citizenship patterns are not congenital. To become active citizens, young people must learn and acquire behavioural patterns through education with the help of socialization and cultural acquisition (Aloni, 2020). Active citizens are characterized by active civil-socio-political systems, such as, respectful and equal behavior to people and their rights, seeking social justice, pluralism, tolerance and involvement (Oser & Veugelers, 2008). Active civic education including global and local awareness and involvement is one of the skills required in the 21st century (Dede, 2010). Therefore, integrating active citizenship into learning subjects is critical and essential to promoting and maintaining future liberal democratic citizenship.

Many researchers have addressed the definition and meaning of active citizenship, and it appears there is a correlation between how a country defines active citizenship for its educational institutions and its political and social culture. Studies in education for active citizenship have addressed views, characteristics, and behaviours of active citizens (e.g., Brannan et al., 2006; Kennedy, 2006). Active citizenship moves along an axis

between passive active citizenship (PAC) and active active citizenship (AAC). The former refers to civic activity such as voting in elections and supporting national symbols and anthems, whereas the latter refers to activities whose purpose is involvement in socio-political processes such as political party and civic movement membership. The former generally maintains the status-quo in contrast to the latter, which casts doubt on it and it is this that will be addressed in this article (Kennedy, 2006).

2.2 Activism

From the end of the AAC axis, another has opened and that is the spectrum of activism, which refers to activities challenging and subverting the status quo (McDermott, 2017). Activism links to reality change – actions occurring in a social, public and community context, mainly against oppressive forces, and strives for a more worthy society (Menuhin, 2010). It is common to make a distinction between circumstantial and task-oriented activism factors (Ollis, 2020). Task-oriented activism relates to desire and hastening long-term activist purposes. One can assume therefore that teachers who view teaching as a realm to promote open or latent socio-political awareness are task-oriented activists.

2.3 Activist Pedagogy

Activist pedagogy did not blossom in a vacuum, and there were those who defined its growth from critical pedagogy established in the 1960s and 1970s (Freire, 1970/2018). Many pointed to educational systems operating without purpose, which did not lead to inspirational teaching but were concerned with the mechanics of learning and how to teach the superfluous and superficial, instead of promoting human and critical educational narratives. Schools disseminate conservative traditions employing manipulations of pressure and threats (grades and tests) to force students to learn irrelevant contents. Traditional and conservative education push aside learning methods developing critical and independent thinking, skills to identify latent and complex messages and generate meaning (Postman, 2011). It is possible there was an expectation that critical pedagogy would provide a response to changes so needed in education systems, but there are those who argue this was not enough and activist pedagogy was required like “putting meat on critical pedagogy’s theoretical bones. (Frey & Palmer, 2014, p. 26).

Critical theory promotes release from oppressive balances of power as well as how to reduce the power given to narratives and texts, and creates educational connections requiring critical dialogue between intellectual and artistic teachers and their students. Activist pedagogy is based on this, as well as promoting actions of active citizenship and finding partnerships and involvement in changing the status quo (Catone, 2017; Marshall & Anderson, 2008; Ollis, 2012).

In a discussion of the concept activist pedagogy, distinction must be made between macro and micro politics (Kelchtermans, 2007; Kostiner, 2003). Macro political activist pedagogy refers to changing policy for the majority through legislation and reforms, whereas micro political activist pedagogy refers to socio-cultural theories of changing majority awareness through classroom education (teaching-learning in all subject areas) and outside classrooms (physical education lessons, sport tournaments, breaks, annual trips and the like). Researchers found a gap between changes in macro political educational policy and reality in the micro political field, and it is noticeable that despite changes in education policy, in practice in the field of classroom change assimilation has not been expressed (Chhabra, 2017; Perry-Hazan, 2015). Therefore, one must assume that generators of meaningful change are activist teachers themselves.

2.4 Activist Teachers

Teachers interested in educating the next generation to cast doubt, to constantly seek interpretations and latent messages are those who will educate their students to understand the need for social changes and teach in the activist spirit. Studies following activist teachers in various parts of the world emphasized the need for the transformation of the teaching profession in the 21st century with emphasis on activist teaching (Catone, 2017; Marshall & Anderson, 2008; Sachs, 2003). Researchers of activist pedagogy, such as McDermott (2017) have shown that critical pedagogy obligates teachers to teach students to explore global social and economic issues, and view activist pedagogy as encouraging local or global acts of change.

Activist teachers are similar to intellectual teachers defined by Freire (2019). They choose to function as people with opinions, positions and presence in class, as human beings with a socio-political identity and dream in practice of world reform. These teachers do not concede or submit to formalistic mechanics of teaching. They do not accept authority as obvious but examine and test and even produce alternatives within standard educational framework. They face their students as role models to address conventions through criticism, authenticity and relevance to their lives and contemporary reality (Greene, 2019; Sachs, 2003).

Many studies from the early 21st century focused on activist teachers, their activist means in civic organizations, and the separation some made between classroom teaching, teaching strategies and skills. These studies showed that activist teachers operated with courage integrating socio-political content in their teaching to promote social agenda, and as a result often experienced loneliness. Additionally, activist teachers operated intuitively, without work routines or formal framework and when asked, described a lack of professional training in activist teaching. Sometimes activist teachers were forced to resign or hide to realize

their world views, which did not sit well with educational policy. Many spoke about courage and risk and the need to establish support organizations for activist teachers, which were indeed established locally (e.g. Catone, 2017).

Researchers indicated that activist teachers have to cope with routines reinforcing a performance culture measured by numerical data of average student test results, although activist teaching can benefit society, community and learners, and promote social justice and world reform (Kumashiro, 2015; Sach, 2016). In a 2018 OECD report about the future of education and skills required for 2030, education for active citizenship by taking responsibility and substantive action stood out. Activist teachers educate the core values of human rights and social responsibility, democratic, liberal values, and the value of humanism – tolerance and empathy for one another (Bron, 2005). Activist teachers develop students investigative, involvement, responsibility entrepreneurship skills and as well as encouraging them to act substantively. However, despite the title ‘Training teachers for active citizenship education’, what was remarkable was the absence of training empowering and providing teachers with practical tools to teach according to the activist approach promoting active citizenship.

2.5 Training Teachers to Teach Using the Activist Pedagogical Approach

Research in the field of activist pedagogy has addressed an innovative definition of the role of educational personnel as those who have the responsibility and ability to promote active citizenship and encourage independent, critical learners, with motivation to act towards social change. However, it seems that practical training for teachers according to this approach is lacking (Nelson & Kerr, 2006). To be able to teach according to the activist approach, teachers must be given theories, knowledge and practical tools; there is a need to discuss with them their views and attitudes towards the subject, support them, create opportunities to collaborate and promote the empowerment of activist teachers interested in undermining the status quo, and encourage action and change through socio-political awareness.

Based on conceptualizing theory for activist pedagogy and the need arising in the 21st century for developing activist professional teachers, it is noticeable that there is a need to develop a training program for activist teachers to promote active citizenship. This article addresses one component of a complete system of teacher training for activist pedagogy. The article presents the model and an applicable aid to activist teaching and promoting active citizenship developed as part of broader research conducted as part of doctoral research.

3. Research methodology

This article presents a theoretical study describing in detail the development of a theoretical five-level teaching model using the activist approach promoting active citizenship. After a background review, the model will be described, followed by examining an example of a film education curriculum applied in Israel. The role of this analysis as a test case is, among others, to validate the model.

The theoretical study included two stages – the first of which was conducting a literature review about activist pedagogy and education for active citizenship, followed by interviews with two focus groups of teachers who were interested and curious to learn and discuss activist pedagogy and promote active citizenship. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 20 teachers who defined themselves so or who were openly activist on social networks and agreed to be interviewed. As a result of all these, a practical model to apply the activist approach in teaching was constructed as part of the author's broader research on the topic of teacher training in activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship.

At the second stage, data was collected about film teaching programs, documents, curricula and course directors' directives since 1992, interviews with three film and communication study teachers and chief inspector of film studies and communications in Israel (1992-2019), to which the researcher's experience in the field as a film studies teacher, coordinator and instructor was added. As a result, data will be analysed as a test case of the model.

The following section describes the development of the practical five-level model for activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship. It will then demonstrate and validate the model using a test case of film studies education in that the article hypothesizes that the curriculum for film studies education had from its inception, and assimilation, an activist pedagogy and active citizenship promotion orientation.

4. Findings

4.1 Five-Level Teaching-Learning Model for Activist Teachers in All Subjects

Descriptions of the different levels of the practical teaching and learning five-level model of activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship are well-known and have been examined in education studies as teaching strategies or competences. The model's innovation has three aspects: (1) connecting the five levels together; (2) placing them gradually; (3) their connection at a practical level to activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship.

As a preliminary stage to applying the model, teachers need to clarify for themselves personally their role, beliefs

and worldviews that led them to choose education. Each teacher's personal social vision serves as a type of pillar of fire facing them in the course of education (Postman, 2011). This clarification includes all the following questions – What is my personal identity? What is the core of my educational role? What is my social agenda? What is my personal social vision? What are teaching attributes? and what is my education approach? (Aloni, 2020; Higgins, 2010).

Activist teachers will both operate around their chosen social vision and encourage their students to act, obviously without indoctrination. These education approaches belong to a progressive, liberal world view espousing rights promoting tolerance, pluralism, and even critical views about activist teachers' world views. These approaches include, among others, education for social justice, feminism, and gender, preventing racism, and addressing the climate crisis (Catone, 2017; Marshall & Anderson, 2008).

Level 1

First level of the model: learning environment enables the promotion of active citizenship and activism:

It is important to apply the first level, because following levels rely on it. It creates a safe space enabling activist and active citizenship education. Teachers can choose their own appropriate teaching means according to the different model levels, but the first level constitutes a type of informal contract enabling safe discourse and a place where teachers and students can express ideas, attitudes and their opinions and world views. The first level is not only a practical tool, but the strategic basis for activist pedagogy.

An enabling environment is consolidated under the leadership of activist teachers both in and outside classrooms, in micro politics, this environment is mostly linked to teachers' activist social vision, but at the same time enables sharing and discourse with all class participants. An enabling environment exists both at a level of physical infrastructure safety, for example walls, classroom arrangement, boards and corridor and at an interpersonal level, for example equality promoting climate, politics of identities, pleasantness, containment, and working on a dialogic culture (Harpaz, 2018; Niblett, 2014; Sarroub & Quadros, 2015; Zalmanson-Levi, 2019). With online learning an enabling atmosphere also exists in online classrooms physically for example, chosen backgrounds, things brought to lessons and at an interpersonal level, private and dialogic learning by dividing space into activity rooms or restricted online sessions.

Level 2

Second level: ten minutes to open lesson – stimuli for the topic promoting active citizenship and activism

The model's second level includes revealing personal social visions chosen by teachers and increasing awareness of it during the opening ten minutes of a lesson. It is possible to encourage active discussion and discourse, but one must remember that this stage lasts purely for the first ten minutes. Thereafter, planned lessons begin with content according to subjects' lesson plans. Some teachers refer to this part as an 'entry ticket' to lessons, which is also suitable for online learning. Activist teachers pour ethical content into these ten minutes linked to social vision using their chosen educational approach. Consistent application of this opening is likely to encourage students to initiate such openings themselves later. The purpose of this level is to awaken awareness, remove student apathy and encourage change actions by giving subjects relevance in reality. Another purpose is to start lessons differently, breaking day-to-day banality and encourage students to escape apathy and routine (Greene, 2019).

Level 3

Third level: Assimilating active citizenship and activist education into lesson plan

The model's third level refers to lessons in curricula where it is possible to integrate and assimilate ethical topics connected to promoting active citizenship and activism. It is an opportunity to add to lessons a different view of any learning topic that can be linked to social injustice, inequality and promote contents encouraging activism and active citizenship. During lessons, teachers connect subject lesson content to the activist pedagogical approach, by emphasizing liberating dialogue with students undermining the status quo (Freire, 2019).

At the third level, teachers use activist imagery, empower students, and encourage activism by allowing them to be involved and voice their opinions about the lesson as well (Bahruţ & Steiner, 2000). There are many examples of integrating values promoting social justice: preventing racism in lesson content at a theoretical level as well as ideas at a practical level, for example in exact sciences such as mathematics and wordy subjects such as literature or physical education (Luguetti & Oliver, 2019; Messiah, 2018; Zalmanson-Levi, 2015).

Level 4

Fourth level: Experiential learning encouraging active citizenship and activism

Experiential learning is enabled in various ways and is multi-dimensional. It helps empower students, consolidate their positions by exposing them to socio-cultural topics, to cope with tolerance and practically learn to take responsibility. Different studies on activist pedagogy have

addressed ways of experiential learning. Frey and Palmer (2014) in their book "Teaching Communication Activism" described intervention programs about activist communication in the community. Among involvement experiential programs are Service Learning, programs promoting experiential learning aims in the community. Lash and Kroeger (2018) described a case of activist experiential learning at early childhood and its effects not only on the children but on the entire community.

Experiential programs of community service teach us about two aspects, one, in actions serving a community that help but preserve the status quo, and the other, actions to promote social change in and outside the community. When students serve their community, they are exposed to social injustices and different possible ways of addressing them. Ideas about social change mostly arise through discourse with activist teachers who are interested in encouraging critical discourse about their pupils' social involvement. Some maintain that as a result of experiential learning during socially involved programs at high school, students will become more active citizens in adulthood (Youniss, 2009).

Level 5

Fifth level: activist initiatives in teaching and learning

The fifth and last level is a result of an activist educational process promoting active citizenship over a period and realizes to some extent the previous levels. At this stage, students themselves, with or without teachers, initiate activities encouraging social change. The role of activist initiatives is to empower students and promote their growth to be active citizens involved in their society. Students in public education systems usually learn to quote and surrender (for example to curricula content and/or existing learning methods). At the model's fifth level, students who have undergone activist experiential learning with teacher linked to previous model levels, can leave their classrooms and initiate influential actions themselves.

Research has provided us reports about activist lecturers in the U.S.A. who share their dilemmas at this stage of sending students to participate in activist social initiatives. In their words, at this stage, lectures do not govern students' actions, and sometimes as a result of breaking lecturer/student boundaries, a challenging process occurs (Sundvall & Fredlund, 2017). Another challenge during the fifth level occurs when a regular school environment changes, and other partners join the activist initiative process – parents, community, academia, civic organizations, and groups with similar progressive liberal activist interests (Sach, 2003).

The first part has described so far, in detail, the practical five-level model to integrate activist pedagogy and promote active citizenship for teachers in all subjects as can be seen in figure 1. The second part focuses on a test case of film

studies education assimilated into the Israel education system from 1992 to date.



Figure 1. Five-level practical model for activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship (personal proposal)

4.2 Case Study – Analysis of Five-Level Model to Teach Using the Activist Pedagogy Approach and Promote Active Citizenship through Film Study Education in Israel 1992-2019

In 1989 a professional committee wrote the curriculum for mass communication (the academic view was that film studies were part of mass media communication). The committee included academic and professional experts from the field of education and communication and mass media (Cohen, 1992). As a preliminary stage, before examining the various levels, one must choose a social vision that will lead to a film studies world view. A humanist approach was chosen as the leading value for film studies curriculum in Israel.

Film as part of media is basically a tool intended to preserve democracy, and therefore, it is essentially a critical area with a strong connection to actuality and mass culture, and its aim to be a tool to store and transmit information and values in society (Cohen, 1992). As such, film studies are associated with a liberal pluralistic world view. In addition, the program promotes a holistic approach to human behavior because the programs learned will help students to deepen their views about themselves and the world surrounding them (Cohen, 1992).

Many teachers from the film and television industry came to teach film studies in schools aiming to prepare the next generation of cinematic personnel as well as grow a new generation of film goers. Thus, the formal framework of film studies teaching, examinations and access to teachers was cooperative, details of school curricula were not dictated top-down and there was much room for teachers' choices. A constructive dialogue developed between staff and the Ministry of Education's film studies inspector and a liberating and emancipating dialogic process to produce modelling for how teachers would conduct themselves in a humanistic and dialogic manner with students (interview with inspector, 22.7.2020).

From the interview one sees an experience of shared learning with students and finding original methods not dictated in textbooks.

Inspector: *“Cinema motivates me personally. It demands that I look at myself profoundly and leads to a world we don't see, awakens emotions and also teaches an entire culture...I relied on teachers to develop the program themselves, teach using films with which they are connected. I would ask teachers: ‘Why are you teaching film studies, why is it important to you?’ And thus, I discovered within a broad human world view what motivated each teacher. I, for example, very much wanted to strengthen the status of women ... One day a teacher came for an interview for a role of practical film studies teacher without the required technical knowledge. I asked him, why did you apply for the role? And he said: ‘I will learn together with students...and he was appointed!’”*

The aims of the program include the understanding that media outputs are a consequence of professional and human choices and not a neutral reflection of reality, as well as exposure, understanding and criticism of ideological and ethical aspects of the media (Cohen, 1992). The program led to film studies becoming an educational field serving as a means to increase social involvement and responsibility.

The ‘flower’ model to analyse films in classrooms including five questions, like five flower petals (Keller, 1994), indicates how much weight the subject places on human, humanist meanings derived from watching films. The role of teachers was and still is to teach students to find revealed and hidden messages in films, with the purpose of reaching conclusions and taking stands in relation to themselves and the society in which they live. Thus, one can see that 30 years ago, a curriculum to teach film studies in Israel evolved with a practical social vision and worldview for teachers and learners, and is humanist, emancipating, anti-oppressing dialogic education for subject teachers as well as educating to act.

Level 1

First model level: Learning environment enabling promotion of active citizenship and activism

The first model level is building an enabling environment, both physical and interpersonal. Physically, an enabling environment in film studies was expressed by classroom setting with a cinema screen that could be darkened and create an intimate atmosphere, an infrastructure breaking the classical structure of classrooms. Film posters were chosen to hang on walls and decorate classrooms. Many film studies courses left walls empty providing students with a place for self-expression, and which were mostly filled with film-related graffiti.

One of the features of an enabling environment is listening, as the inspector said:

“During my years of work I listened. We don't approach students with teachers in possession of all knowledge, a 14-year-old child can sometimes know something a teacher does not. When asking students what

they see, what they hear and what they feel in a film scene watched, our role is to listen and to give students space for discourse. And then we will hear, fears, anger, revulsion; remembrances from their personal space, assumptions of 'it seems to me', and also spontaneous statements and these lead to a profound human discussion. We even suddenly hear whether they are listening. Yes, that happened to me too... Sometimes I passed on or recommended to teachers to pass on statements to the counsellor and suddenly through a film and environment enabling students to speak, we saved souls”.

The 1992 curriculum stated (Cohen, 1992 p' 7): that qual teaching process, a process in which learning is the fruit of dynamic dialogue between teachers and students. The emphasis was not just on passing on knowledge but on the development of tolerance to the unique expressions of others. After two decades, in a directive from the chief subject inspector for the 2012 curriculum (Ballin, 2012), these principles have not changed, and maintained that teachers should be directed to promote meaningful learning by allowing a learning environment providing an experience of involvement both in terms of process and understanding output. They should motivate and instruct learners to identify, processes, criticize and create knowledge, think, ask questions and be partners in the learning process. Teachers must enable good learning characterized by interest, preparedness, curiosity, students' intrinsic motivation, and allow their involvement in the learning process. In such a process, all aspects of awareness are involved: thought, imagination, emotion, desire, and identity. Teachers must provide students with tools encouraging active learning. To promote this, they must encourage flexibility, choice, a range of methodologies adapted to holistic, meaningful learning skills.

Level 2

Second level: Ten minutes at lesson start exposure/stimulus to subject promoting active citizenship and activism

The second model level, ten minutes exposure to social issue, is expressed in the curriculum (Cohen, 1992) which stated that media teaching addresses the world relevant to students, their experiential, actual, cultural, and ethical world, stating that. Efforts will be made in classes to integrate media contents relevant to students. As mentioned, many film studies teachers came from the industry and had experienced different things in the field of film and television. Teachers were asked to start lessons by sharing past experiences, which sometimes encouraged discourse about conflicts and authentic dilemmas relevant to youth. In addition, film studies teachers watch films and mostly shared their recommendations about what to watch or their critiques at the start of lessons.

Level 3

Third level: Assimilating a subject promoting active citizenship into lesson plans

Film studies lessons invite concern around watching films connected to social and activist topics. The curriculum from its start till now is flexible. Teachers must choose teaching contents from a wide range. The basket of possibilities includes topics such as social and political cinema, docu-activism, Israeli cinema and addressing conflicts in Israeli society. Among the theories chosen for teaching are cinema and gender theories, Marxist and neo-Marxist theories, activist video, and social documentary cinema.

During lessons, teachers are asked to teach in a manner allowing students to explore, subvert and have doubts, to be flexible and use films as a fertile ground for innovative learning (Ballin, 2018). Students must also learn independently and present to classes knowledge and insights acquired, and thus increase their self-confidence during their years of study on film studies courses. Independent assessment means and teachers construct the matriculation examination themselves according to the curriculum they chose to teach. Each matriculation examination is sent for professional checking to maintain a high level, but uniqueness and originality is maintained around content chosen by teachers. In this way, teachers were empowered from the start, with each lesson based on contents that were relevant to their social vision, to a nucleus of formal curricula and dialogue with students in class.

Level 4

Fourth level: Experiential learning encouraging active citizenship and activism

Experiential, practical contents have been a cornerstone from the start of film studies curricula over the years, until production of a film for matriculation at the end of three years' study. Over their course of film studies, students experience film and television production. Since the worldview of film studies teaching is humanist, critical and relevant to reality, students experience film through personal and social projects. They film in their close environments, in their communities, and raise communal or personal dilemmas to create drama or an interesting inquiry.

Experience producing films and clips during the first years of film studies allows students to express messages and ideas through cinematic visual language. Most experiences occur outside classrooms, breaking out of classroom learning and going out to other places in the community. For example, film production as cinema experience around students' reality, realizing dreams, addiction, challenging families, special needs, and other topics concerning youth in school and community space. Some practical experiences producing films have led to

expressing theoretical learning about films from around the world experienced in class.

Level 5

Fifth level: Activist initiatives in teaching and learning

After three years of study, students produce final films for their matriculation. These films have an activist initiative nature, both at execution and content levels. To successfully produce a film, cooperation with production teams is necessary, with each student having a significant role – director, producer, editor, and cinematographer. Grades are mostly given to teams, and therefore, each team member understands his/her responsibility for the production. At a content level, students control the messages they are interested in conveying through visual language. They must submit a production file and justify their choices. They analyze different means of visual language and their editorial choices to influence viewers. Students are exposed for the first time to various considerations and experience them themselves, similar to media-controlling tycoons. For example, editorial considerations can change messages from one extreme to another, and students experience this in practice and learn critical education through action. In cases where messages are subversive and encourage social change, it is even possible to say that students learn how to be activists.

The uniqueness of a film production team is that every student has a specified role – director, cinematographer, editor or producer, and hence collaborative learning acquires a further dimension, when each has sole responsibility and an equal place in the film production. Without each one performing these roles, there is no film, and at the same time success belongs to all members of the group. Each one has a personal voice and unique, appropriate, and essential knowledge in producing the final film.

Producing a film is similar to project-based learning (PBL) and is not a new learning approach. PBL's popularity has increased over recent years, but in the film studies education this method is inbuilt into the curriculum from the start. Producing a final film requires students to leave classroom boundaries and conduct initiative meetings. Film studies teachers encourage activist initiatives. The difference between level four (experiential learning encouraging active citizenship and activism) and level five (activist initiatives) is that producing the final film is not solely experiential learning and active experience, but a process requiring high level thinking, seeking knowledge and practically realizing all three years of the process.

The reflection and assessment accompanying activist initiatives of these final films are carried out during all stages of the process. Students producing films have to point out links between theoretical and practical learning. They submit a written document describing and discussing

their reflections about the process. There is room for personal references to, thoughts about, and discussions of their work process on the film. Reflection reveals on the one hand what changed in them from looking inwards from the beginning to the end of the project, and on the other hand the sources of their inspiration to produce a film (community figures, directors, classic films, big ideas, etc.).

Not every film produced in film studies' courses is considered an activist film whose role is to encourage social change, but the strategic skills in teaching are activist and encourage change. Not all students realize this during the film production process in 12th grade, they get opportunities to do so because of teachers' activism in teaching and encouragement for activist initiatives. Despite this, it appears that many final films in film studies' courses are indeed activism for social change. The point of origin for most these films is located in social injustices students feel, and thus employ their films as a means of awakening awareness or encouraging change, therefore this is the climax of ethical education transmitted by film studies' teachers through the years, humanist critical education.

Teaching staff's activist initiatives include for example, the film studies inspector, teaching staff and cinema instructors have produced film festivals for school youth since 1999 in a town considered to be peripheral in the south of Israel, Dimona. Film studies students attend once a year to watch hundreds of student films, attend creative workshops with pupils from other populations, such as Jewish and Arab students, as well as observing panels of media personnel on social and political topics. In addition, a large cinema in Tel Aviv holds a film and human rights solidarity festival including films made by schools' film studies' students.

5. Discussions

This article focused at the start on conceptualizing theory of the term 'activist pedagogy' and revealing the five-level model to apply activist pedagogy and promote active citizenship in teaching. As a test case, the article analyzed the field of film studies. In the discussion, it is possible to explore the following questions: how can innovation be seen in the five-level model applied to teaching in the activist approach? Is film studies education in Israel truly ground-breaking and did it apply the activist pedagogic approach before the term became integrated into educational discourse? What uses can be made of the five-level model for education in the activist pedagogical approach and promoting active citizenship?

The applied model is composed of components known in educational research, its contribution and innovation exposed in the article is in connecting five developing levels from the first to the fifth and particularly the link to activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship. Teachers from all subjects who came to teaching to be

agents of social change and are interested in teaching using the activist approach, can find in this model a solution and pedagogical framework as a strategic of their educational work. Today, there are teachers in the field who intuitively apply some of the levels, and the model described in this article can serve as a diagnostic tool, indicator of activist pedagogic orientation, and provide those operating in the field a sense of empowerment and structured means of continuing their work.

The author of this article, who is currently conducting broad research, will continue to explore in-depth teacher training in activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship in the field of film studies and the link to activist pedagogy. It will be fascinating to see whether there is a difference between film studies and communication teachers and teachers in all other subjects, whether current film studies and communication teachers have a higher orientation towards activism than their colleagues in other subjects. In addition, the article is based solely on qualitative methodology being part of broader doctoral research, and therefore does not provide comprehensive information. It will be interesting to examine the field using mixed methodology.

6. Conclusions

The test case described in the article and analysed according to the five-level model applying activist pedagogy and promoting active citizenship is a film studies curriculum. The article presents an innovative concept researched in the 21st century and uses it to analyse film studies education from the 1990s without knowing the concept and unaware that in practice the outline, contents, means and vision fit an innovative theory of activist pedagogy. Therefore, the model was a gauge to examine the film studies curriculum, and in the future can continue to serve as a gauge to measure other and varied curricula.

Finally, perhaps this article will inspire further breakthroughs to integrate activist pedagogy and promoting democratic liberal active citizenship in other subject curricula in education systems.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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Emotional intelligence and its influence on the adaptive skills of children with hearing disabilities

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Emotional intelligence and its influence on the adaptive skills of children with hearing disabilities

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Abstract

Keywords:

emotional intelligence,
adaptive skills, hearing
disabilities

As several studies reveal there are strong relationships between emotional intelligence and the academic competences and on the other side, between emotional intelligence and adaptive behavior. The present study aims to demonstrate the relationship between emotional intelligence and adaptive skills, mainly in the social area in children with hearing disabilities. On the other hand, we focused on the relationships that could be established between the type of the disability, the hearing aids and the adaptive skills. Our findings showed that there is no significant correlation between emotional intelligence and adaptive skills and between the adaptive skills in the school setting and the degree of hearing disabilities, as well as the type of prosthesis. These results are there to confirm other findings which emphasize the fact that children with hearing disabilities have about the same social skills as the typically developed and in the same time they have no significant delays regarding the level of socio-emotional adaptability.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

emotionale Intelligenz,
Anpassungsfähigkeit,
Gehörsstörungen

Wie zahlreiche Studien erweisen, wird ein enger Zusammenhang zwischen emotionaler Intelligenz und Lernfähigkeit sowie zwischen emotionaler Intelligenz und Anpassungsfähigkeit festgestellt. Vorliegende Studie nimmt sich vor, den Zusammenhang zwischen emotionaler Intelligenz und der Anpassungsfähigkeit, vordergründig im Kontext sozialer Fähigkeiten bei Kindern mit Gehörsstörungen zu beweisen. Auf der anderen Seite haben wir uns auf den Zusammenhang der zwischen dem Typ der Behinderung, der Prothese und der Anpassungsfähigkeit festgestellt werden konnte, konzentriert. Unsere Erkenntnis ist, dass es keinen wesentlichen Zusammenhang zwischen emotionaler Intelligenz und der Anpassungsfähigkeit und zwischen der Anpassungsfähigkeit im Unterrichtskontext und der Stärke der Gehörsstörungen sowie der Art der Prothese gibt. Diese Ergebnisse bestätigen andere Erkenntnisse die hervorheben, dass Kinder mit Gehörsstörungen ungefähr die gleichen sozialen Fähigkeiten wie die normal entwickelten haben und gleichzeitig weisen sie keine wesentlichen Verzögerungen bezüglich dem Grad der sozial-emotionalen Anpassungsfähigkeit auf.

1. Introduction

As specified by Goleman (2019), some skills facilitate the effectiveness of human interactions and relationships, namely self-assessment and self-identification, self-control and empathy, skills which interfere directly with emotional intelligence. Studies performed in schools and universities showed that students with a higher level of emotional intelligence obtain higher academic achievements than the ones with a lower level of emotional intelligence (Pleșca, 2016). In the same time, there are studies that emphasize the fact that methods used in order to improve emotional intelligence in school settings, family settings could, beside other factors, can compete to a growth of school performance in children.

According to Connors-Burrow et al. (2017) most important emotional skills include: self-awareness, that is the ability to recognize one's emotions, sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence, etc.), self-management (the ability to regulate one's emotions, including controlling impulses, motivating oneself, setting and working toward goals) and social awareness meaning showing empathy and understanding others' perspectives, respect for others).

We may refer also to a study conducted by Raicu (2015) which demonstrate that preadolescents with a high level of emotional intelligence are sociable, can clearly and directly express their feelings, emotions, are easily adapted to stress conditions, make new friends naturally, are independent and self-confident.

Children learn social and emotional skills beginning in infancy and early childhood. So social–emotional development involves children’s growing capacities to recognize and manage their emotions, have positive relationships with adults and peers and solve problems effectively.

At the opposite children without strong social and emotional skills often receive negative feedback from teachers and are rarely praised by teachers for appropriate behavior and are even included in punishing interventions. Without an effective and early intervention, children with social–emotional delays are likely to have problems further on in the next years (Campbell, 1995), including social and academic problems in school, school dropout, and even adolescent and adulthood delinquency (Dunlap et al. 2006). All these concerns are a reality in different schools for children with disabilities, in which the students exhibit disruptive and challenging behavior due to their lack of emotional abilities and strengths. These statements were, partly, the reason for us to try to show how things go for children in schools for hearing disabilities.

2. Adaptive skills and emotional intelligence

Adaptive behavior is described as the ensemble of conceptual, social and practical abilities learned and used by one person during his/her entire life (Schalock, 2010). Of course, there have been a large number of definitions for this construct, from all of these we can mention some, aspects that are very important specially when we have to evaluate a person with disabilities, taking his/her real environment into account. Therefore, we can speak about adaptive behavior according to the person’s age and cultural background, every individual can function in deep connection with his physical needs and his social participation, the ability of initiating and maintaining social relationships, the developmental nature of adaptive behavior including greater difficulties that come along with aging, adaptive behavior reflected in daily individual’s acts (Bruininks, Thurlow & Gilmore, 1987).

Social adaptive behaviors include interpersonal relationships, responsibility, self-esteem, tendency to believe too readily, compliance to rules, avoidance of victimization. These aspects will be followed across the present study as being influenced by emotional intelligence. There are also some ideas that we want to stress out concerning children’s emotional and social competence, their behavior in the classroom or in some other setting and their ability to learn. What we mean is *the way of being aware of the emotions* (improving recognition, naming, understanding the causes of one’s emotions), *emotional control* (supposing a good frustration tolerance, controlling anger, expressing anger in a suitable way, less isolation and anxiety, positive feelings about him/herself, school and family), *the use of emotions in a productive way* (more

responsibility, concentration skills, less impulsivity, self-control), *empathy*, approaching relationships.

Reuven BarOn (1992, apud Roco, 2004) established the components of emotional intelligence: the inner aspect (awareness of one’s emotions, assertive behavior, self-respect, independence), the interpersonal aspect (empathy, positive relationships, social responsibility), adaptability (problem solving, testing reality, flexibility), stress control (tolerance, control of impulses), general disposition (happiness, optimism).

3. Adaptive behavior and emotional intelligence in children with hearing disabilities

In the case of children with hearing disabilities, it seems there are no significant delays concerning socio-emotional compared to the hearing peers. Hearing disability does not strongly affect one’s person ability to react to social stimuli and to produce major difficulties in the area of social skills (Rieffe & Terwogt, 2006).

Norway University of Sciences and Technologies conducted a study in 2016 assuming that the loss of hearing could represent a threat for a smooth development of social competencies. Social skills have been compared for 14 children with mild bilateral or unilateral hearing loss and 21 children with moderate to severe loss and for 123 children with typical hearing, all aged 4-5 and all the children with hearing loss had hearing aids. Associations between social skills, vocabulary skills and the age of introducing the hearing aid. Results suggests that despite a limited effect on the development of the vocabulary, it is possible that early intervention could promote social skills development (Rieffe & Terwogt, 2006).

The same researchers performed a study in order to establish possible correlations between developmental levels of social skills, vocabulary, the age of introducing the aids and parental education in three groups of typical children, children with moderate and mild hearing loss and children with severe hearing loss. The findings revealed that children with severe hearing loss showed similar levels of social skills with the ones of typical children, while children with moderate or mild hearing loss were appreciated with almost a standard deviation smaller than the typical children.

Finally, another study in this area suggests that children with severe hearing disabilities aged between 9 and 13 included in intervention programs succeeded to improve their abilities in solving social problems, mainly the understanding of the steps involved in interpersonal problems. Intervention was also a way in which children significantly improved their assertive behavior (Suárez, 2000).

When we speak about children with hearing disabilities, we raise some problems that have to get

answers, one of them concerns communication. In the precise case of the Special Technological High School for Hearing Impaired in Cluj-Napoca, the most common communication method is sign language, along with lips reading for children with profound hearing disability and with adapted verbal language and of course, natural gesture, mimics.

Children with hearing disabilities succeed to realize an understanding based upon signifying some situations that they may observe, concrete, connected with immediate reality. But if the situation needs an understanding of complex, abstract aspects that cannot be observed directly they cannot perceive the essence of that situation. Therefore, the teachers have to find associations in order to facilitate understanding, mainly with an image and with the specific sign from the sign language alphabet. For a better understanding of a text, its associations with a representative image for the whole, along with signing the story are very useful tools. Dramas can also be used, cartoons, summaries of the images and of the interactions between images and words are helpful ways to make these children understand specially in older students.

For children with hearing disabilities, learning is about a mediation that the teacher is performing between the child and the world around him. It supposes using total communication, using all the available tools to transmit a message, so that this message is understood: verbal language, sign language, lips reading, mimics, gesture, facial expression.

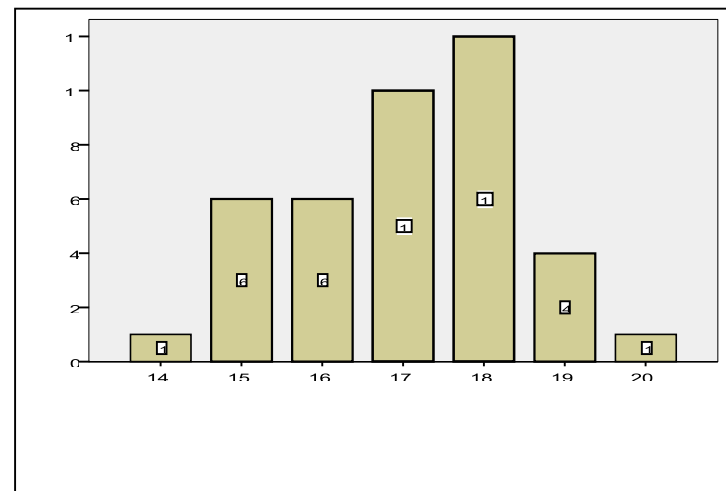
As we mentioned before, our first aim for the study was to investigate the relationship between emotional intelligence and adaptive behavior in children with hearing disabilities, so necessary within the boarding school in which these children are staying during school time. And secondly, we aimed to establish a possible correlation between social adaptive skills, the degree of disability and the type of hearing aid. Therefore, we assumed that the higher level of emotional intelligence the children have, they will exhibit better social adaptive behavior. And secondly, there is no correlation between social adaptive skills, the degree of disability and the type of hearing aid.

4. Results

4.1. Participants

In this study there were 40 participants, students with ages range between 14 years and 20 years (an age average of 17.07 years, 23 (57.5%) girls and 17 (42.5 %) boys, within the Special Technological High School for Hearing Impaired in Cluj-Napoca. These participants have been selected according to the following criteria: all of them had a neuro-sensitive hearing loss (profound, severe or moderate), they were students in the Special Technological High School for Hearing Impaired in Cluj-Napoca and they had no associated impairments.

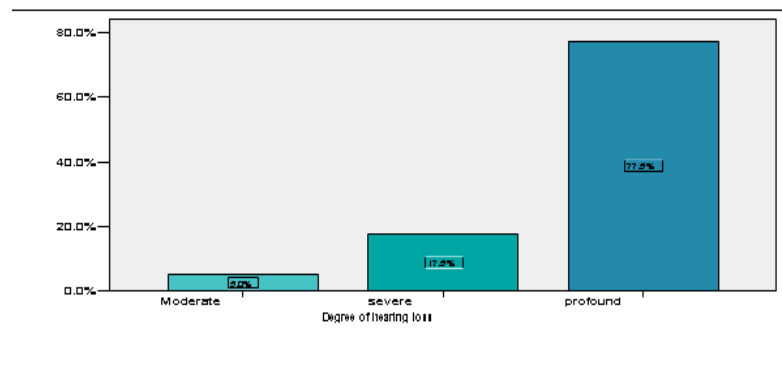
Figure 1. The number of the participants and their age



Age of the participants

77.5% of the participants have normal hearing parents, 20% have both parents with hearing disabilities and 2.5% have families in which one parent is normal hearing and the other has hearing disabilities. Concerning other variables included in the study, 5% of the participants have moderate hearing disability, 17.5% have severe hearing disability and most of them, 77.5% have profound hearing disability. All the participants had the opportunity of an early intervention with the help of hearing aids; in the same time, they were included in different types of educational therapies and according to the specialists they were guided through the communication methods, the adaptations that were considered the best for each of them.

Figure 2. The degree of hearing loss



Concerning the type of hearing aids, 50% of the participants do not have any of these/have a non-functional cochlear implant, 7.5% have functional cochlear implant and 42.5% have a hearing aid which they wear.

The type of design in this study is a predictive non-experimental one because it aims to establish if and in which measure emotional intelligence influences, predicts a successful social skill for children with hearing disabilities. We can therefore mention the variables of the

study, the predictive one is emotional intelligence and the criterial one is the scholar social adaptive skills. For the second assumption, the study is correlational.

4.2. Instruments

4.2.1. Adaptive Behavior Assessment System II (ABAS-II)

ABAS-II (Harrison, Oakland, 2012) offers a valid measure of adaptive skills for persons until 89 years of age. It is a valuable instrument which evaluates the areas of adaptive skills mentioned in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 4th edition (DSM-V, American Psychiatric Association, 2013), American Psychiatry Association (APA, 2000), including the current directions of the American Association of Intellectual Disabilities (AAID) for the three main fields of the adaptive behavior (conceptual, social and practical).

As measured by ABAS-II, adaptive skills are defined as daily practical abilities needed for a person to function, to integrate in the environment, including the capacity of taking care independently of him or herself and the interaction with other people. In this study we used the form for teachers, with only one skills area, the one named "social" within the test, with 20 items measuring on a Likert scale the adaptive skills specific for school setting, more precisely personal relationships, responsibility, self-esteem, tendency to believe too readily, gullibility, respecting rules and norms and avoiding victimization.

The gross scores obtained are transformed, according to the tables, in scaled scores on a scale from 1 to 14, 1 meaning a very low level and 14 the highest level.

4.2.2. The Emotional Intelligence Test (EIT)

The Emotional Intelligence Test was adapted by Rocco (2004, original version BarOn & Goleman, 1992) consists in 10 questions presenting some situations (scenarios) a person can find herself in. The items refer to the identification of emotions and adaptability, empathy and involvement, inner motivation and hope, optimism/tenacity, accepting diversity/assertive democratic model, empathy for angry persons, anger control, anger management and calming strategies, manager qualities, ensuring comfort, empathy for persons with special needs and intuition, self-improvement, sustained work, development (Dewi et al., 2015).

For each participant there can be an exceptional score (more than 200), above the average score (150-200), average score (100-150), under the average (less than 100).

5. Procedure

This study respected the principles outlined in the current legislation on clinical investigation, and the Research Ethics Committee of the Babeș-Bolyai University approved it. Due to the situation created by the pandemic

conditions and the on-line courses in schools, the EIT has been administrated on-line with an adapted version and a video material which was necessary for the transposition of the participation agreement, the summary of the test, the training concerning the way the items should be completed in the Romanian Sign Language.

The positive aspect of this method was the fact that each of the participants responded sincerely, without being influenced by their colleagues, as it happens frequently within collective testing situations.

On the other hand, the social skills area included in the form for teachers within the ABAS-II is filled in by the educator responsible for each classroom who is trained how to respond to all the items. In order to obtain the highest data accuracy, the educator will complete only two forms/day, for two children that is and the information will be checked also by other professionals working on a regular basis with the children to ensure the objectivity of the answers.

The scaled scores for all the participants were introduced in the program SPSS so that a value of the assumptions could result.

6. Results

Our first assumption was that the higher level of emotional intelligence the children have, they will exhibit better social adaptive behavior. Therefore, we wanted to see whether the social skills could be explained or influenced by emotional intelligence in children with hearing disabilities and for this we first verified the normality of the distribution for the predictor/the independent variable (emotional intelligence) as well as for the criteria/dependent variable (social skills). We used the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which compares the distributions of the scores for the sample with a normal distribution having the same average and standard deviation. As the result for this test is statistically insignificant for each variable, we concluded that the answers are normally distributed.

Table 1. Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test

		Emotional intelligence	Adaptive skills in school
N		40	40
Normal Parameters ^{ab}	Mean	84.8750	7.1500
	Std. Deviation	31.03942	3.73857
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.163	.140
	Positive	.098	.085
	Negative	.163	.140
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1.028	.885
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.241	.414

Further on we verify the conditions that allows us to use the simple regression method in order to verify if there is high degree of prediction of the results for the EIT on the social skills. These refer to a normal distribution of the quantitative variables (Table 1), the relationship between the independent variable (emotional intelligence) and the dependent variable (social skills) has to be linear (Figure 3), the errors are normally distributed (Figure 4) and the avoidance of extreme cases and influent cases (Table 2).

Figure 3. The relationship between the predictor and the criteria (regression gradient)

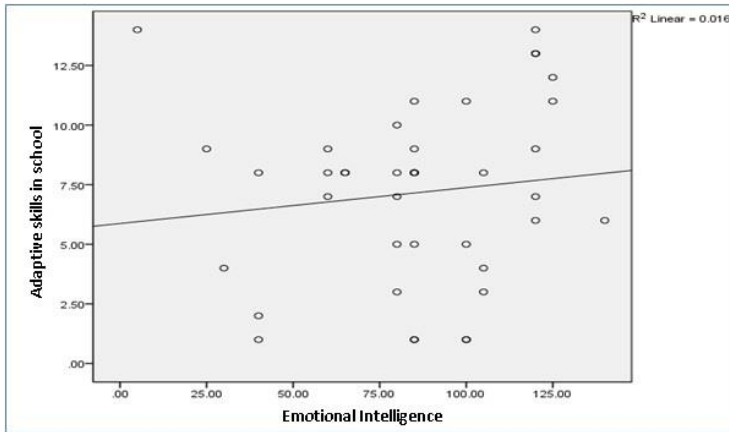
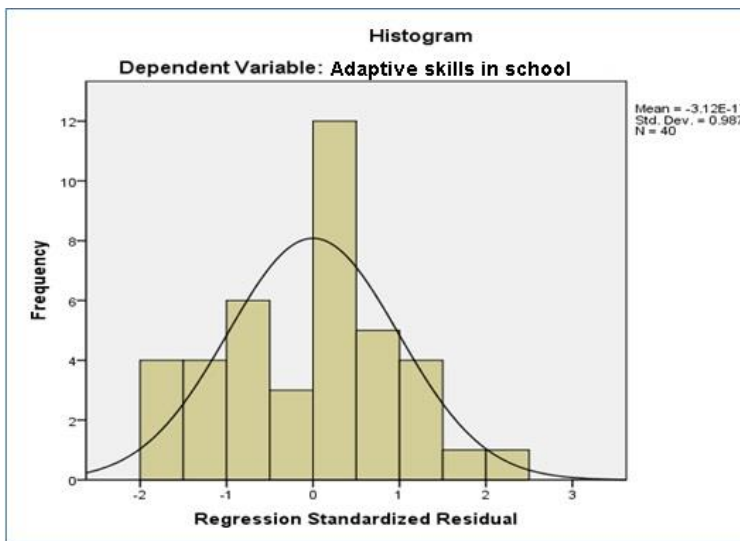


Figure 4. Error distribution



We can observe in Figure 3 that there is a linear relationship between the two variables and in Figure 4 we can see that the errors are normally distributed. If we analyze Table 2, the values *Std. Residual*, *Stud. Residual* and *Cook's Distance*, knowing that for more than 1% of the values of *Std. Residual* and *Stud. Residual* are between [-3, 3], the regression equation is not stable (Field, 2013). And as the minimum and maximum values in Table 2 are not overpassing this interval, we will consider that there are no extreme cases. In the same time, we notice that in Table 2 the maximum value for *Cook's Distance* is 0.69 (smaller than 1), which shows us that there are no influent cases. We

can therefore conclude that all the conditions for the simple linear regression are fulfilled.

Table 2. Statistical data concerning errors

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Predicted Value	5.9473	7.9800	7.1500	.46735	40
Std. Predicted Value	-2.573	1.776	.000	1.000	40
Standard Error of Predicted Value	.594	1.659	.805	.244	40
Adjusted Predicted Value	3.9992	8.2145	7.1000	.65601	40
Residual	-6.37773	8.05266	.00000	3.70925	40
Std. Residual	-1.697	2.143	.000	.987	40
Residual Stud.	-1.724	2.388	.006	1.022	40
Deleted Residual	-6.58237	10.00078	.05002	3.98471	40
Mahal. Distance	.000	\	.975	1.342	40
Cook's Distance	.000	6.622	.039	.109	40
Centered Leverage Value	.000	.170	.025	.034	40

Tables 3 and 4 include the results of the simple linear regression analysis, what we may notice from these data is the fact that the results are statistically significant $F(1,39) = 0.603$, $Sig. = 0.442$ and the adjusted value of the determination quotient is 0.016, meaning that just 1.6% of the emotional intelligence variance could explain the social skills one.

Table 3. Results of the regression analysis concerning the social skills based on the scores in emotional intelligence

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	β	b	SE b
1	.125	.016	-.010	.125	.015	.019

Table 4. Results in testing the significance of the regression line emotional intelligence-social skills

Model	Sum of Squares	df.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	8.518	1	8.518	.603	.442 ^a
Residual	536.582	38	14.121		
Total	545.100	39			

Therefore, we can conclude that the first assumption is not confirmed, that means emotional intelligence is not a predictor for the social skills in children with hearing disabilities.

Concerning the second assumption which refers to the absence of any correlation between social skills and the degree of hearing loss and the type of hearing aid (prothesis, functional implant, non-functional implant or not wearing the prothesis) in children with hearing disabilities. First of all, we verified the distribution for the involved variable to see if this a normal one, through the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Table 5). The test compares the distribution of scores for the sample with a normal distribution with the same mean and standard deviation. Since the result for this test is statistically significant for variables degree of hearing loss and type of hearing aid, we can conclude that the answers are not normally distributed for these variables.

Table 5. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. Comparison of the distribution of scores for the sample with a normal distribution with the same mean and standard deviation

	Adaptive skills in school	Degree of hearing disability	Type of hearing aid
N	40	40	40
Normal Parameters ^{a,b}	7.1500	3.7250	1.9250
Mean			
Std. Deviation	3.73857	.64001	.97106
Most Extreme Differences	.140	.466	.330
Absolute			
Positive	.085	.334	.330
Negative	-.140	-.466	-.291
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z	.885	2.949	2.085

Since two variables are not normally distributed and ordinal, to verify the correlation between social skills, the degree of hearing loss and the type of hearing aid, we wanted to find out the Spearman correlation quotient (Table 6).

Table 6. Spearman correlations for adaptive skills, degree of hearing loss and type of hearing aid

Correlations				
	Adaptive skills in school	Degree of hearing loss	Type of hearing aid	
Spearman's rho	1.000	.155	.066	
Adaptive skills in school Correlation Coefficient				
Sig. (2-tailed)		.341	.684	

N	40	40	40
Degree of hearing loss Correlation Coefficient	.155	1.000	-.188
Sig. (2-tailed)	.341		.246
N	40	40	40
Type of hearing aid Correlation Coefficient	.066	-.188	1.000
Sig. (2-tailed)	.684	.246	
N	40	40	40

As we can observe from Table 6, there is no statistically significant correlation between social skills and the degree of hearing loss, $\rho(38) = 0.155$, Sig. = 0.341 and in the same time there is no statistically significant correlation between social skills and the type of the hearing aid $\rho(38) = 0.066$, Sig.=0.684.

Since we have obtained these results, we can conclude that the second assumption we stated is confirmed and therefore there is a correlation between social skills and the degree of hearing loss and the type of hearing aid (prothesis, functional implant, non-functional implant or not wearing the prothesis) in children with hearing disabilities.

7. Discussions and conclusions

The idea of the present study came from our concerns regarding the way in which children with hearing disabilities succeed to adapt in different settings and of course, mainly in school because it is the environment where we have the opportunity to observe and to analyze all the aspects that go along with it. It seemed of great interest for us to see if we could realize some connections between some variables related to the child himself, that is emotional intelligence and adaptive skills, and on the other hand, the degree of hearing loss and the type of hearing aid. And of great importance is also the way in which the child gets related to the teachers, to his peers in school and his relationships within his family.

We consider that both emotional intelligence and social adaptive skills in school have a greater chance to develop in an adequate way if teachers show empathy, respect, trust, an active involvement in all their activities, even if these are successful or if they fail from time to time. Studies suggest that sociodemographic variables; such as access to hearing assessment and speech services, time of intervention, presence of hearing impaired family member, preferred communication method of family, preferred communication method of the participants regardless of

their hearing loss play important roles in developing the adaptive emotional abilities of children with hearing disabilities and that hearing disability itself is not the only reason of lower performance of this category of children (Akram & Hameed, 2014).

On the other hand, other studies, such as the one conducted by De Giacomo (2013) investigating cognitive skills, adaptive behaviors, social and emotional skills in children with cochlear implants showed that there were no significant differences with the results of children with normal hearing, perhaps only small differences concerning emotional problems and relationships with peers.

Of course, as seen in our study we did not intend to investigate all the relationships between all the variables we mentioned above, this could be one of the limitations. One other limitation is related to the number of the participants, so we can say that the results we obtained concern this group of participants only and not all the factors that could contribute to the extent of their development neither in the emotional intelligence area, nor in the one of adaptive skills were considered.

Nevertheless, it is well known that life skills training is effective in enhancing the self-esteem of children with hearing disabilities and some of the social skills that children may develop are related to making friends, initiating conversation, joining social groups, all of these can be taught by modeling, social skills exercises, stories, dramatherapy (Vernosfaderani, 2013).

When we speak about children with hearing disabilities, the message they perceive is, most of the time shortened, partially perceived, the child is rebuilding it according to the context, to his knowledge, to his intelligence. That is the reason why there are many misunderstandings, situations of bad interpretation, incorrect meanings which can produce challenging behaviors, out of the context, not adapted to the situation, which can create confusion for the child with hearing disabilities as well as for the normally hearing person.

The participants who receive intervention in pre-lingual period in the form of any amplification, cochlear implantation, speech training, have higher levels of emotional abilities and this is the case also for the participants we included in our study. The results are also consistent with the findings of Smith et al. (2014) who asserted the important role of early intervention in the development of cognitive abilities of children with hearing impairments. Early intervention is possible on the basis of early assessment and diagnosis. The children with hearing disabilities who received language oriented early intervention programs showed better social emotional adjustment as compared to peers who were not involved in intervention programs (Calderon & Greenberg, 1993) and this is also a possible reason for our results. For sure, further research is needed with larger samples in different settings

and considering the interactions between more variables in order to confirm some of the findings.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article

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Cyberbullying: a brief research study emphasizing junior high students' perceptions regarding the cyberbullying phenomenon

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Cyberbullying: a brief research study emphasizing junior high students' perceptions regarding the cyberbullying phenomenon

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Abstract

Keywords:

cyberbullying; awareness level; strategies; coping; prevention

The present study is a result of a psycho-pedagogical experiment with junior high students' perceptions regarding the cyberbullying phenomenon. The experimental program, based on a needs analysis and carried out by the survey method (questionnaire developed by the authors), was used to increase and measure students' awareness of the cyberbullying phenomenon. While some students consider cyberbullying a major issue, others do not acknowledge its presence. The psycho-pedagogical experiment focused on a set of strategies for preventing, combatting and approaching (coping with) the elements and specific situations of cyberbullying, communication with an adult, interpersonal communication at group level, role-playing, games, etc. The activities in the experimental program were meant to prevent the phenomenon of cyberbullying and placed a special emphasis on the key role of parents and educators in assisting students.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Cybermobbing;
Bekanntheitsgrad;
Strategien;
Bewältigung;
Prävention

Vorliegende Studie ist das Resultat eines psycho-pädagogischen Experimentes mit Kindern in den Klassen 9 zu der Wahrnehmung des Phänomens cyberbullying. Das experimentelle Programm, das nach einer Bedarfsanalyse durchgeführt wurde, die mit der Erhebungsmethode auf der Grundlage eines von den Autoren entwickelten Fragebogens durchgeführt wurde, wurde verwendet, um das Bewusstsein der Schüler für das oben genannte Phänomen zu erhöhen und zu messen. Während einige Studenten Cybermobbing als Hauptproblem betrachten, erkennen andere seine Anwesenheit nicht an. Das psychopädagogische Experiment stützte sich auf eine Reihe von Strategien zur Verhinderung, Bekämpfung und Annäherung (Bewältigung) der Elemente und spezifischen Situationen von Cybermobbing, Kommunikation mit Erwachsenen, zwischenmenschlicher Kommunikation auf Gruppenebene, Rollenspielen usw. Die Aktivitäten im experimentellen Programm sollen das Phänomen des Cybermobbings verhindern und einen besonderen Schwerpunkt auf die Schlüsselrolle von Eltern und Erziehern bei der Unterstützung von Schülern legen.

1. Introduction

The physical, verbal or emotional aggressiveness in the educational environment has always been present overtly or covertly, but because of the media, the various social networks, one can say that it has become a phenomenon called bullying that may occur at different ages and have different forms, direct, online, electronic etc (Chiş & Grec, 2019).

As children began spending more and more time interacting with each other online, a new phenomenon known as cyberbullying has emerged and has become increasingly prevalent, particularly among teenagers. Thus, it has become an issue that has drawn the attention of both parents and educators.

In Romania, research on education and the online environment has been realized so far in relation to generation Z learning skills (Dulamă et al., 2019), to web-

based research and e-learning (Ilovan et al., 2015; Ilovan, 2019; Ilovan et al., 2019), to using online apps and web sources in learning through discovery (Rus et al., 2019), and especially to e-learning using Facebook (Dulamă et al., 2015; Dulamă, Ilovan & Buş, 2016; Dulamă, Vana & Ilovan, 2016). Most of these studies focus on improving e-learning at the university level.

In this context, our paper fills a gap in research on education and the online environment, focusing on the spreading phenomenon of bullying, with a high impact in school and outside it.

2. Problem statement

A common definition of cyberbullying is that provided by Hinduja and Patchin (2015) in their book *Bullying Beyond the Schoolyard: Preventing and Responding to*

Cyberbullying, where the authors refer to this phenomenon as a “willful and repeated harm inflicted through the use of computers, cell phones, and other electronic device” (Hinduja & Patchin, 2015, p 5).

One of the main goals of the study was to test students’ awareness levels regarding the cyberbullying phenomenon. When asked to provide examples of cyberbullying, 35% of the students in the focus group mentioned mean comments as a means of harassment online, 33% made reference to offensive pictures being posted online, 27% considered spreading online rumors a form of harassment, and the other 4% indicated other reasons, but not specific ones. Furthermore, 42% of the students who completed the survey believe that cyberbullies harass others in order to make themselves feel better, 32% of those questioned consider that cyberbullies have issues at home, are hurt and thus attempt to hurt others as well; 11% of the students believe that cyberbullies are jealous of others, and another 11% indicated other non-specific reasons, while only 5% of the students believe that cyberbullies harass others as a joke.

When asked why they do not consider cyberbullying a good idea, 53% of the students in the focus group believe that cyberbullying hurts others, 29% indicated that cyberbullying can lead to suicide, and only 18% believe cyberbullying is a bad idea simply because others can see the posts.

3. Research Questions

The perceptions of students in the focus group regarding the phenomenon of bullying and cyberbullying were identified in the school year 2018-2019 using a questionnaire of authors’ own conception which included 11 questions that the students were asked to answer during school hours. All answers were anonymous and have provided valuable insight into the various ways students perceive cyberbullying, the means they use to cope with it, as well as the strategies they implement to avoid its unpleasant outcomes.

During the pedagogic experiment the following research questions have been explored:

1. *How can we identify bullying situations at school and online?*
2. *What effect does the experimental program have on preventing the phenomenon of cyberbullying?*

4. Purpose of the Study

The main aim of the study was to emphasize students’ various levels of awareness regarding the cyberbullying phenomenon and to translate their responses into a plan meant to raise awareness on the issue, help students cope with the phenomenon, and aid them in preventing its occurrence.

In order to raise students’ awareness towards cyberbullying, after interpreting the results, we devised and implemented an intervention program tailored for the focus group.

Various strategies have been proposed such as prevention strategies, prevention of and coping with situations specific to cyberbullying, communication with an adult, interpersonal communication within the group and role play.

5. Research Methods

In this research the following methods have been used: the pedagogical experiment, the focus group and direct observation of students, analysis of documents.

The research took place in the 2018-2019 school year and had as a focus group 19 freshman students (grade 9) who were attending Logos Christian Academy in Illinois, USA.

The needs analysis has been devised based on observations and class discussions regarding bullying as well as various observations made throughout school years. These observations indicated that some students consider cyberbullying as non-existent or are not fully aware of its seriousness and implications.

In the pre-experimental stage, we administered an investigation variant, namely the indirect written investigation with the purpose of selecting the content in order to apply the psycho pedagogical experiment. The interpretation of the answers received from the first questionnaire was the starting point for the discussions and activities as part of the initiated experimental program. Thus, as part of the research, an initial questionnaire for students was used.

The initial questionnaire was compiled after consulting various materials that can be found on www.kidshealth.org, www.nsteens.org and www.cyberbullying.org and after reading Jane Hunt’s book *Bullying: Bully no More*.

6. The intervention program

The pillars of the intervention program were chosen based on the students’ answers received in the initial questionnaire: awareness of the phenomenon of online harassment and its implications, online harassment, suicidal tendencies, the circular nature of harassment, motives, coping strategies, the effects of long-term harassment.

The proposed study focused on the application of a training program conducted over eight weeks. The program included activities to identify, prevent and combat cyberbullying. We selected for presentation and discussed with the students the following topics and ways of intervention: increasing self-esteem, identifying the roles of

the aggressor, victim, witness, as well as concrete ways to prevent and respond in cyberbullying situations. We also mentioned some ways to achieve the above mentioned aspects: role play, debate sessions, watching videos, etc.

The aim was to emphasize the elements which indicated a sufficient awareness of cyberbullying and its implications (such as suffering inflicted by cyberbullying, to the point of prompting suicide) but also an insufficient awareness of some of the implications of cyberbullying (the circular nature of cyberbullying, reasons for cyberbullying, strategies for coping with the cyberbully, effects and implications of cyberbullying).

7. Findings

Our findings indicate that bullying and cyberbullying situations can be identified by observing students' behaviour and language both at school and in the online environment.

The experimental program meant to prevent cyberbullying had several results: it approached a phenomenon known by most students, it led to open class discussions regarding the phenomenon, it helped raise students' awareness of the phenomenon, it posed several challenging questions regarding how students can cope with and prevent the phenomenon, and it helped create a safe environment where students felt more comfortable to share their thoughts and ask for help from adults. A vital element in the prevention of cyberbullying is awareness of the phenomenon and the appropriate training of adults (both teachers and parents) so as to enable them to identify the phenomenon, its victims, and properly assist students who are cyberbullied.

The focus group pertaining to this study is a clear example that open, frank discussions regarding cyberbullying and practical advice offered to children can be of help to them in knowing how to deal with existing or potential cyberbullying instances. After the focus group completed the surveys, a prevention and coping program was tailored based on their answers and was carried out for several weeks during school hours.

At the end of the survey, students were asked, among other questions, how they would respond if they were cyberbullied online; 36% (compared to only 28% in the initial survey) said that they would ignore the aggressor's comments, and 26% (compared to only 11% in the initial survey) affirmed that they would discuss the matter with an adult. However, the percentage remained almost identical regarding the possibility of confronting the aggressor (22% in the first survey compared to 21% in the second survey).

8. Conclusion

Although online disagreements are not always the cause for cyberbullying, the phenomenon seems to be increasingly prevalent. The intervention to prevent the

bullying phenomenon will enable the protection of children against all types of aggression, violence, ensuring the school and community safety for our children (Chiş & Grec, 2019).

The interpretation of the results points to the fact that a significant number of the participants in this study (over 50% of them) considered useful and helpful the class activities throughout the program and the mottos introduced during the second week of the program

Both parents and educators play a key role in educating children and teens about the prevalence and risks of cyberbullying. The study also concludes that an 8-week intervention program is insufficient to educate students regarding the cyberbullying phenomenon, which is why schools should have such ongoing programs throughout the entire school year.

Furthermore, such prevention and coping programs should be designed not only for students but also for adults (teachers and parents alike) so as to enable them to identify cyberbullying, to cope with it and to protect children from its harmful effects.

This study has been beneficial not only for the students in the focus group but also for us as educators, offering us a more comprehensive view of the phenomenon, prompting us to delve deeper into the topic, and helping us have open discussions with the students. Our students' interest in this topic, involvement in the experiment, and frank answers have been an invaluable tool.

We will strive to continue to raise awareness on this topic among students, colleagues, and parents and will suggest that cyberbullying prevention strategies be part of the school curriculum.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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Use of Digital Games in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners

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Use of Digital Games in Teaching Vocabulary to Young Learners

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Abstract

Keywords:

Digital games; English; vocabulary; young learners

It has been an educational policy for the Turkish educational authorities to teach English as a foreign language from early ages of children. This research attempts to determine the role of digital games on enhancing English vocabulary and to compare games with pen and paper practices. For this purpose, digital games on EBA (Education Informatics Network) platform were used for enhancing vocabulary teaching in a public primary school in Turkey. The study recruited 37 third-grade students from two separate classes. A class of 20 students was identified as the experimental group, and another class of 17 students was assigned as the control group. The data for this study was obtained by gathering information from pre and post-tests. The control group received English lessons without using games on EBA, while the experimental group used EBA while learning vocabulary. Independent sample t-test was used to measure the effect of digital games on the vocabulary learning of the experimental group. It was deduced from the findings that there were statistically significant differences in the mean scores of post-tests. The findings showed that the experimental group outperformed the control group and the statistical results were considerable in post-test. Findings indicate that digital games usage in teaching vocabulary is effective for learners to improve their vocabulary knowledge.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Digitale Spiele; Englisch; Wortschatz; junge Lerner

Für die Türkischen Bildungsbehörden war es eine Bildungspolitik, Englisch als Fremdsprache von klein auf zu unterrichten. Diese Forschung versucht, die Rolle digitaler Spiele bei der Verbesserung des englischen Wortschatzes zu bestimmen und Spiele mit Stift- und Papierpraktiken zu vergleichen. Zu diesem Zweck wurden digitale Spiele auf der EBA-Plattform (Education Informatics Network) verwendet, um den Wortschatzunterricht in einer öffentlichen Grundschule in der Türkei zu verbessern. Die Studie rekrutierte 37 Schüler der dritten Klasse aus zwei getrennten Klassen. Eine Klasse von 20 Schülern wurde als Versuchsgruppe identifiziert, und eine weitere Klasse von 17 Schülern wurde als Kontrollgruppe zugewiesen. Die Daten für diese Studie wurden durch Sammeln von Informationen aus Vor- und Nachuntersuchungen erhalten. Die Kontrollgruppe erhielt Englischunterricht ohne Verwendung von EBA-Spielen, während die Versuchsgruppe EBA beim Erlernen des Wortschatzes verwendete. Ein unabhängiger Stichproben-T-Test wurde verwendet, um die Auswirkung digitaler Spiele auf das Vokabellernen der Versuchsgruppe zu messen. Aus den Ergebnissen wurde abgeleitet, dass es statistisch signifikante Unterschiede in den Durchschnittswerten der Nachuntersuchungen gab. Die Ergebnisse zeigten, dass die Versuchsgruppe die Kontrollgruppe übertraf und die statistischen Ergebnisse nach dem Test beträchtlich waren. Die Ergebnisse zeigen, dass die Verwendung digitaler Spiele im Vokabeltraining für Lernende effektiv ist, um ihr Vokabularwissen zu verbessern.

1. Introduction

Technology has a leading role in every aspect of life and education takes its part utilizing technology for teaching learning process. Educational practices are constantly seeking innovation as a result of developments in information communication technologies and changes in educational practices naturally change teaching and learning approaches. Traditionally, students have access to information through books and lectures, however, technology especially internet, which is being used in many schools, enables learning anywhere and anytime, and information is always available for students and teachers.

Together with the other subjects, foreign language teaching takes its part in using technology in classes. Different language teaching methods are applied to increase the effectiveness of teaching process and technology succeeds in replacing traditional teaching. With the spread and development of English around the world, English has long been had its place in the Turkish educational system and enjoys his status by its position as a key subject in both primary and secondary schools' curricula. Technology offers many options to make teaching interesting and at the same time make teaching

more productive especially when in a country with little or no opportunity to encounter with a native speaker and practise the language learned. As students from early ages begin learning English, in order to attract their attention, using multimedia is a good way to satisfy both visual and auditory senses of students. In language teaching, technology such as internet, mobile phones, computers or videos offers many opportunities. Using multimedia in English language teaching has many advantages.

The aim of the foreign language teaching is to enable the students to acquire four language skills, speaking, listening, reading and writing. However, students need vocabulary to communicate using the target language. The lack of vocabularies has hindrances and obstacles for the students to speak fluently and accurately. Without vocabulary acquisition, it is impossible to construct meaningful sentences in communication (Patahuddin, Syawal & Bin-Tahir, 2017). It is an undeniable fact that language skills require a lot of vocabulary and vocabulary helps you to express your opinion fully. Vocabulary allows the use of structures and functions that facilitate communication (Nunan, 1991). As teaching English starts at the age of 8 in the Turkish education system and young learners get distracted too soon, an effective way to teach vocabulary is the use of digital games as games are motivating and more appealing for students to learn a foreign language.

There are some studies confirming the effects of digital games on vocabulary learning (Reinhardt & Sykes, 2014; Shyamlee & Phil, 2012; Sundqvist & Sylvèn, 2014; Takeuchi & Vaala, 2014; Taghizadeh, Vaezi & Ravan, 2017; Vasileiadou & Makrina, 2017). However, most of them are conceptual studies and there is little empirical evidence of the impact of digital gaming in classrooms. Most digital game-based language learning research has been conducted outside the classroom but little research has been done on the integration of digital games into English classes (Thomas, 2012). To fill this gap, this study explored the implementation of digital games in English classes in a primary school. In this context, some digital platforms are investigated as there are many platforms for teachers to utilize games in their classes. One of these is *EBA* (Education Informatics Network) which is a platform designed to be used by both teachers and students online and offline at school or out of school. By means of *EBA*, teachers can upload and download multimedia contents and use them for educational purposes. Although there are other platforms to play digital games in classes, *EBA* is pre-controlled by the Turkish Ministry of Education and is an easy-to-use and intuitive tool that promotes motivation and competitiveness. Therefore, this research is aimed at using digital games on *EBA* to teach vocabulary.

In this study, it was aimed to find a solution for students' vocabulary problems. The purpose of the study is

to explore the effects of digital games for overcoming students' vocabulary problems.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Teaching Vocabulary

Vocabulary is one component of language skills such as reading, speaking, listening and writing. Vocabulary knowledge enables language use, language use enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge, and knowledge of the word enables the increase of vocabulary knowledge and language use and so on. In English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning, vocabulary items play a vital role in the acquisition of the four language skills –listening, speaking, reading, and writing (Nation, 2013). Without vocabulary knowledge, neither language production nor language comprehension would be possible. Therefore, the increase of vocabulary is one of the prerequisites for language acquisition and the increase of vocabulary is only possible when teachers use effective vocabulary teaching and learning strategies (Mukoroli, 2011). Teachers should help students learn the basic steps and how to access and acquire, recognize and remember, and activate and generate new word meanings to maximize vocabulary development (Loucky, 1998).

In English classes various communicative activities can be helpful in teaching vocabulary however, the most effective way to attract attention could be met via listening or visual representation. Nowadays, there is an increasing interest towards using technology in different fields of human life, particularly in education. Digital games are used for entertainment and facilitating the process of learning (Ilomaki & Kankaanranta, 2009).

2.2. Digital Games

“A game can be defined as a goal-oriented, rule-based, playful activity” (McGonigal, 2013). For today's generation, digital games play a significant role. Digital games are games that are programmed with various technologies and enable users to enter a visual environment (Çetin, 2013). Two types of games can be distinguished in this context: special purpose games developed with an educational purpose and Commercial-Off-The-Shelf games developed for entertainment purposes (Stewart et al., 2013). The launch of digital gaming in education focuses on games that are designed to teach academic content and skills to students playing them (Mayer, 2015). Hong, Cheng, Hwang, Lee and Chang (2009) classified digital games into 5 categories: (1) drill and practise games; (2) single combat games; (3) stable contest games; (4) evolutionary contest games; and (5) contextual games.

Using drill and practise games developed with educational purpose in classrooms impacts on the mode of learning as games motivate players to achieve goals, gratify the ego when winning, is fun through enjoyment and pleasure and spark the players' creativity to solve the game (Prensky, 2001). The use of digital games as a learning tool and game-like formats could be more effective at capturing learners' attention than traditional media such as textbooks (Wood, 2001).

Teaching vocabulary through the use of games is beneficial as games provide enjoyment and interest in learning (Bakhsh, 2016). Students especially young learners accept new foreign languages easily, if effective tools are devised to teach vocabulary. Vocabulary learning is considered as a difficult task because of memorizing unfamiliar words and spelling. In order to motivate and engage students more in the learning process, games could be an effective way. Technologies used in classrooms push us to move forward from conventional pen-and-paper instruction to more interactive and productive digital classroom activities. For Liu and Chen (2013), games with animated graphics and impacts of audio provide a good motivation for vocabulary learning.

Studies carried out with young learners of English as a foreign language show that using digital games during classes has a positive impact in the acquisition of vocabulary. A study carried out by Peterson (2013) resulted that kindergarten children who were taught vocabulary using digital games achieved more compared to the children learned through regular curriculum. Sundqvist and Sylvèn (2014) pointed out that 4th grade English learners had better outcomes in learning vocabulary than the students having been taught by traditional methods. According to Taghizadeh Vaezi and Ravan (2017), the use of games enables children to learn vocabulary better than using traditional methods. Also, Ashraf, Motlagh and Salami (2014) stressed the effect of using games in learning the vocabulary for children. Similarly, a study performed by Calvo-Ferrer (2017) showed that students used computer games scored significantly better than the ones who used other means of practicing vocabulary. In a meta-analysis of 17 studies by Yudinseva (2015) results concluded that foreign language vocabulary is enhanced when learners engage in playing video games.

Technology enhanced activities have long been in progress in Turkish education and interactive whiteboards, e books, interactive applications and internet use make a notable difference in teaching learning process. These developments create potentials for utilizing digital game activities for English classes.

Based on the aspects summarized in the introduction and literature review, the research question to be addressed is 'How effective is the use of *digital games* to enhance vocabulary?'

3. Methodology

3.1. Research design

The study followed a pre-test-post-test experimental-control group design to know how far digital games to improve the students' vocabulary. Both the control and experimental group attended the English classes for 80 minutes per week. The former followed the regular curriculum while the latter was supported with digital game-based learning activities.

3.2. Participants

The participating school was a public primary school in Turkey. Two third-grade classes were randomly selected to participate in this study. The total number of participants were 37 students (18 boys and 19 girls), ranging in age from 8 years to 9 years ($M = 8$ years and 5 months). The experimental group ($N = 20$) included 7 girls and 13 boys, and the control group ($N = 12$) involved 5 boys and 12 girls.

3.3. Instruments

A pre-test including 30 vocabulary items with a maximum score of 30 was administered to the groups of the study to discover the participants' level of knowledge of English vocabulary. The instrument prepared as the pre-test included the outcomes defined by the Turkish Ministry of Education.

A post-test was carried out to measure the students' level of improvement in comparison with the results taken in the pre-test. This instrument included 30 questions that were graded out of 30 points.

3.4. Procedure

The data for this study were gathered for a period of 4 months in 2019- 2020 academic year. An experimental design was used in order to carry out this research. The use of *digital games* and its effect on learning vocabulary in the English classroom were tested. The groups of students for this study were selected according to the class they were enrolled. There were 2 groups, 1 received English classes that included activities with *digital games on EBA* and the other taking regular classes and both studied vocabulary related to numbers, family members, adjectives, feelings, toys and games. During the study, the teacher taught the regular curriculum using the textbook, audio recordings, worksheets, tracing, cut and paste activities in both classes. For the experimental group, teacher designed classes using digital games on EBA including listening, matching and memorizing, finding and colouring activities. Digital game integration was implemented only in the experimental class.

At the beginning of the 4-month intervention period, a pre-test was administered to 37 students. At the end of the intervention, a post-test was administered to all of the participants.

After gathering and organizing the data from pre-tests, and post-tests, SPSS software was used in the analysis of the results; thus, descriptive and inferential statistics (with a confidence level of 95%) were applied, and the results of pre- and post-tests from the experimental and control groups, were compared and contrasted.

4. Results

The results of the pre-test administered to both groups to identify previous knowledge about vocabulary show that the experimental group obtained an average of 5,05 points and the control group 7,52 points. Thus, we can observe that, before the intervention, there was no significant difference ($t = 1,748, p = ,08$) between these two groups in relation to their proficiency level in EFL vocabulary.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for pre-test scores of the groups

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pre-test	Control	17	7,5294	4,92592	1,19471
	Experiment	20	5,0500	3,69174	,82550

As regards the post-test administered to both groups, the results show that students in the experimental group increased their score ($t = -2,134, p = ,04$). These results (see Table 2) make it evident that the use of *digital games* helped the students in the experimental group to increase their EFL vocabulary knowledge. This means that *use of digital games* was an effective tool to enhance vocabulary in these students. With respect to the control group, the increase in the post-test scores might be attributed to the regular teaching process that English teachers followed as part of the primary school curriculum.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for post-test scores of the groups

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Post-test	Control	17	11,5294	8,14799	1,97618
	Experiment	20	17,1000	7,71124	1,72428

To figure out whether the differences in the pre-test and post-test scores of the two groups were statistically significant or not, the following *t* test table (and the *p* value therein) had to be checked.

Table 3. Results of the independent-samples t-test comparing pre-test and post-test scores of the groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig.(2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
Pre-Test	Control	1,656	,207	1,748	35	,089	2,47941	1,41854	-,40038	5,35920
	Experiment			1,707	29,300	,098	2,47941	1,45216	-,48928	5,44810
Post-Test	Control	,001	,976	-2,134	35	,040	-5,57059	2,61067	-10,87052	-,27066
	Experiment			-2,124	33,355	,041	-5,57059	2,62268	-10,90431	-,23687

Table 3 depicts that there were no statistically significant differences in pre-test scores of the control and the experiment group ($t = 1,748, p = ,08$). This meant that the two groups did not differ significantly in terms of their vocabulary knowledge prior to the intervention. Results of the post-test indicated that after a semester of exposure to the digital game-based activities, the experimental group's post-test scores were significantly higher than those of the control group. This implies that the intervention had a

significant positive effect on the vocabulary knowledge of 3rd grade EFL learners.

5. Discussions

The goal of the study was to examine the effectiveness of digital games on the third-grade English vocabulary development and learning and to compare games with pen and paper practices. For this purpose, the research question asked whether using digital games has effect on English

vocabulary learning. Results of the study indicated that after a semester of exposure to the digital game-based activities, the experimental class' post-test scores were significantly higher than those of the control group. An independent sample *t*-test suggested there was a statistically significant difference in test scores between the experimental and control groups of students. This finding is supported by Ratminingsih, Mahadewi, and Divayana (2018) who state that the digital games help students learn while playing and come across grammatical patterns in different context. Similarly, Saffarian and Gorjian (2012) explored the effect of computer-based digital games for vocabulary development among young children in their study. After a pre-test and a post-test administered, they conveyed that computer-based digital games facilitated students' learning performance. In Another study supporting the findings, Lorenset and Tumolo (2019) investigated the use of the digital game *The Sims* using a pre-test and a post-test. Results indicated *The Sims* as effective for vocabulary acquisition in EFL.

The effect of using a digital computer game and its role on promoting Iranian children 's vocabulary learning was investigated by Aghlara and Tamjid (2011). The results indicated that the mean score of the children in the experimental group was significantly higher than those in the control group, indicating the positive effect of using digital games in teaching English vocabulary to children. Yip and Kwan (2006) have shown that students prefer learning that is supported by digital educational games rather than traditional activity-based lessons. According to their study, students who were provided with an electronic environment and games became more successful in learning new words compared to those who learned the same vocabulary through activity-based lessons.

6. Conclusions

Based on the results it can be concluded that the use of digital games in teaching English vocabulary to young learners was much more successful than the use of traditional methods. Digital tools are indispensable parts of most children's lives and using these tools in school could motivate children to enjoy classes more.

Digital games have replaced traditional games in the technology age and schools should keep up with the requisite of the age. For language learning, there are many methods to motivate and entertain young learners. However, games, especially digital ones, are up-to-date and more meaningful to those learners.

Authors note:

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language are her areas of interest. She lectures on curriculum development, scientific research methodologies.

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Efficient ways to develop reading comprehension skills

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Efficient ways to develop reading comprehension skills

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Abstract

Keywords:

skills; comprehension; read text; teaching strategies; interactive methods

In the past few years, there is an increasing emphasis on a pedagogy for skills. One of the most complex skills, which is formed from the first years of schooling, is the reading-writing skill. Students begin first grade with high expectations towards reading, with the desire to discover the mysteries of the letters. Reading requires - in addition to the ability to decode a written text and the comprehension of the reading - identifying the meaning of the word and the message to be transmitted. Failure in this sense has repercussions on the formation of the personality of the child. Teachers in the classroom are mainly concerned with the prevention of any difficulties that may arise in the formation of the ability to read and write, trying to come up with ways to intervene in the context of the educational process. This paper aims to find ways of training and developing reading comprehension methods that can be applied in the teaching and learning activities. This is particularly important for understanding and responding to the needs of each student in the class.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Kompetenzen; Verständnis; Text lesen; Unterrichtsstrategien; interaktive Methoden.

In den letzten Jahren wurde zunehmend Wert auf eine Pädagogik für Kompetenzen gelegt. Eine der komplexesten Kompetenzen, die von den ersten Schuljahren gebildet wird, betrifft das Lesen und Schreiben. Die Schüler beginnen die erste Klasse mit hohen Erwartungen an das Lesen, mit dem Wunsch, die Geheimnisse der Buchstaben zu entdecken. Das Lesen erfordert - neben der Fähigkeit, einen geschriebenen Text zu dekodieren und das Verständnis des Lesens - die Identifizierung der Bedeutung des Wortes und die gesendete Nachricht. Ein Versagen in diesem Sinne hat Auswirkungen auf die Persönlichkeitsbildung des Kindes. Die Lehrer im Klassenzimmer befassen sich hauptsächlich mit der Vermeidung von Schwierigkeiten, die bei der Bildung der Lese- und Schreibfähigkeit auftreten können, und versuchen, Wege zu finden, um im Kontext des Bildungsprozesses einzugreifen. Dieses Papier zielt darauf ab, Wege zu finden, um Leseverständnismethoden zu trainieren und zu entwickeln, die in den Lehr- und Lernaktivitäten angewendet werden können. Dies ist besonders wichtig, um die Bedürfnisse jedes Schülers in der Klasse zu verstehen und darauf zu reagieren.

1. Introduction

In the past few years, there has been an increasing emphasis on a pedagogy for skills. (Dulamă & Ilovan, 2015, 2017) One of the most complex skills, which is formed from the first years of schooling, is the reading-writing skill. This paper aims to find ways of training and developing reading comprehension methods that can be applied in the teaching and learning activities and in the assessment process. Nowadays, when information is conveyed in a variety of ways, the ability to read is essential and has value. We are surrounded by written materials (such as books, newspapers, magazines, books, advertisements, instant messages, web pages, etc.), so that reading takes up a leading role both in your professional life, as well as in the society. Reading requires the coordination of many strategies, abilities and skills: decoding the written text, comprehending the text read and the ability of the expression to the document. Thus, even in

the early years of schooling, as children are learning to read, reading becomes a fundamental skill as it is a cognitive instrument that is necessary in the acquisition of knowledge later on. The development of this competence is highly complex and it is a challenge for teachers, because not all children are able to develop the necessary reading skills or the appropriate comprehension skills. We also point out the fact that reading requires a higher level of inconsistencies in the interpretation and contribute to the development of vocabulary, communication, imagination, creativity and, implicitly, of school performance.

2. Problem Statement

Gardner argues that each individual possesses a unique combination of nine types of intelligence according to the Theory of Multiple Intelligences (linguistic/verbal, logical-

mathematical, musical/ rhythmic, visual-spatial, naturalistic, bodily-kinesthetic, intrapersonal, interpersonal, existential). This combination acts in a complementary, compensatory and co-ordinated manner. Therefore, in order to improve the training, there is need for a pedagogy that is interactive, varied, and individualized so as to take into account the psychological characteristics, the age of the students, their learning styles and their educational needs. (Bocoş, 2013, p. 143) Considering the potential of each student and his/her learning style, the content will be the same for all students, but the mode of transmission will be different, in order to achieve the targeted objectives and to focus on the individual work performed by each student. We provide a few examples of differentiated instructional strategies that need to be taken into account: the adequacy of the teaching methods and techniques with regard to the content that is to be offered and the potential of the students, the selection of appropriate resources, curriculum and organisation of students' work. Also, the notions, the concepts of the data will be logical and praxiological. It is important to note that the teacher plays the role of a mentor and of a guide of the learning activities and of the development process of students' capacities and skills.

3. Research Questions

As a result of the studies carried out in recent years relating to the differences in the formation of the text reading comprehension skills, it should be pointed out that, in some cases, the comprehension deficit cannot be attributed to the difficulties of decoding; also, a good decoding can co-exist with a poor comprehension ability. It is considered that there is a single system of processing, both in comprehension of the text read, as well as in the comprehension of the oral language. The consistency of the application of the appropriate strategies for learning to read and write will strengthen the development of skills for the comprehension of the written text. Over the years, over generations of students, it was found that there were students whose reading was cursive and without other lexical problems, but they failed to answer all the inferential questions asked, the comprehension of the text being deficient.

The research question is:

Is the development of reading comprehension skills favored by the use of teaching strategies appropriate to students' particularities?

4. Purpose of the study

The purpose of this psycho-pedagogical experiment is to highlight the need to understand the mechanisms involved in the activity of comprehending a text read and the specific students' learning characteristics in order to offer the teacher the possibility to adapt one's teaching style

to students' learning styles students and to promote the comprehension of a read text. When the transmitted message reaches the student in ways that suits one's needs, when it is in accordance with one's learning style, it is easily recognized by the brain, the assimilation of the knowledge being easily achieved and thus, the ability to interact with the text and to make the necessary connections between its elements increases.

5. The psycho-pedagogical experiment

The psycho-pedagogical experiment was carried out for a school year to first grade learners during the fundamental acquisitions stage. The application period was long-lasting, throughout the learning of reading and writing. The research methods used were observation, study of documents, psycho-pedagogical experiment, method of analysis of students' activity products and case study.

The development of reading comprehension skills starts from the preschool period and continues in the first years of schooling. We will present some absolutely necessary methods in this regard, methods that have been applied to first and second grade students.

The psycho-pedagogical experiment incorporated a set of activities that capitalized on specific methods for developing the comprehension of a text read. We will present some important and necessary aspects to be acquired by students in order to comprehend a text read. These aspects that have been taken into account since the acquisition of the first letters.

Training of phonological awareness

This constitutes a salient aspect and consists of developing and training learners' phonological consciousness. Following a synthesis study on maintaining the effects of training reading, Suggate (2016, in David & Roşan, 2019, p. 19) reports that "phonological awareness training produced lasting effects (M = 11 months), and the effect was transferred to other skills, for example comprehension."

Reading skills require action taken systematically and repeatedly which occurs before writing. At the beginning of the reading acquisition stage learners perceive the units separated from the composition of the word. Thus, efforts are needed for their synthesis. Then the perception of the word becomes global and is generalized in the case of syntagmatic units. This stage of global perception is followed by analysis in order to achieve the decoding and understanding of the word. The automation of the reading is related to the global and syncretic perception of the reading, being influenced by the speed and the focus on the main ideas.

It is necessary to have some acquisitions before starting the phonological awareness training, namely those related

to spatial notions and spatial orientation (sequence according to ordinal position) and hearing discrimination skills.

Training comprehension of the read text

The decoding and comprehension of the read text require linguistic, orthoepic, punctuation and interpretation knowledge. A good lexical skill is required, putting the imprint on the personality of the reader but also his age. As a result of reading, the visual attention increases, reaching a cursive and expressive reading, but also to the development of thinking, motivation and "multidimensional" language (Slama-Cazacu, 1999, in Burlea, 2007, p. 124). Of course, the comprehension of the text read also depends on the difficulty of the text, on the child's vocabulary, on the basis of the knowledge held and on the accuracy of the reading.

Teachers play a particularly important role in developing first grade learners' appropriate comprehensive skills. We will outline some aspects that must be taken into account. First, the texts chosen by the teacher must have two important characteristics, namely, to be cohesive and coherent. There must be links and meaning between the sentences in a text. The decoding of the words must be correct. If there is a word that learners do not understand, i.e. the comprehension of the sentence within a paragraph, then the understanding will be compromised, especially if that word is essential in the respective text. Also, the correct, coherent reading favors reading comprehension.

The connection made between the text read and the general knowledge that the reader has, generates the inferences that underlie reading comprehension. Studies by Barnes, Dennis & Haefele-Kalvaitis (1996) show that inferences improve with age and inferences made by young children may be limited by the accessibility of relevant information.

Following the studies, Mih (2004) emphasizes the important role of the explicit instructions provided by the teacher, through which the students are asked to generate relevant and correct inferences. By acquiring the appropriate modalities for their elaboration, children will understand the demands of the task and the meaning of the text, skills that can be applied in the situation of reading texts and viewing films or even cartoons.

Another important aspect represented the use of interactive methods suitable to the content transmitted.

Strategies for understanding the text through interactive methods

Interactive methods stimulate learning, critical, creative thinking, intragroup and intergroup communication, collaboration, create learning situations based on direct cooperation and involvement (Dulamă et al., 2015, 2019). All of these develop the self-esteem of the

student, motivating him / her for active participation and involvement in the task, promoting a positive attitude and, which is very important, tolerance and mutual respect (Ilovan et al., 2016).

We will mention only a few interactive methods that favor the teaching-learning process when studying a text read.

Group-led activity is a method that supports the comprehension of the text read by asking inferential questions (connection, anaphoric, elaboration, predictive, factual) corresponding to the read content, thus developing the student's ability to detect important details and process texts. It also emphasizes anticipation as an important aspect of reading, students using the knowledge they possess and critical thinking to generate new ideas.

Directed reading and thinking activity resembles group-led activity, except that this method emphasizes the prediction of what will happen or will continue in the story or informative text. Thus, it is recommended that the text contains surprise elements.

"I know / I want to know / I learned" is another method of developing the comprehension of a text read, generally with scientific, informational content, which guides the extended learning along several activities. The students are helped to formulate inferential questions corresponding to the text and which can be elaborated due to their curiosity, uncertainty regarding the understanding of a content etc.

Mutual teaching is a method of learning through cooperation, through which inferential questions, prediction, clarification and summary of the read text appear. Also, students learn the positive interdependence and development of interpersonal skills.

A search procedure is applied when the text has a more complex content, it is requested information related to the main idea, clarification of details, deductions, predictions.

Thinking aloud is useful when it is necessary for the teacher to demonstrate the interaction with the text during reading. The processes that take place during the reading of a text are modeled in such a way that the students understand the reader's way of thinking. The teacher will reveal to the students what happens in his mind during the reading, emphasizing the use of imagery, which by indirect effect keeps the attention and the deeper processing active. It is also known that imaging exercises are a support in reading activities during the first years of school.

Interactive methods are multiple and varied and their use for comprehending the text read depends on the creativity of the teacher and its content.

6. Findings

At the beginning of the second grade, after the psychopedagogical experiment, students in the experimental class

were asked to read a text at first sight and answer in written form to different inferential questions, formulated by the teacher. These were incorporated in the design documents of the evaluation of the products of the activity.

As a result of applying the methods mentioned above to students in the first grades, the effects were visible. Through the exercises of phonological awareness training, working memory was trained, the students retained the correct order of the letters easier, assigning them the corresponding sounds, the correct division of the words in syllables, the memory of the first syllable and the generation of the following syllables in order to identify the words correctly.

By explaining and understanding the steps to be taken in order to comprehend a text read, school performance increases, a fact that was proven by the case studies performed.

Further on, we exemplify the progress made by the students participating in the case studies: Our subject, D.C. is dyslexic and reads more slowly, with stumbling blocks and returns to the text read. He managed to answer correctly to approximately 80% of the inferential questions asked, erroneous answers being found to the questions regarding the connection inferences. Also, T.C and A.P, who come from disadvantaged families, learned to read and write. They answered correctly to 90% and 80% of the questions asked after reading a text at first sight. D.C who has elements specific to the attention deficit, managed to answer correctly to 76% of the questions, while the wrong answers occurred in questions related to connection inferences and, in part, to the ones concerning the elaboration inferences.

Also, the use of interactive strategies involves the students in activities through active participation, asking them to solve tasks, determining students' self-esteem as an outcome of the success achieved. It can be said that interactive methods have energized the teaching-learning process and motivated the students. These methods develop the ability to communicate and cooperate, the skills of networking and teamwork, positive attitudes and adaptability, involvement and responsibility.

7. Conclusion

The use of the interactive strategies from the psychopedagogical experiment involved the students in activities through active participation. By asking them to solve the tasks it determined an increase in self-esteem. It can be said that interactive methods have energized the teaching-learning process and motivated students.

These methods develop the ability to communicate and cooperate, networking and teamwork skills, positive attitudes and adaptability, involvement and responsibility.

By referring to the research question, we can conclude that the development of reading comprehension skills is

favoured by the use of teaching strategies appropriate to the particularities of students.

In a world full of stimuli, focusing children's attention on reading is useful and necessary for developing the skills of receiving the written message. The development of the comprehension of a read text depends, to a large extent, on the applied methods, on the tasks and texts used by the teacher. The efficiency of the didactic steps taken in order to train comprehension skills is determined by the existence of the skills of reading, analyzing and interpreting a text. The modeling occupies an important role in the development of the reading comprehension, the students being determined to participate actively in order to identify any existing ambiguities so that they can subsequently read on their own and apply the acquired skills. Applying in a suitable manner to the potential of the students in the classroom, the hidden curriculum will determine the development of the comprehension skills of the read text at its own pace, specific to the particular psychological particularities of the students.

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The curricular model of personal development and the multimodal text in the context of new curricula for Romanian language and literature. Diachronic and synchronic perspective

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The curricular model of personal development and the multimodal text in the context of new curricula for Romanian language and literature. Diachronic and synchronic perspective

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Abstract

Keywords:

competences, curricular paradigm, the model of personal development, multimodal text, Romanian language and literature curriculum

The new pedagogies have forced a rethinking of the educational system, including the curriculum. The curricular model of personal development, dominant in the school curricula applied in the gymnasium, shifts the focus to the student, favors active-participatory methods and favors reflection on oneself, on others and on the world. Although there is more talk now about this curricular model, it is recurrent in visions of education from Aristotle to Dewey, being explicitly found in Bain's vision of “exceptional learning”. The inclusion of the multimodal text in the Romanian language and literature curriculum for the gymnasium, built on the curricular model of personal development, is justified precisely because it stimulates self-knowledge, understanding of the world and creativity. Although the concept of multimodal text is present in the school curriculum, including at the level of competences, textbooks do not pay much attention to it.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Kompetenzen, Lehrplanparadigma, Modell der persönlichen Entwicklung, multimodaler Text, Lehrplan für rumänische Sprache und Literatur

Die neuen Pädagogiken haben ein Umdenken des Bildungssystems einschließlich des Lehrplans erzwungen. Das Lehrplanmodell der persönlichen Entwicklung, das in den im Gymnasium angewandten Lehrplänen dominiert, verlagert den Fokus auf den Schüler, bevorzugt aktiv-partizipative Methoden und begünstigt die Reflexion über sich selbst, andere und die Welt. Obwohl jetzt mehr über dieses Lehrplanmodell gesprochen wird, kommt es immer wieder in Bildungsvisionen von Aristoteles bis Dewey vor, die ausdrücklich in Bains Vision von “außergewöhnlichem Lernen” zu finden sind. Die Aufnahme des multimodalen Textes in den Lehrplan für rumänische Sprache und Literatur für das Gymnasium, der auf dem Lehrplanmodell der persönlichen Entwicklung aufbaut, ist gerade deshalb gerechtfertigt, weil er die Selbsterkenntnis, das Verständnis der Welt und die Kreativität fördert. Obwohl das Konzept des multimodalen Textes im Lehrplan enthalten ist, auch in Bezug auf Kompetenzen, schenken Lehrbücher ihm nicht viel Aufmerksamkeit.

The new pedagogies require a rethinking of the educational system, a rebalancing of the structural and functional components of education, including the curriculum, understood broadly as a whole of the educational processes and learning experiences of a student during his schooling, and narrowly as a whole regulatory document that generate these processes.

The National Education Law no. 1/2011 generated two essential changes in the Romanian education system: the

introduction of the preparatory class and the orientation of the curriculum towards the formation of key competencies, their structuring level being visible in the graduate profile, a document that establishes the status of the educable at the end of each schooling. A consequence in the operational perspective (Bocoş & Jucan, 2019) of this curricular reform was the elaboration of new framework plans, new school curricula and new alternative, digital textbooks.

1. The curricular model of personal development. Not such a new model

Firstly, the program is characterized by reconfiguring the previously applied curricular model. The dominant curricular model of personal development (Sâmihăian, 2014; Pamfil, 2016), which does not cancel the communicative-functional model, but diminishes its weight, has as a starting point the pedagogical reform of the first decades of the twentieth century, a *Copernican revolution* (Dewey, 1929) focused on the idea that in the elaboration of educational goals one should not start from the contents, but from the needs of the educable, from his learning potential. However, the perspective is not so new, it is found over time in the theses of some philosophers and pedagogues belonging to different temporal and spatial contexts. For example, in Aristotle's vision, formulated in *Politics*, education is related to the need for happiness of the individual, and not only to the needs and reasons of the state. Happiness (eudaimonia) is understood as the state of man acting in accordance with his own nature, which requires the creation of contexts for man to reach the stage that allows him to know the characteristics of his own person. A few centuries later, Rabelais amends in his novels the pedagogical principles of the scholastic type, promoting the advantages of humanistic pedagogy, at the center of which is the human being and its harmonious development. And the pedagogical system developed by Comenius takes into account the personal development of the child, relying on an authentic and thorough education, consistent and intuitive.

The model of conformity with the nature and axiomatics of universal education contain some of the principles of the model of personal development, according to which learning is generated by investigating and exploring the world and not by transmitting information, much less unnecessary information. Education is seen as an active process, developer of lateral thinking, the human being not having enough understanding of the world, in the conditions in which it must be able to participate in its change, through active citizenship: All must be trained not to enter the world as mere spectators, but as future people of action. Jean-Jaques Rousseau's vision of education is similar to that of Comenius, in the sense that it starts from conformity with nature, but, unlike its predecessor, in building its own set of principles takes into account the concrete nature of the child. In *Emile or about education*, Rousseau promotes the need for free development of the child and the importance of capitalizing on his experiences, and when discussing the orientation towards intellectual and moral education or the relationship between desire and necessity, the French philosopher only anticipates the model of personal development. In fact, the human condition, which he considers a vocation of humanity, concentrates the central function of education to determine

human development in its essence, which involves not only knowledge of the world and self-knowledge, but also the ability to relate creatively to concrete situations. And some of Kantian Herbart's pedagogical ideas converge on this vision. From his point of view, education is not an end in itself, but a way for the formation of the moral man, and between this ideal and the moment when education begins there are intermediate goals, generated by the interests of students, be they empirical, speculative, aesthetic, moral, social or religious. His conclusion is that the school has the role to develop multilateral receptivity to the student and to cultivate multilateral interest, the effect being visible in the way the future adult will relate to himself, to others and to the world in which he will live.

The twentieth century was decisive for changing the paradigm of education. Criticizing the conservative view that the school's purpose is to convey information, Dewey proposes a life-related education that meets the child's (autotelic) developmental needs. Although he does not call it that, the curricular model he proposes is close to that of personal development, Dewey pointing out that the learning process belongs to the child, whose potential must be allowed to assert itself and practice. Contemporaneous with Dewey, Bobbitt, a follower of social efficiency in education, also associates the curriculum with learning experiences, emphasizing that capitalizing on experiences contributes to ensuring the ability to understand the world and oneself.

In the model of personal development that articulates the current curriculum, we started from Bain's (2004) vision of *exceptional learning*. In the approach taken to define this concept, Bain establishes that this type of learning presupposes a double direction of the didactic approach: towards the intellectual development and towards the personal development of the student. If intellectual development is focused on cognitive processes, the accumulation of content, the structuring of the competence to learn to learn, but also on metacognition, personal development involves understanding the self - emotions and feelings, limits, prejudices and personal abilities - and what it means to be human, the manifestation of responsibility to oneself and to others, of empathy, and last but not least, moral development.

2. The curricular model of personal development in the Romanian language and literature curriculum for the gymnasium

The school programs for secondary education, the discipline of Romanian language and literature, implemented starting with the school year 2017 - 2018, therefore propose a new curricular vision, new skills and contents. Elements specific to the curricular model of personal development are also found in the Romanian language and literature programs from the first decades of

the 19th century, but disappear in the analytical programs from 1947 to 1953, in the context of excessive ideologization of the discipline. followed by valuing only the aesthetic dimension of literary texts, without producing changes in the finalities. The program of 1908, more oriented towards the model of personal development than the ones that will follow, includes as finality of the Romanian language and literature discipline in the gymnasium the development of students' judgment and feeling and of all their soul powers, thus aiming at the affective dimension of the human psyche. novelty of the program being the emphasis on encouraging the expression of emotional reactions to the text (for the reading subdomain).

Gradually, in the subsequent programs, from 1929 and 1935, the tendency to technicalize the discipline becomes obvious, and the references to its affective valences are not explicit. The reform of education in the years following the Second World War, materialized by the school curriculum of 1947, reoriented the study of the discipline to the principles of communist ideology, to be fully subordinated to the Soviet model between 1950 - 1956. All subsequent programs will emphasize the canon, the stylistic and structural analysis, the ideological, social and political dimension of the literary text, nullifying any possibility of reflection on it.

The first school curricula that will impose a new vision on the discipline and a new curricular model, communicative-functional, appear in 1998, among their aims being the training of a young person able to understand the world around him, to communicate and interact with peers., to be effectively integrated in the context of the future school and professional path. Placing the student at the center of activities aimed at developing communication skills in Romanian and cultural awareness and expression of students, their cognitive and emotional dimension, the new program for Romanian language and literature for high school (2017) imposes the model of personal development in the study of discipline, privileging reflection on interpersonal and intercultural relations. The text becomes an instrument of knowing the world and the self, in its exploration capitalizing on the student's personal experiences and stimulating critical thinking and reflection, which leads to in-depth learning (Chiş, 2005). Therefore, the curricular model of personal development has as specific the recalibration of the relationship between the student as object (beneficiary of educational influences) and subject (active participant) of education (Ionescu& Bocoş, coord., 2017) and curriculum and emphasizes the student's personal, social, cultural and academic benefits: setting up one's own set of values, a deeper knowledge of oneself and others, of the world in which one lives, the development of creativity, the use of language acquisitions to communicate appropriately to the context.

3. Multimodal text. The presence of the multimodal text in the programs and textbooks for the Romanian language and literature discipline, gymnasium level

The adoption of the curricular model of personal development required the introduction of new concepts in the field of reading, less theorized in the Romanian educational space, such as a new classification of texts in terms of their format - continuous, discontinuous and multimodal.

The multimodal text is a concept adopted in the Romanian didactic space recently, with the initiation in 2013 of the *Reading as a life skill Contest*, but the term was coined by Kress and van Leeuwen as far back as 1996. In their view, any text whose meanings materialize through more than one semiotic code is a multimodal one, thus integrating the various textual forms generating meanings, and involves the combination of two or more semiotic systems in the series: linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial This basic feature justifies the multitude multimodal text typologies, which can be identified in visual design, photographs, magazines, books in electronic format, web pages, film product, ballet show, etc.

Although, like any text, it supports two types of reading – *efferent*, the reader's interest focusing on the information transmitted by the text and how he can use it, and *aesthetic*, the reader being interested in what he thinks and feels during reading – the multimodal text requires a different approach, taking into account not only the linguistic system but also the other semiotic systems: visual (which involves the analysis of color, shape, style, size or perspective), gestural (observation of facial expressions, body language), spatial (positioning, proximity or distance between objects), auditory (melodic line, sound effects, ambient noise, silence, intonation or volume). The decryption of the multimodal therefore denotes both the linguistic and communicative abilities of the students, as well as their thinking and imaginative abilities and stimulates self-knowledge. understanding the world and creativity.

An analysis of the Romanian language and literature program mentioned above, made by us in Table 1, from the perspective of this concept, revealed that the multimodal is found five times in specific skills, the multimodal text being explicitly associated with the ability to receive the text.

Table 1. The term *multimodal text* in school curricula for Romanian language and literature, middle school level (2017)

General competence	Grade	Specific competence
1. Participating in verbal interactions in various communication	8th	1.3. Making a multimodal oral presentation in front of an audience, correlating the

situations by receiving and producing the oral text		verbal, paraverbal and nonverbal elements in some argumentation strategies	
2. Receiving written text of various types	5th	2.1. Identify important information from literary and non-literary texts, continuous, discontinuous and multimodal	The term appears only once in the list of contents, in the syllabus for the 5th grade: Narrative in multimodal texts (text and image - comics), while being present in the sequence containing text suggestions: multimodal texts: textbook, comics (5th grade), multimodal texts (6th grade), multimodal texts: texts from illustrated encyclopedias, on paper or online (7th grade), multimodal texts: advertisements (8th grade). It is also included in the suggestions for learning activities that accompany competence 5.2. The analysis of common elements identified in one's own culture and in the culture of other peoples (sixth grade): the selection and processing of information from various materials (oral, written, multimodal), presenting the values promoted in the traditions and customs of different cultures. In the chapter Methodological suggestions, in detailing the aspects related to competence 3 (Writing written text of various types) it is specified that the production of various multimodal texts is one of the capabilities covered by the program.
	6th	2.1. Correlation of explicit and implicit information from literary and non-literary texts, continuous, discontinuous and multimodal	
	7th	2.1. Recognition of the ways in which information is organized from literary and non-literary texts, continuous, discontinuous and multimodal texts	
	8th	2.1. Evaluation of information and communication intentions from literary, non-literary, continuous, discontinuous and multimodal texts	

Table 2. The multimodal text in school textbooks for gymnasium, Romanian language and literature discipline

Grade	Publishing house	Lesson title	Remarks
5th	Aramis	Multimodal text. Comic book	The comic is based on an excerpt from the novel <i>The Wizard of Oz</i> by Frank Baum
	Ars Libri	Narrative in multimodal texts (text and image - comics)	Three vignettes from a comic strip that capture events specific to the school context
	Art	Multimodal text	The comic made after an excerpt from the novel <i>The Lightning Thief</i> by Rick Riordan
	Booklet	Multimodal text. Comic book	The comic is based on an excerpt from the novel <i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i> by Mark Twain
	CD Press	Comic book	Comic book entitled Journey with adventures
	Corint	The narrative in multimodal texts	Comic book that captures events specific to the school context
	EDP	-	Excerpt from the comic <i>Greuceanu and the beacon of the earth</i>
	Intuitext	Comic book	<i>George and the secret key to the universe</i> , after Lucy and Stephen Hawking
	Intuitext	Text and image. School textbook	Excerpt from a geography textbook
	Litera	Narrative text in images and words. Comic book	Excerpt from the illustration of the novel <i>Around the Earth in Eighty Days</i> by Jules Verne
	Paralela 45	Narration in text and images	Excerpt from the comic <i>The mighty Prâslea and the golden apples</i>
	Sigma	The narrative in multimodal texts	Illustrations for <i>The Book with Apollodorus</i> by Gellu Naum

6th	EDP (Cârstea, Avram, Sanda, Dragomirescu) EDP (Norel, Bucurenciu, Dragu)	Literary text and film -	Unit 6 (<i>The artistic world</i>) proposes the approach of two screenings of the novels <i>The Jderi Brothers</i> by Mihail Sadoveanu and the <i>Castle of the Carpathians</i> by Jules Verne. There are no lessons for studying the multimodal text.
7th	Aramis Art-Klett Intuitext	- Multimodal text (update). Encyclopedia	There are no lessons for studying the multimodal text Illustrated encyclopedia article. Wikipedia, <i>The Runc secular forest</i> There no lessons for studying the multimodal text.
8th	Aramis Art-Klett Corint	- Nonliterary text. Multimodal text. The commercial From reading the text to reading the image. The commercial	There are no lessons for studying the multimodal text. Advertising for engine oil Promoting a theater show

Despite the uneven and inconsistent attitude of authors towards the multimodal text, it should be borne in mind that the textbook itself is limited to this type of text, its use allowing the structuring of the competence to identify important information from literary and non-literary texts, continuous, discontinuous and multimodal.

4. Conclusions

The use of multimodality, both in reception and text production activities, is in accordance with the curricular model of development proposed by the current Romanian language and literature program for high school, facilitating the development of multimodal competence (Lebrun, 2012) and learning integrated (Ciolan, 2008), stimulating the creative and experimental language, so necessary in a world dominated by technology, image and media culture.

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The Efficiency of the Online Academic Teaching Process During the Pandemic Covid-19

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The Efficiency of the Online Academic Teaching Process During the Pandemic Covid-19

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Abstract

Keywords:

online academic teaching process, educational efficiency, barriers, pandemic Sars COV-2, performance

This article aims to identify the efficiency of the online academic teaching process during the Sars COV-2 pandemic, but also identify the main factors which negatively influence the online academic teaching process. The study is based on quantitative research, the data of which were collected by applying an online questionnaire to students at the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences in Cluj-Napoca between 01.06.2020-01.07.2020.

The results of the study indicate that, during the pandemic, the efficiency of the online teaching process is below the level of the classic teaching process and is negatively influenced by a number of factors (lack of knowledge and technical information held by students / teachers on online teaching platforms, resistance to change of students / teachers (fear of something new (scary) - feeling rejected by the new because you think you can't cope or may have negative effects or repercussions for you, etc.). However, in order for the online teaching process to be successful, a greater importance should be given to the transfer of responsibility process: focusing on the individual learning process or on the continuous improvement of the online academic teaching process. This transfer can lead inherently and implicitly to an increase in the degree dissatisfaction.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

akademischer Online-Unterrichtsprozess, Bildungseffizienz, Barrieren, Sars COV-2-Pandemie, Leistung

Dieser Artikel zielt darauf ab, die Effizienz des Online-Unterrichtsprozesses während der Sars COV-2-Pandemie zu ermitteln, aber auch die Hauptfaktoren, die den Online-Unterrichtsprozess negativ beeinflussen. Die Studie basiert auf quantitativer Forschung, deren Daten durch Anwendung eines Online-Fragebogens an Studenten der Fakultät für Politik-, Verwaltungs- und Kommunikationswissenschaften in Cluj-Napoca zwischen dem 01.06.2020 und dem 01.07.2020 erhoben wurden.

Die Ergebnisse der Studie zeigen, dass während der Pandemie die Effizienz des Online-Unterrichtsprozesses unter dem Niveau des klassischen Unterrichtsprozesses liegt und durch eine Reihe von Faktoren negativ beeinflusst wird (mangelndes Wissen und technische Informationen der Studenten / Lehrern auf Online-Unterrichtsplattformen, Widerstand gegen Veränderungen von Schülern / Lehrern (Angst vor etwas Neuem (beängstigend) - Gefühl, von Neuem abgelehnt zu werden, weil Sie glauben, dass sie nicht damit umgehen können oder dass es negative Auswirkungen auf sie haben können usw.) Damit der Online-Unterrichtsprozess erfolgreich ist, sollte dem Prozess der Übertragung von Verantwortung eine größere Bedeutung beigemessen werden: Konzentration auf den individuellen Lernprozess oder auf die kontinuierliche Verbesserung des Online-Unterrichtsprozesses. Dieser Transfer kann inhärent und implizit zur Steigerung der Unzufriedenheit führen.

1. Introduction

Educational institutions in both Romania and worldwide are currently facing one of the biggest crises in the education system generated by the emergence of the SARS COV 2 virus, which involved the transition from a classic teaching system to one exclusive online.

The online academic teaching process can be considered a real challenge in Romania, because there is still needed a much more in-depth training on how to conduct online courses, there are still major discrepancies

at national level regarding the access to Internet and devices necessary to support a new teaching style, the possession of such a device by each student being crucial during the maintenance of the online teaching process during the pandemic. However, the question would be, how efficient is this style of teaching compared to the classic teaching process in Romania?

Thus, this research aims to analyze how the process of online academic teaching is defined in specialized studies and to identify the efficiency of the online academic

learning process from the students' perspective, as well as identifying the main barriers to the online academic teaching process.

Also, the research is based on data from the analysis of other specialized research, as well as data obtained by conducting a sociological analysis that consisted of applying online questionnaires to students at the Faculty of Political, Administrative and Communication Sciences, Cluj-Napoca, to determine the level of educational efficiency from their perspective.

The online teaching process is considered to be effective, but at the same time it involves a series of challenges to which educational institutions and students must adapt. According to a study, the main challenges involved in the transition to online academic teaching are mainly related to "connectivity issues, lack of infrastructure and costs, while in Asian countries such as India and China the challenges of financial costs, regulations predominate and the digital divide, while European universities face a lack of students' self-motivation skills" (Amemando, 2020).

In contrast, as educational institutions have begun to adapt and digitize their courses, they have failed to deliver quality learning such as classical teaching and have placed more emphasis on providing high quality online platforms to demonstrate that they can be competitive (Michie, 2020).

Following the study of the concept, a significant difference was observed regarding the use of the online academic teaching process during the pandemic in Romania compared to the existing studies at international level.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1 The online teaching process

The online academic teaching process (E-learning) can be defined as a process by which teaching takes place partially or totally via the Internet, but at the national level this teaching style was not used until the global pandemic, which involved the transition from the classic teaching process in educational institutions to the entirely online teaching process.

In existing studies in the literature, online academic teaching includes a number of definitions. According to some researchers, online teaching is defined as "the process that includes learning materials that have already been converted into HTML text and graphics and that are placed on either a server or a site" (Booker, p. 4), while other researchers have defined the online teaching process as "the interaction between the teaching / learning process and information technologies - ICT (Information and Communication Technology) that can cover a wide range of teaching activities conducted entirely online" (Brut, 2006), but also as a "learning experience in synchronous or asynchronous environments that use different devices (e.g. mobile phone, laptop, etc.) with internet access" (Raboca & Cărbunărean, 2015).

The synchronous online academic teaching process involves the participation of students in live lectures, the creation of interactions between teachers and students as well as the creation of the possibility of providing immediate feedback, while asynchronous online learning environments are not properly structured. Specifically, learning content is not available in the form of lectures or live courses but in the form of learning systems or forums / platforms (Sadeghi, 2007).

Also, the online academic teaching process is defined as "a teaching / learning activity planned by an institution that provides educational resources stored on electronic media in a sequential and logical order to be assimilated by students in their own way, without forcing you to synchronize group activities.

On the other hand, online teaching was defined as "a teaching method that capitalizes on the principles of modeling and analysis of training activities in the context of the use of information and communication technologies, characteristic of contemporary society" (Adăscăliței, 2007), but also as "a training that takes place through a computer connected to a network, the educational content can be in the form of a traditional lesson or a collaborative work session, made with the help of communication technologies. Educational materials can be presented in the form of text, graphics, audio and video materials" (Moise, 2008).

Following these definitions, it can be said that the online teaching process is a teaching style that involves the use of electronic devices and connection to various platforms through which the learning process is facilitated and participation in courses doesn't require presence in classrooms.

Currently, the online teaching process is the only option through which students can continue their studies, but the studies show that, although online teaching can be used in times of crisis, it is recommended that the educational institutions assess the situation very well and ensure that they can support the online teaching process, before resorting to online teaching. (Cho & Shim, 2013).

With the implementation of the new measures taken by the central public authorities during the SARS-COV2 pandemic, each educational institution had to adapt to the online teaching and learning process, but at national level have been identified a series of barriers faced by the educational system. One of the main factors that can influence the online teaching process is the lack of socialization, the interaction between students, and student-teachers. According to a study, the main barriers in online learning from the perspective of students refer to: "administrative problems, lack of social interaction, academic and technical skills, student motivation, time and support in online learning, costs and internet access, but also connectivity related issues" (Muilenburg et al., 2007).

Although technology has improved significantly and we have access to a number of applications / platforms that

can facilitate the online academic teaching process, there are a number of factors that can negatively influence the online academic teaching process during the pandemic: "download errors, problems with installation, connection, audio and video issues, etc. which may occur, but also the lack of attention and commitment from students and the lack of e-learning skills of students / teachers "(Dhull & Sakshi, 2017).

Also, the lack of control over students during exams, the lack of motivation from students, which are easily distracted from anything else, only by active participation in classes not, and the lack of feedback ("students tend to be dissatisfied with the lack of rapid feedback, and because of this, teachers are forced to find alternative methods to improve feedback" (Tamm, 2019) are other factors that negatively influence the online teaching process.

Uncertainty may be the one that can describe the faculty's perception of online education during the SARS-COV2 pandemic, because the measure of moving from the classical teaching process was imposed by law, a process that was very well established, structured, in which barriers were kept under control, control constantly aiming at increasing the educational performance and efficiency, to a completely online teaching process, a totally new process in the Romanian educational system.

Table 1. The main barriers identified in specialized studies

Concept	The main barriers identified in specialized studies	Authors
The online teaching process	"Lack of feedback, lack of motivation of students, lack of efficiency of teacher control during exams."	Tamm, 2019.
The online teaching process	"Administrative problems, lack of social interaction, academic and technical skills, student motivation, time and support provided in online learning, costs and internet access, but also problems related to connectivity."	Muilenburg et.al., 2007.
The online teaching process	"Problems related to connectivity and internet access, lack of technological equipment, financial costs".	Sadeghi, 2007.
The online teaching process	"Lack of interaction between students, teacher-students, high costs of purchasing software and hardware".	Harper et. al, 2000.
The online teaching process	"Lack of organizational culture, lack of technical skills, lack of knowledge and training on online platforms".	Holt et. al., 1998.

2.2 Educational efficiency

The first part of this article analyzed what the online academic educational process is and identified the main

barriers encountered in the online teaching process, and in this part of the study we will focus on defining the concept of educational efficiency.

Most of the time, educational efficiency is misunderstood, and some studies show that, "the efficiency of the educational process is an objective that should be pursued by all educational institutions", but, on the other hand, there are other studies that come and contradict this statement, indicating that "efforts to achieve the highest possible educational efficiency, will undermine exactly what is at the heart of the educational process", this situation is determined by the misunderstanding of the meaning of efficiency (<https://education.stateuniversity.com>).

At the moment, there is a high emphasis on the efficiency of the educational process in order to develop professional skills, especially in higher education institutions. The literature suggests that the efficiency of the online teaching process in higher education is influenced by a number of factors such as: "the ability to effectively organize online teaching activities, how to teach, and testing and monitoring the intelligibility of educational material" (Nikolaenko et.al, 2016).

Educational efficiency is defined by some researchers as "a specific set of resources with a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning" (Lockheed & Hanushek, 1994), while other authors believe that educational efficiency can be defined as "a comparison of inputs and related outputs" (Hanushek, 1986), or as "the degree to which certain pedagogical practices or school pathways affect or not the learning" (Psacharopoulos & Loxley, 1985).

A study of students at the University of Information Technology (CUIT) in Chengdu, China, identified the students' perceptions of online academic teaching during the COVID-19 situation, the effectiveness of online courses, and whether the process an online questionnaire was applied to students in undergraduate engineering specializations to achieve the objectives of the study. The results of the study showed that the results regarding the efficiency of online courses are more than depressing, only 25.5% considered the online courses to be effective and useful, whereas in terms of comparing teaching styles (online versus classical) only 34.6% of participants preferred the online teaching process. It was possible to analyze the degree of attention of the students during the online courses the results indicate that over 60% of students are attentive in the first 15 minutes and that after 25 minutes from the start of the online course about 20% remain focused and not distracted and generally they are dissatisfied with the learning effect online (Radha et. al., 2020). As can be seen, the sudden shift from a classic teaching style to an exclusively online one has led to a number of challenges among students and teachers, with some studies claiming that the online teaching process can be effective, while others Studies show that students

quickly lose patience during online courses, and the effectiveness of online courses is much lower than that obtained from face-to-face courses.

2.3 Forms of teaching during a pandemic

The negative effects generated by the pandemic determined the approach of three major forms (scenarios) of teaching that could be adopted depending on the extent of the pandemic, these being both advantages and disadvantages. Thus, one of the pandemic teaching scenarios is the hybrid teaching process, which however is the most difficult to implement, but offers a number of advantages. The hybrid teaching process is necessary to be used for technological specializations, medicine, more precisely where it is necessary to carry out experiments, laboratories, specialized practice.

One of the advantages offered by this scenario is the maintenance of teacher-student interactions, face-to-face communication, allows or directly involves, etc., but has as main disadvantage the high costs, the lack of organization and management of schools and the lack of organization of students.

Regarding the classical teaching process, it offers the possibility of holding face-to-face courses, which determines a direct communication and interaction, teaching material can be easier to assimilate, efficient and the quality of the classical teaching process are high, but has the disadvantage of high costs for ensuring and respecting the conditions of social distancing. Thus, the most efficient form of teaching during a pandemic can be considered an online academic teaching process, it involves lower costs than the classic process, it is much more flexible and accessible compared to the classic teaching process, allows monitoring and evaluation, manual or automatically, the results obtained by students, as well as activity during courses / seminars, and as a disadvantage of the online teaching process is spending a large number of hours in front of the computer, possible issues at connecting / using online platforms, the digital divide, but also the lack of transmission of rigorous scientific content.

However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the education system has had to adapt to new changes and adopt the most efficient teaching process to ensure further studies during the pandemic.

3. Research methodology

The purpose of the research was to find the answers to the following questions:

- In the case of the online teaching process, can we speak or not of a high degree of educational efficiency?
- In terms of educational efficiency, where is the online educational process compared to the classic (face-to-face) educational process?
- What are the main factors that can negatively influence the use of the online teaching process during the pandemic?

The research objectives were:

- Investigating and highlighting, from the students' point of view, the level (degree) of educational efficiency of the online teaching process used during the pandemic period (both in general and compared to the classical teaching process);

- Investigate and highlight, from the students' perspective, the main factors that can negatively influence (reduce) the online teaching process used during the pandemic period (barriers to the use of the online teaching process).

It should be mentioned that this research is part of a larger research aimed at the impact of the pandemic generated by the appearance of SARS COV 2 virus on students, survey conducted between 01.05.2020-01.07.2020.

In this sense, the research was conducted on the basis of a sociological survey conducted among senior students enrolled in bachelor's and master's programs in public administration, respectively the bachelor's degree program (students in the last year of study), programs offered by the Faculty of Political Science, Administrative and Communication at Babeş-Bolyai University.

Also, the survey was conducted based on the completion of an anonymous questionnaire by students, the number of interviewees, taken in the analysis, being 193 (table 2.1.) The analysis and data processing aimed at an invariable analysis of some questions in the questionnaire. Thus, starting from the premise that educational efficiency, as a concept, can be defined as "the volume of information and knowledge acquired by a student after the teaching process, as well as the quality level of this information and knowledge", the investigation of the level of efficiency as operationalization) was carried out from the prism (perspective) of 2 dimensions, namely:

- the general level of efficiency perceived by students regarding the online educational process;
- the level of efficiency of the online educational process perceived by students compared to the classical educational process (face to face).

In order to investigate the factors that negatively influence the online academic teaching process during the pandemic, a question with a number of 9 items was used, the interviewees having to express their opinion on the extent to which the 9 items may or may not be considered barriers (negative factors) in the use of the online teaching process. The scale used is a 1-5 scale of the Likert type (1-very small measure, 5 - very large).

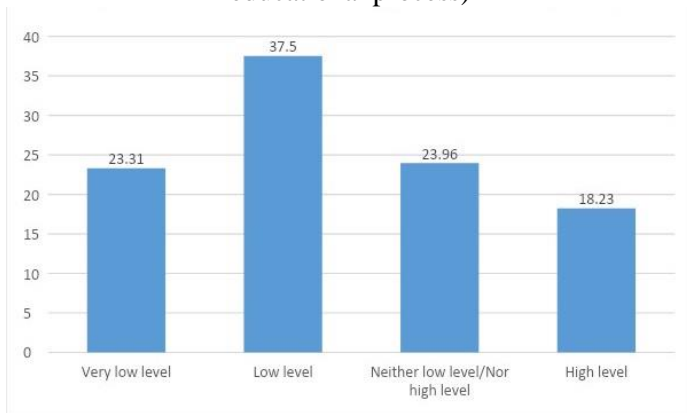
Table 2. The level of the study program and the specialization of the study participants

Study program level (percentage of total respondents %)	
License program	69.9 %
Master's program	30.1%
Specialization of study respondents (percentage of total respondents)	
Public Administration program	59.1 %
Advertising program	40.9 %

4. Results and discussions

Regarding the level of educational efficiency of the online academic teaching process, the survey data highlight a number of aspects that are not at all gratifying and which, in part, dispel the myth of the invincibility of the online academic teaching process. In this sense, on the one hand, the survey data reveal that the level of educational efficiency related to the online academic teaching process used during the pandemic period is not a high level (figure 1). In this sense, over 57% of the interviewed students consider that the online academic teaching process (used during the pandemic period) has a low educational efficiency.

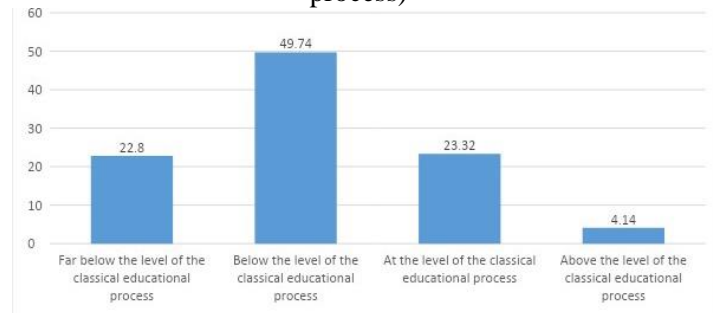
Figure 1. Level of educational efficiency (online educational process)



On the other hand, survey data reveal that, from a comparative point of view, the online educational process

used is below the level of educational efficiency related to the classical (face-to-face) educational process. In this sense, practically more than 2/3 of the interviewed students consider that the online educational process (and used in the pandemic period) is below the level of the classic educational process in terms of educational efficiency (figure no. 2).

Figure no. 2 Level of educational efficiency (online educational process compared to the classic educational process)



Last but not least, related to the educational efficiency related to the online teaching process used during the pandemic, the survey data reveal that there is a link between the level of study (the study program followed by the interviewee) and the perception of the level of efficiency. In this respect, the survey data reveal that the interviewed students following a bachelor's degree program consider the level of efficiency of the online educational process as much higher compared to the interviewed students following a master's program (Table no 3).

Table 3. Association table between the level of educational efficiency and the level of respondents' studies

		Educational efficiency of the online teaching process (general level)				Total
		very low level	little level	neither high level / nor low level	big level	
Level of education	Licence	6 15.4%	51 70.8%	42 91.3%	35 100.0%	134 69.8%
	Master's	33 84.6%	21 29.2%	4 8.7%	0 0.0%	58 30.2%
Total		39 100.0%	72 100.0%	46 100.0%	35 100.0%	192 100.0%
Chi-Square Test						
					Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided)	
		Pearson Chi-Square		Value	df	0.000
				80.042	3	

Regarding the factors that can negatively influence the online academic teaching process, the survey data reveals that there are at least 3 important factors that can influence the online teaching process (table no. 4).

Table 4. The main factors influencing the online teaching process

	Me an	Std. Deviati on
1. Lack of (technical) resources needed for the online teaching process (example: internet access and teaching platforms, webcams, cloud storage, etc.)	4.40	.686
2. Lack of knowledge and technical information held by students / teachers on online teaching platforms)	4.17	.814
3. Work and high individual work (learning, homework preparation, homework / project development)	4.07	.832
4. Resistance to change of students / teachers (fear of something new (scary) - feeling rejected by the new because you think you can not cope or may have negative effects or repercussions for you)	3.66	.775
5. Communication in the interaction between student teacher too low compared to the classic teaching process (face to face)	3.53	.913
6. Lack of support from the faculty to encourage students to use ITC tools and online platforms	3.11	1.035
7. Lack of organizational measures needed to run online courses through platforms (planning courses and seminars)	3.09	1.151
8. Lack of clear documentation on the use of online teaching platforms (tutorials, user guides for Moodle platforms, Zoom, WS Team, other IT tools)	2.96	1.154
9. Lack of training of students on the use of online teaching platforms (or other IT tools);	2.84	1.083

In this regard, it can be seen that the lack of resources needed for the online teaching process, as well as the lack of training on the use of different online teaching tools (lack of knowledge needed to use) can be considered as the factors that most negatively affect the online teaching process online teaching.

Another factor with a negative impact on the online academic teaching process, from the students' point of view, is the aspect related to the high volume of individual work that students have to submit as a result of the online academic teaching process. Basically, here we are talking about a perception of students about the work needed to be submitted for their academic training. Although surprising

at first glance, the explanation for the emergence of this negative perception originates in one of the possible shortcomings of the online academic teaching process, namely due to the low level of teacher-student interaction compared to the classic teaching process). If for various reasons the process of online teaching leads to a low level of interaction between teacher and students inherently there is a change / shift (shift) of responsibilities in this educational process, namely: a decrease in teachers' responsibility to teach and an increase at the same time of the individual responsibility of the student to learn and prepare academically. Therefore, this increase in the volume of individual work required to be submitted by the student corresponds in essence to the increase in the individual responsibility for their academic training.

Last but not least, survey data reveal that we can identify other factors that negatively influence the online teaching process, although their effect is not as negative as the factors already mentioned. In this sense, like other factors that have a certain negative influence we can mention: the level of resistance to change of students / teachers, the level of reduced teacher-student interaction, respectively lack of support and stimulation for using ICT tools in the educational process.

5. Conclusions

Finally, the results showed that the online academic teaching process established during the pandemic is below the level of the classic teaching process, but from a certain point of view, the online teaching process, regardless of the forms and tools used, seems to be quite suitable in pandemic situations, especially when the situation requires the establishment of an epidemiological quarantine situation in the medium and long term. Undoubtedly, the use of this type of teaching during pandemics and implicitly during pandemic COVID-19 solves a big problem, namely: continuing the educational process (both in the medium and long term) while respecting the physical distance between people (rule of prevention on the spread of the pandemic). However, the use of the online teaching process during a pandemic requires, whether we like it or not, paying a price and it generates two big problems. In this sense, the price paid does not refer only to the expenses necessary for the development of the online educational process but also in terms of the level of educational efficiency. On the one hand, the costs of the online educational process are quite considerable and concern not only the acquisition of ICT tools (for example: laptops, webcams, online platforms, various video conferencing accounts) but also the costs related to training and preparation of the teachers and students.

For a number of educational institutions this expenditure cannot be borne as it is a major problem due to the lack of funds. On the other hand, the second price paid, respectively the second problem refers to the low level of educational efficiency that the online teaching process has, compared to the classic teaching process (face to face

teacher students). From certain points of view, a low level of educational efficiency generates, sooner or later, a low level of quality of the educational process and which will ultimately have a negative impact on the specialized training of students. Because of this, the organization of the educational process only in the online environment I do not think is a viable option over time, respectively will have to find a way to alternate or combine the process of online teaching with the classic process (face to face).

Thus, when implementing an online academic teaching process, it must be borne in mind that there are a number of factors that can negatively affect this process, factors that we must take into account. In this sense, one of the factors necessary for successful implementation is, obviously, the allocation of resources both for the purchase of ICT equipment and tools specific to the online teaching process, and for the training of teachers and students. Last but not least, in order for the online teaching process to be successful, care must be taken in the emergence of the transfer of responsibility process: focusing on the teaching process on the individual learning process, a transfer that can lead inherently and implicitly to the increase of the degree of dissatisfaction.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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Educational Change - Easy to Say, Hard to Do: Teachers' Perceptions towards Introducing Innovative Teaching Approaches

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Educational Change - Easy to Say, Hard to Do: Teachers' Perceptions towards Introducing Innovative Teaching Approaches

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Abstract

Keywords:

ICT, techno-pedagogical teaching, 21st century skills, TPACK, questionnaire validation

Computers, communication, and internet technologies have led to significant changes in learning and teaching. The constructivist approach in education puts learners at the center of the teaching process and actively makes them construct their knowledge, developing 21st century skills required for tomorrow's world. Despite advances in the process of integrating technology into teaching, a significant gap still exists between promise and actual reality. Implementation of computer technologies depends on many complex factors, one of which is teachers' perceptions of assimilating computerization into their teaching methods. This research is part of a broader study examining techno-pedagogical change in a high school in Israel. The current study focuses on the process of constructing, testing, and validating a questionnaire examining teachers' attitudes toward pedagogical innovation and assimilating technological skills into teaching. The validation process was done by an exploratory factor analysis to detect cases with low variability and explore the dimensionality of each survey instrument. This was complemented by a confirmatory phase. The results showed high reliability and stable dimensions in the instruments.

This study's importance is in constructing an original instrument that examines the extent to which high school teachers adopt innovative pedagogies assimilating technological tools. This study may have a universal contribution because the instrument can be used across countries and cultures.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

ICT, Techno-pädagogischer Unterricht, Kompetenzen des 21. Jahrhunderts, TPACK, Fragebogenvalidierung

Computer, Kommunikations- und Internettechnologien haben zu bedeutsamen Veränderungen des Lernens und Lehrens geführt. Der konstruktivistische Ansatz des Lehrens stellt die Lernenden in das Zentrum des Lehrprozesses und veranlasst sie aktiv dazu, Wissen zu erwerben, und die Kompetenzen des 21. Jahrhunderts zu erlangen, die für die Anforderungen der Welt von morgen von Nöten sind. Trotz der Fortschritte im Prozess der Integration von Technologie in den Unterricht besteht nach wie vor eine erhebliche Kluft zwischen Prognose und Realität. Die Implementierung von Computertechnologie hängt von vielen komplexen Faktoren ab, einer davon ist die Einstellung der Lehrenden, die Computerisierung in Lehrmethoden zu integrieren. Diese Studie ist Teil eines umfassenderen Projektes, das den techno-pädagogischen Wandel an einer israelischen Sekundarstufe 2 untersucht.

Diese Studie fokussiert sich auf den Prozess des Konstruierens, Testens, und Validierens eines Fragebogens, der die Einstellung Lehrender bezüglich pädagogischer Innovation und Assimilierung technologischer Kompetenzen in den Unterricht untersucht. Die Validierung erfolgte durch eine explorative Faktorenanalyse um Items mit geringer Variabilität zu erkennen, und die Dimensionen jedes Erhebungsinstruments zu untersuchen. Ergänzt wurde die Analyse durch eine Validierungsphase. Die Ergebnisse zeigen eine hohe Reliabilität und stabile Dimensionen der Instrumente.

Die Relevanz der Studie liegt in der Entwicklung eines innovativen Instruments das untersucht, in welchem Umfang Lehrende der Sekundarstufe II technologische Hilfsmittel in innovative pädagogische Strategien integrieren. Die Studie kann einen universellen Beitrag leisten, da das Instrument Länder- und Kulturübergreifend eingesetzt werden kann.

1. Introduction

The technological changes that characterize the digital age present challenges to the educational system, which must adapt learning programs and teaching strategies to these new technologies. Schools are required to create a

change process in the school's learning culture in line with the shifting reality (Anderson & Maninger, 2007; Avidov-Ungar & Eshet Alkalai, 2011). Therefore, the Israeli Ministry of Education is leading pioneering projects and

implementing the National Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Program for "Adjusting the Education System to the 21st Century", whose aim is to advance digital learning in Israeli schools.

Despite the stated policy of pedagogical change via ICT integration, many teachers still do not consider these technologies an inherent part of their teaching discipline and continue to teach in the traditional manner (Avidov-Ungar, 2011; Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2017). The current study is part of broader research that examines high school teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards adopting techno-pedagogical methods. In this study, an original questionnaire was constructed and validated to examine teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards techno-pedagogical approaches and the integration of ICT in their area of teaching according to the following dimensions: desired teacher character, teacher's pedagogical competence, 21st century skills, and school's role in the process of change. Examining teacher's attitudes will make it easier to assimilate the optimal and innovative pedagogy, which will prepare students for the real world that awaits them.

1.1 Educational change and 21st century skills

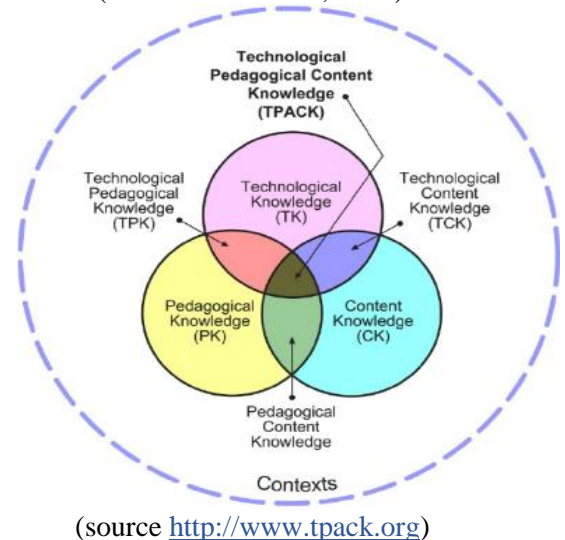
Since the beginning of the previous century, education systems around the world have faced challenges surrounding the argument between two relevant options: "teacher-centered learning", where the learner is a consumer of knowledge, or "learner-centered pedagogy", where the learner is the constructor of knowledge (Dori et al., 2003; Fullan, 2001; McDermott, 1991; Sandholtz, Ringstaff, & Dwyer, 1997). In recent decades, ICT influenced numerous perspectives in society and culture (Bonk, 2009; Pesig, 2010), which necessitated a re-adaptation in numerous areas, including in the education system, where the change is needed primarily in the teacher's role. The teacher must be responsible for the students' learning processes (Cuban, Kirkpatrick, & Peck, 2001; Webster & Murphy, 2008) and teach them how to successfully cope with frequent changes in information, technology, and roles. To do so, the teacher must give up on the role of being "omnipotent".

It is necessary for the education system to adapt to the 21st century (Tondeur, Van Braak, Ertmer, & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2017). Schools must recognize the world of today's youth and help students acquire the skills that will be needed to successfully contend with their anticipated challenges. Six categories of essential skills have been identified for successful functioning in the age of knowledge: creativity and ingenuity, critical thinking and problem-solving, ability to communicate and cooperate, information literacy, communication literacy, and computer and technology literacy (Salpeter, 2003).

To successfully help students acquire these skills, there is a need to alter teaching approaches and the teacher's role from one where the teacher conveys information to the

students – "sage on the stage," to one where the student is the center, and the teacher serves as a mentor encouraging independent learning or in partnership with the students – "guide on the side" (King, 1993). Using digital tools and adapting them to the classroom, it is possible to change the teacher's teaching methods and help the teacher develop "digital intelligence" (Prensky, 2009). Integration between technology, pedagogy, and content knowledge (TPACK - see Figure 1) will allow innovative teaching and learning processes appropriate for the education system in the 21st century and improve the learning experience (Hsu, 2016; Luterbach & Brown, 2011). Changes in teaching methods and the teacher's role, and moving responsibility to the students will only happen to the extent that teachers will be convinced that there is a need (Johnson, 2008; Mishra & Koehler, 2009; Washuk, 2011).

Figure 3 Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge (Koehler & Mishra, 2008)



1.2 Teachers attitudes and barriers towards innovative teaching using technological tools

One of the decisive factors in the effectiveness of adapting innovative technology in school and successful implementation of pedagogical change is the teacher's skills and beliefs as a professional agent with content, pedagogical, and technological knowledge (Borko, 2004; Brinkerhoff, 2006). Teachers' attitudes towards digital surroundings and their role in teaching in these environments can significantly impact how they integrate ICT when teaching (Cunningham, 2009; Halverson & Smith, 2010; Selwyn, 2010).

Two types of internal and external barriers prevent teachers from assimilating technology into their teaching (Avidov-Ungar & Amir, 2018). The external barriers include equipment, hardware, and software resources, technical support, the school's culture, teaching subject, and the teacher's technical skills. Internal barriers include teachers' beliefs in technology and its added value to learning, and their beliefs regarding quality teaching

processes (Hew & Brush, 2007; Hsu, 2016; Nikolopoulou & Gialamas, 2016). An additional barrier is the “disciplinary barrier”, reflecting a lack of deep understanding that technological tools can explicitly promote the discipline (Avidov-Ungar & Amir, 2018). About a decade ago, it was found that the more significant barrier preventing the integration of technology is the external barrier, which is reflected mainly in the lack of necessary financial resources (Ertmer, Ottenbreit-Leftwich, Sadik, Sendurur, & Sendurur, 2012; Hew & Brush, 2007).

In recent years, schools have increased access to quality technical resources, and accordingly, teachers have greater control over ICT tools. Nonetheless, teachers are reluctant to integrate this technology into their teaching (Ertmer et al., 2012). Teachers’ motivation and attitudes towards the importance of this integration and their ability to do so are directly related to their actual practices (Greer, Koran, & White, 2016; Hsu, 2016; Liu, Lin, Zhang, & Zheng, 2017; Tondeur et al., 2017). Yet, it is not enough for teachers to have positive attitudes towards technology to successfully integrate technology into teaching. Proper training for teachers can bring a change in the quality of teaching and facilitate an intelligent integration of technology into teaching (Davis & Varma, 2008; Furman-Shaharabani & Tal, 2008; Halverson & Smith, 2010; Magen-Nagar & Peled, 2013; Varma, Husic, & Linn, 2008). Teachers need to be trained to adopt new technology by focusing on new teaching skills that are based on the interaction between content knowledge (CK), pedagogical knowledge (PK), and technological knowledge (TK) (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Salomon (2000) adds that for ICT to support teaching and learning processes, it is important to define a guiding rational pedagogy, which will accompany the way of using the technology. Similarly, there needs to be meaningful and long-term guidance that includes relevant pedagogical advice and experience implementing technology in the class (Davis & Varma, 2008; Furman-Shaharabani & Tal, 2008; Varma et al., 2008).

Implementation of innovative technologies in schools also requires a systematic change in the school culture, including administrative, pedagogical, and technological factors (Coffman, 2009; Eshet, 2007). The school needs to develop an organizational learning culture that helps strengthen the dissemination of knowledge, creativity, flexibility, and support, which are critical ineffective coping with change (Collinson, 2010; Giles & Hargreaves, 2006; Weldy & Gillis, 2010; Zhao & Ordóñez de Pablos, 2009). Similarly, teacher participation in leading change and decision making is necessary to strengthen their positive approach towards change (Davis & Varma, 2008; Fullan, 2014; Harris & Hofer, 2009; Selwyn, 2010). Teachers involved can better contend with the challenge of change and develop professionally (Janson & Janson, 2009; King & Dunham, 2005). As part of this, the teacher has to be surrounded by a supportive learning environment and school system that is part of the school’s vision (Bowyer,

Gerard, & Marx, 2008; Fullan, 2006; Furman-Shaharabani & Tal, 2008; Guskey, 1998; Rogers, 2010).

2. Problem Statement

Today’s generation of learners has changed to a great extent, and the main goal of education is to prepare students for future job opportunities and civic responsibilities. In Israel, 21st century skills become a significant topic on the agenda of the educational system. In introducing Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) and pioneering programs into schools, the expectation was that teachers would apply constructivism practices into their teaching. However, teachers still do not implement ICT as an inherent part of their teaching discipline. Studies showed that most teachers use technology to implement a traditional “teaching” pedagogy (Avidov-Ungar, 2011; Mioduser & Nachmias, 2002; Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2017; Steiner & Mendelovitch, 2017). The problem seems to be more difficult in high schools. Until now, no studies were conducted in Israel concerning high school teachers. The construction of an instrument that can evaluate high school teachers’ attitudes, perceptions, and willingness to change and implement techno-pedagogical approaches can help understand teachers’ needs and promote innovative teaching approaches.

3. Research Question

To what extent the constructed questionnaire is reliable and statistically valid?

4. Purpose of the Study

The study aims to construct an original questionnaire that examines teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards the insertion of innovative techno-pedagogical approaches into their teaching and validate its reliability.

5. Research Methods

The current study utilized a mixed methods approach, including both quantitative and qualitative methods. The study employs a qualitative methodology, which includes 12 in-depth semi-structured interviews as a method of researching the phenomenon and constructing an original questionnaire. Since no questionnaire was found to suit the specific research questions regarding Israeli high school teachers’ attitudes and perceptions towards innovative techno-pedagogical approaches and 21st century skills, there was a need to construct a new, tailor-made questionnaire. This study focuses on constructing and validating the questionnaire.

5.1 Research participants

The study participants included 85 teachers of varying disciplines, gender, and years of experience from three high schools that are part of the Amal school network. This network, established in 1928, includes 120 educational institutions, from junior high schools and above. These

schools focus on the sciences, technology, and the arts and are guided by innovation and entrepreneurship (www.amalnet.k12.il/english).

5.2 Research tool

A questionnaire-based on content analysis according to themes and categories of the in-depth interviews, along with theoretical ground and previous research, was constructed. The interviews enabled the researcher to become familiar with the teachers' perceptions of the aspects that promote and inhibit techno-pedagogical change and propose items for the scales to measure these aspects in the quantitative questionnaire. The four main themes identified served as the questionnaire factor dimensions. The four factor dimensions were: desired teacher characteristics, teachers' pedagogical competence, 21st century skills, and school's role in the process of change.

5.3 Process of constructing the questionnaire

The pioneering survey was conducted as soon as the survey questionnaire was constructed. A validation process means that the researcher distributes a valid and reliable questionnaire among the sampled population. Valid questionnaires receive stable responses, have low rates of missing data, and are later easy to analyze, as respondents understand the questions and do not need further clarification. The current questionnaire was composed of several survey instruments designed to assess teachers' agreement with major statements about necessary teaching skills and how they are implemented in the teaching process.

A preliminary pilot questionnaire was distributed among 15 teachers to decide upon the style of questions. Two styles were tested: self-evaluation across a set of teaching statements (seven teachers), and an agreement with similar statements, yet about the other teachers (eight teachers). The comparison between the two styles suggested that agreement with other teachers' characteristics had a stronger potential to identify what teachers think. With the limitation of this style, it will still yield good measures of teachers' and teaching aspects. Adjustments were made to the final version of the survey.

Next, it was sampled in a **limited exploratory survey** of 85 teachers for construct validation. In the validation procedure, first, a descriptive statistics and an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) were used to detect cases with low variability and explore the dimensionality of each survey instrument. The EFA procedure determines possible context divisions of the instrument. That is, the survey instrument can be divided into several distinguished sub-contexts, altogether providing full contextual coverage of the theoretical construct. Statistically, it was expected that items from the same instrument share a common context based on correlations. After the final definition of the survey instrument sub-divisions, the Cronbach's Alpha for internal consistency was calculated. This index emphasizes

the internal consistency across factor items. The Cronbach's Alpha provides a measure for consistency across items, especially if these items share the same theoretical context. Alpha greater than 0.70 is considered to indicate a high level of consistency.

Next, **the exploratory phase was complemented by a confirmatory phase** (Confirmatory Factor Analysis, CFA). This phase is intended to validate theoretical constructs. The confirmatory phase is based on goodness of fit statistics for construct validity, e.g., Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI). Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) and Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). These indices represent the quality of the fit between hypothesized constructs and empirical covariance structures. Commonly, minimum accepted levels for these indices are as follows: CFI, TLI > .90, RMSEA < .08, SRMR < .05 (Wang & Wang, 2012). To summarize, the validation process means that empirical data are aligned with the theoretical framework within which the research is situated. SPSS V.25 statistical package (IBM Corp, 2017) was used for the exploratory phase, and Mplus V.8.0 (Muthén & Muthén, 2017) was used for the confirmatory phase.

6. Findings

For each survey instrument (Main factor), the explored factor structure (factor dimensions), factor loadings, and the overall confirmatory goodness of fit results are presented. The exploratory analysis goal is to determine factor dimensions, which are distinguishable sub-factors that altogether present the survey instrument (Hefetz & Liberman, 2017). The following are the sub-factors or factor dimensions of each survey instrument. These distinguishable factors are shown in Table 1 by means of item loadings, factor statistics, and internal consistency.

There are **four factor dimensions** in the survey:

- a. Desired teacher characteristics
- b. Teachers' pedagogical competence
- c. 21st Century skills
- d. School's role in the process of change

Note that for each dimension, only those items that perform high loadings (Loading > .35) are presented.

The desired teacher: The first instrument looks at the desired characteristics of the desirable teacher. For this purpose, the survey instrument was designed to suggest several statements about teachers and their teaching performances and to ask the surveyed teachers about their agreement level with each statement. Table 1 shows the exploratory analysis results for one factor, including six survey items, while Q1 and Q2 were left as two independent items that did not correlate with the general factor of the desired teacher characteristics. This explored factor was found to explain 45 percent of the common item variance. A further consistency analysis showed Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = .75$. Although the factor loadings were not extremely high, they were found to be on average, but not very low.

The confirmatory results suggest that the factor structure was confirmed; that is, fit indices are above accepted levels: CFI = .996, TLI = .993, RMSEA = .02.

Teachers' pedagogical competence: A set of questionnaire items (9 to 47) was designed to capture the perceived innovative teacher in terms of pedagogical competence. Table 1 shows the exploratory division for factor dimensions, supported by the confirmatory results. Four distinguished dimensions were found for the pedagogical competence: creativity through interactivity; teachers' originality and innovativeness; self-disciplined learning; and transferring responsibility. This instrument's four dimensions explained over 50% of the common variance, with high reliability across the first three dimensions. The fourth dimension was constructed of only two items, thus the low consistency. A measurement model that included the four dimensions performed to a satisfactory level, as shown in Table 1, e.g., CFI, TLI >.90. For modeling purposes, the fourth dimension may be used as two single items rather than a combined factor.

21st century skills: Next, the items regarding necessary teaching skills for dealing with the 21st century demands were explored. This instrument searched for those skills

that teachers may need if they intend to face technological challenges. Although several items received high agreement as necessary 21st century teaching skills, other items received a lower level of agreement, e.g., "Teachers integrate creative experiences into learning ...". These items were summarized into three dimensions: empowering teachers, self-directed learning, and strategic learning. The three dimensions were found to explain nearly 60% of the common variance, and the reliability was high, which suggests clear and easy to distinguish factors.

School's role in the process of change: The last instrument analyzed focused on the process of change, which is known to be difficult to apply in organizations. Two dimensions were found for this purpose: school empowering the teachers and objective-oriented school. The first factor is shown to explain the instrument's main portion (66%), which is an identification problem to some extent. The data indicated one factor; however, the context required a division into two independent dimensions. Further construct validity test showed a high goodness of fit. Thus, the two dimensions were kept as fully distinguished.

Table 1 Exploratory factor analysis results by factor dimensions: Factor items, loadings, descriptive and consistency

	Desired teacher characteristics	Teachers' pedagogical competence	21st century skills	Schools' role in the process of change
	Factor 1: Desired teacher characteristics	Factor 1: Creativity through interactivity	Factor 1: Empowering teachers	Factor 1: Empowering school
	q3 0.68	q17 1.08	q61 0.90	q75 0.96
	q4 0.64	q12 0.93	q51 0.89	q78 0.87
	q5 0.63	q16 0.92	q62 0.88	q74 0.86
	q6 0.60	q13 0.92	q59 0.82	q77 0.83
	q7 0.53	q18 0.91	q58 0.75	q76 0.78
	q8 0.42	q20 0.72	q52 0.73	q79 0.71
		q19 0.69	q50 0.69	q85 0.46
		q9 0.63	q53 0.69	
		q14 0.59	q60 0.67	
		q46 0.57	q56 0.57	
		q21 0.54	q54 0.55	
		q22 0.46	q67 0.50	
		q15 0.45	q63 0.49	
		q37 0.43	q68 0.42	
		q42 0.40	q69 0.38	
		q11 0.39	q55 0.32	
			q66 0.26	
Eigenvalue	2.72	16.48	13.00	8.00
% of Variance	45.4	42.3	50.0	66.6
Reliability	.75	.95	.95	.94
Means	4.49	3.46	3.78	3.52
SD	0.42	0.72	0.67	0.91
		Factor 2:	Factor 2:	Factor 2:

		Teachers' originality and innovativeness q39 0.84 q25 0.80 q38 0.79 q40 0.73 q28 0.62 q30 0.59 q27 0.57 q24 0.57 q29 0.55 q10 0.54 q41 0.46 q34 0.45 q45 0.42 q43 0.42 q33 0.39 q23 0.39 q26 0.37	Self-directed learning q71 0.81 q65 0.76 q72 0.71 q73 0.66 q64 0.62 q70 0.48	Objective-oriented school q84 0.89 q80 0.86 q83 0.63 q82 0.58 q81 0.52
Eigenvalue		2.24	1.12	0.56
% of Variance		5.7	4.3	4.7
Reliability		.94	.86	.92
Means		3.21	3.16	3.76
SD		0.71	0.77	0.85
		Factor 3: Self-disciplined learning q36 0.69 q31 0.68 q47 0.67 q35 0.46	Factor 3: Strategic learning q49 0.84 q48 0.79 q57 0.39	
Eigenvalue		1.43	0.67	
% of Variance		3.7	2.6	
Reliability		.71	.79	
Means		3.88	3.39	
SD		0.60	0.77	
		Factor 4: Transferring responsibility q32 0.72 q44 0.51		
Eigenvalue		1.29		
% of Variance		3.3		
Reliability		.39		
Means		3.64		
SD		0.62		
Confirmatory Factor Analysis – Goodness-of-fit			First Order Second Order	
χ^2	9.31	771.26	361.71 349.78	51.77

df	9	586	281	280	38
P	.41	<.001	<.001	<.01	.07
RMSEA	.020	.061	.058	.054	.065
SRMR	.043	.069	.053	.053	.030
CFI	.996	.921	.947	.954	.987
TLI	.993	.910	.939	.947	.977

Note: In each cell, the left column is for the item code, the right column is for the item loading on the factor; factor descriptive and consistency are at the bottom of each cell.

7. Conclusions

This study aimed to develop and validate a questionnaire that asks teachers about their teaching perspectives within an innovative rapid technological transformation environment. The validation process exposes the full dimensionality of these perspectives. The empirical exploration of the data reveals sub-contexts within each general perspective and allows a better understanding of teachers' emphases when facing the challenges of implementing advanced technology. The challenge is in preparing teachers for the 21st century so that they can, in turn, prepare their students properly.

The exploration and validation of the first round of answers to the questionnaire teach us about differences between creativity and originality and between teachers' empowerment and school empowerment. Although these aspects exist in the questionnaire items, the factor structures tell us how to distinguish between dimensions and results in a workable questionnaire.

It can be concluded that from two aspects, the questionnaire performed as expected. First, the questionnaire was found reliable by means of Cronbach's alpha. The alpha is a measurement of consistency across items of which the survey instrument was composed. When these reliability values are high, in this study they were found above .70 except one dimension, it indicates the high correlation between these items. High correlation may be interpreted as sharing the same context.

In validity terms, we receive construct validity, which is based on the difference between the observed and the expected relationships across items. When these differences are small, it can be concluded that empirical data measure the expected theoretical constructs. Altogether, the questionnaire in its final form is qualified for use among other educational systems in different countries and across different cultures.

This research's methodological contribution is in constructing a new valid and reliable instrument for examining educators' perceptions towards implementing techno-pedagogical skills in their classrooms. This research instrument can serve as a basis for more studies in the field of teaching and 21st century skills.

This study is a part of a more comprehensive study conducted in Israel. It uses the questionnaire with a large

sample of participants in an experimental group and a control group to examine high school teachers' attitudes and perceptions towards implementing techno-pedagogical teaching approaches.

Authors note: The authors have equal contributions to this article.

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The role of feedback in the teaching-learning process

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The role of feedback in the teaching-learning process

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Abstract

Keywords:

feedback; teaching;
learning; academic
performance

Feedback can be considered as the totality of information that is provided to the student, parent, or teacher regarding the student's performance, concerning learning objectives or learning outcomes and aims to improve learning among students. It has the role of reorienting the actions of the teacher, parent, or student in the direction of achieving specific goals of the learning process by aligning the effort and activity with a certain expected result. It can be offered about the results of the activity, the process itself, the way the student manages his learning or self-regulates in the learning activities. The power of feedback comes from the fact that he can straighten, maintain a good attitude, or change a student's behavior. Giving direct but at the same time, empathetic feedback means allowing students to express their opinion, to give feedback in turn, to contradict you, or to recognize the problems when they arise. But all this requires tact, empathy, and understanding, because only in this way can we, the teachers, correct, direct and manage the challenges, in parallel with building communities in which students collaborate and care about each other. Feedback allows the other person to receive a real response to his action and is constructive when referring only to the action itself and nothing else.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Feedback; Lehren;
Lernen;
Akademischeleistung

Feedback kann als die Gesamtheit der Informationen betrachtet werden, die dem Schüler, Elternteil oder Lehrer über die Leistung des Schülers in Bezug auf Lernziele oder Lernergebnisse zur Verfügung gestellt werden und die darauf abzielen, das Lernen unter den Schülern zu verbessern. Es hat die Aufgabe, die Handlungen des Lehrers, der Eltern oder des Schülers neu auszurichten, um bestimmte Ziele des Lernprozesses zu erreichen, indem Aufwand und Aktivität auf ein bestimmtes erwartetes Ergebnis ausgerichtet werden. Es kann über die Ergebnisse der Aktivität, den Prozess selbst, die Art und Weise, wie der Schüler sein Lernen verwaltet oder sich in den Lernaktivitäten selbst reguliert, angeboten werden. Die Kraft des Feedbacks beruht auf der Tatsache, dass er sich aufrichten, eine gute Einstellung beibehalten oder das Verhalten eines Schülers ändern kann. Direktes, aber gleichzeitig einfühlsames Feedback zu geben bedeutet, den Schülern die Möglichkeit zu geben, ihre Meinung zu äußern, ihrerseits Feedback zu geben, Ihnen zu widersprechen oder die auftretenden Probleme zu erkennen. All dies erfordert jedoch Fingerspitzengefühl, Einfühlungsvermögen und Verständnis, denn nur so können wir als Lehrer die Herausforderungen korrigieren, lenken und bewältigen, parallel zum Aufbau von Gemeinschaften, in denen die Schüler zusammenarbeiten und sich umeinander kümmern. Feedback ermöglicht es der anderen Person, eine echte Antwort auf ihre Handlung zu erhalten, und ist konstruktiv, wenn sie sich nur auf die Handlung selbst und nichts anderes bezieht.

1. Introduction

Providing feedback on learning, often associated with the formative assessment process, has been shown to have positive influences on the school learning process and on the quality of student achievement (Richardson, 2005; Juwah et al, 2009; Black & William, 1998). In fact, the importance of knowing and analyzing the mechanisms for providing feedback are already very well anchored in educational research focused on this topic. (Fisher & Miller, 2008).

Feedback can also be defined as the totality of information that is provided to the student, parent or teacher regarding the student's performance, in relation to learning objectives or learning outcomes and aims to improve learning among students. It has the role of reorienting the

actions of the teacher, parent or student towards achieving specific goals of the learning process by aligning effort and activity with a certain expected result and can be offered on the results of the activity, the process itself, the way in which the student manages his learning or self-regulates in the learning activities. Moreover, Avis (2010) indicates that the teacher's abilities to provide clear, constructive, supportive and developmental feedback are part of their entire effective teaching process, as they consistently contribute to the identification by the instructor of the elements that are considered valuable in the teaching process.

Under these conditions, the teacher or parent can provide valuable corrective information, colleagues can provide alternative strategies, the book can provide

information to clarify certain ideas, the parent can provide encouragement, and the student can analyze his response to assess the level of correctness. (<https://brio.ro/adviser/feedback-ul/info/5>, accessed on October 22, 2020)

When we talk about feedback, it is necessary to analyze two essential components: the transmitter and the receiver. The sender, in our case the person who provides feedback, must meet certain specific conditions: it must be defined correctly, used at the right time, in a certain context, to produce the desired effects. However, these conditions are not enough if the sender is not trained to receive and the receiver to use the feedback in a productive way. Thus, if the receiver listens, understands and accepts / assimilates the feedback, and then acts and obtains the desired results, only then can we discuss the existence of effective feedback.

If we analyze the importance of feedback, it is very important to analyze in depth the ways of manifestation, concretization, or realization within the daily instructive-educational activity. In accordance with the typology of the feedback, over the years, attempts have been made to identify some hypostases under which it can materialize. In the interactional model proposed by De Landsheere and Bayer (1969), the functions assigned to the teacher are mentioned, among which we find them

- "positive feedback functions", in which the teacher may have behaviors such as
 - approves it in a stereotypical manner;
 - approves it by repeating the student's answer;
 - approves it in a specific manner;
 - approves it in another way;
- "negative feedback functions", which is in fact only the expression of a negative opinion about students' actions, without including useful recommendations for remedying the effects of those actions. Feedback of this type leads nowhere, but produces heated discussions or smoldering frustrations, especially from the one directly targeted by those remarks. In actions of this type, the teacher may manifest behaviors such as:
 - disapproves in a stereotypical manner;
 - disapproves by repeating the answer in an ironic or accusing manner;
 - disapproves in a specific way;
 - disapproves in another way;
 - provides delayed feedback;

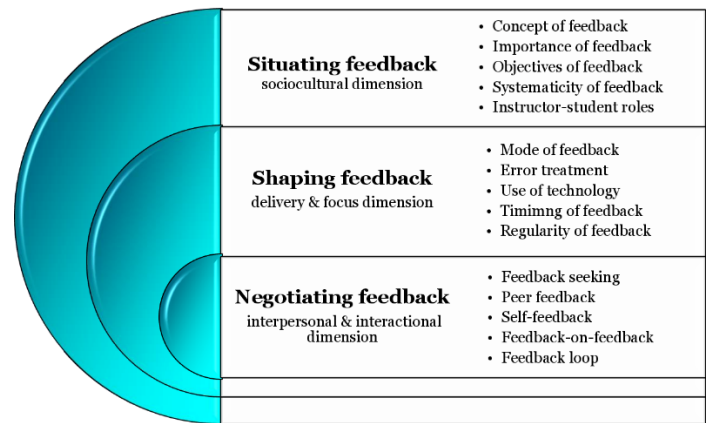


Figure 1. The feedback culture, a comparative exploration, Hisham M. Alfayyadh, 2016 (<https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-feedback-culture-in-translation-education%3A-A-of-Alfayyadh/645e689fe95669d0ba0ad72b294501f60c6601f1>)

2. Typology of school feedback

In the educational reality we can identify 3 fundamental categories of feedback

- **evaluative feedback (evaluates)**
 - it can be positive or negative
 - negative feedback will very rarely lead to the improvement of a behavior and also will not lead to maintaining the stability and balance of the learning act
 - Positive feedback is a type of feedback that is very well received by students, often leading to improved behavior.
- **prescriptive feedback (offers advice)**
 - does not provide accurate information, rather focusing on what the subject should do, not on how he has already acted
 - does not describe exactly what is happening, but what should happen
- **descriptive feedback (describes authentic feedback)**
 - it corresponds to the notion of authentic feedback
 - it brings major improvements if offered correctly
 - it generates remarkable results and reduces the defensive reaction of the students

The quality of descriptive feedback also depends on the teacher's knowledge about its specificity, so that it is made in accordance with the specific requirements for providing this type of feedback. The power of feedback comes from the fact that he can straighten, maintain a good mood, or change a student's behavior. Giving direct but at the same time empathetic feedback means giving students the opportunity to express their opinion, to give feedback in turn, to contradict you or to recognize the problems when they arise. But all this requires tact, empathy and understanding, because that is the only way we can correct, direct, and manage challenges, while building communities in which students collaborate and care about each other. Feedback allows the other person to receive a real response

to his action and is constructive when referring only to the action itself and nothing else.

Thus, in the conditions of providing feedback to students, we consider the fact that this type of response is characterized by the fact that:

- Does not issue value judgments
- It is specific
- It is well targeted
- It is usually required
- It is well intentioned
- It is applicable
- It is realistic
- Brings improvements

Feedback studies show that it has a strong effect on learning, but it can nevertheless have a very wide range of effects, with the possibility, when not given properly, of producing negative effects. For this reason, it is important to have a good understanding of both the benefits and potential limits of feedback as an integral part of teaching and learning processes. In general, approaches that explicitly aim to provide feedback to students, such as Bloom's "performance-oriented learning", often have a positive impact. In fact, feedback has effects on all age groups. (<https://brio.ro/adviser/feedback-ul/info/5>).

3. Principles of formative feedback (Nicol & MacFarlane-Dick, 2009; Juwah et al, 2004)

1. Facilitates the development of self-assessment (reflection) in learning.
2. Encourage teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
3. Helps clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, expected standards).
4. Provides opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
5. Delivers high quality information to students about their learning.
6. Encourages positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
7. Provides information to teachers that can be used to help shape the teaching

Feedback should be tailored to the needs and preferences of each student. Some prefer private feedback because they may feel embarrassed if praised in front of others. Other children may respond better to feedback from others because they feel valued when their merits are recognized. Also, some children prefer verbal feedback, others prefer non-verbal feedback, therefore, depending on their age we can use gestures such as: clapping, applause, stickers, tickets, notes in a notebook for these actions, all serving as evidence of the child's progress, being able to view feedback whenever he needs to remember the path he had taken until then.

To be effective, however, feedback must occur in a learning context, as part of the teaching process, and must

occur immediately after the student has provided an answer following the initial instruction, when the information is addressed. aspects related to the student's homework performance.

Hattie (2012) considers that in the teaching process it is necessary for the feedback to take into account 3 questions to which the student must answer, analyzing 4 levels of functioning. These three feedback questions are:

What am I heading for?

How will I get there?

and

What's next?

The four levels at which feedback works are: workload, methods used, self-regulation and self

1. *Workload* - in this context, feedback is effective if it is more focused on information (correct or incorrect), leads to the acquisition of more or more diverse information and builds more surface knowledge. This type of feedback is most common in the classroom and most students see feedback this way. It is often also called "corrective feedback" or "knowledge of results" and is usually given in class through teacher questions; it is given, most of the time, by the observations on the themes; it is often specific and cannot be generalized; is the most common type of feedback for the entire class.

2. At the level of the learning process - there is feedback regarding the *methods used* to obtain the result or complete the task. Such feedback can lead to providing alternative approaches, reducing cognitive loads, supporting the development of learning and error detection strategies, providing clues for a more effective search for information, recognizing the relationship between ideas.

3. At the level of *self-regulation* - it is more focused on the register of self-regulation or on the monitoring by the student of his own learning process. Feedback at this level can improve students' self-assessment skills, provide greater confidence for further involvement in the task, support the student in requesting and accepting feedback, and increase their willingness to try to seek and use feedback.

4. At the level of the *self* - it is directed towards "self" (for example: "You are a good student!" Or "You did well!") And is usually associated with the notion of "praise". Praise is often used to provide peace and support; it is always present in many classes and is welcomed and expected by students, but often diverts attention from the task, method, or self-regulation. The main message is that you can give praise but be given in such a way as not to diminish the power of feedback.

Improper feedback can have severe repercussions on the educational act, with students being able to drop out of difficult tasks, which often leads to a lack of involvement in subsequent learning tasks. They can also "distort" the tasks, combining them with each other, choosing after their completion only the aspects that have been successfully completed and ignoring the failures. They can also lower

their standards by choosing less challenging tasks, accepting as satisfactory a performance placed at a much lower level than their abilities would have allowed, just to avoid situations in which they are judged and criticized.

Training students' self-assessment skills is a systematic and complex process. To help teachers complete the self-assessment process, C. Rolheiser outlines four stages of student preparation, where feedback is highlighted throughout the process:

- Stage I - the teacher involves the students in determining the criteria. Often, students come up with ideas to negotiate with the teacher to reach the final criteria. In defining the criteria, it is important to use a language accessible to students.

- Stage II - the teacher demonstrates how the criteria are used in the evaluation of work tasks. Giving examples helps students understand the meaning of the criteria and how to apply them.

- Stage III - the teacher provides feedback on the application of the criteria, brings examples of different products that meet these criteria. The feedback will not focus on the correctness or incorrectness of the tasks, but how well the students applied the criteria, so it will refer to the evaluation criteria.

- Stage IV - involves identifying further learning objectives and strategies that can contribute to achieving them. In this context, students determine their own objectives and strategies, being directed by the teacher.

4. Conclusions

Feedback has both advantages and disadvantages. A major disadvantage for the teacher would be that it is time consuming. Thus, it is necessary for the teacher to take the time to find out what the students' level is, what their abilities and skills are, what the targeted performance is. And all this only at a stage preceding the moment when the feedback can be given. Also, creating the context in which the student feels safe when receiving feedback requires the allocation of a time frame that cannot be predicted exactly, due to human variables.

However, a major advantage of using feedback in the classroom is that using it regularly leads to effective learning, which can be noticed not only in terms of content, but also in terms of methods and techniques.

It is important to always remember that the learning process is a complex one, sometimes difficult, both for parents, teachers, but especially for children. Effective communication is the path to success, so it is necessary to communicate coherently and constantly, to always express our expectations patiently and calmly, to be firm but also understanding and always open to new ways of achieving goals. Each child has his own learning style, but with perseverance we can make the learning experience a positive experience, full of satisfaction and remarkable results.

Authors note:

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Opinions of primary education teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of on-line teaching

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Opinions of primary education teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of on-line teaching

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Abstract

Keywords:

online teaching,
digitization, advantages,
disadvantages, teachers,
technology

In Romania, schools were closed, courses were suspended on March 11, 2020. The Ministry of Education and Research sent teachers the recommendation to conduct online courses at home. Over the following weeks, this recommendation was supplemented by others, the Ministry recommend that teachers take online courses, without making them compulsory. On March 20, 2020, the Ministry of Education approved the Methodology on the distance continuation of the educational process in quarantine conditions that establishes the way to continue the educational process in primary, secondary and high school institutions in quarantine conditions. The methodology establishes the obligation to conduct distance learning courses through various online platforms (eg Viber, Whatsapp, Facebook, Google Classroom, Zoom, etc.) and allows the assessment of students during this period and the registration of grades in the catalog. The large number of platforms available online for conducting such courses, as well as the lack of a national or local decision on the use of a single platform, has generated quite a bit of confusion among teachers and especially among students. We wanted to find out the opinions of primary school teachers regarding the advantages and disadvantages they perceive regarding online teaching, through interviews with them.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Online-Unterricht,
Digitalisierung, Vor-
und Nachteile, Lehrer,
Technologie

In Rumänien wurden die Schulen geschlossen und die Kurse am 11. März 2020 ausgesetzt. Das Ministerium für Bildung und Forschung sandte den Lehrern die Empfehlung, Online-Kurse zu Hause durchzuführen. In den folgenden Wochen wurde diese Empfehlung durch andere ergänzt. Das Ministerium empfiehlt den Lehrern, Online-Kurse zu belegen, ohne sie zu verpflichten. Am 20. März 2020 genehmigte das Bildungsministerium die Methodik zur Fortsetzung des Bildungsprozesses unter Quarantänebedingungen, die den Weg für die Fortsetzung des Bildungsprozesses in Primar-, Sekundar- und Hochschuleinrichtungen unter Quarantänebedingungen festlegt. Die Methodik legt die Verpflichtung fest, Fernlehrgänge über verschiedene Online-Plattformen (z. B. Viber, WhatsApp, Facebook, Google Classroom, Zoom usw.) durchzuführen, und ermöglicht die Bewertung von Studenten während dieses Zeitraums und die Registrierung von Noten im Katalog. Die große Anzahl von Plattformen, die online für die Durchführung solcher Kurse verfügbar sind, sowie das Fehlen einer nationalen oder lokalen Entscheidung über die Verwendung einer einzigen Plattform haben bei Lehrern und insbesondere bei Schülern zu großer Verwirrung geführt. Wir wollten die Meinungen der Grundschullehrer zu den Vor- und Nachteilen, die sie im Online-Unterricht wahrnehmen, durch Interviews mit ihnen herausfinden.

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the way teachers around the world teach. The familiar atmosphere of the classroom was replaced by the necessary distance learning in an emergency. But what could schools and teachers do to successfully integrate online learning into the future? How should it proceed? Given that the pandemic has led to the mass closure of schools in Europe, many countries have taken steps to limit the disruption of education, which has necessitated the transition to online and distance learning in both secondary and primary schools.

The interest of NGOs and national and European administrative structures in the specifics of online teaching and its strengths and weaknesses has materialized in a series of educational policy documents developed recently or several years ago, designed to bring completions and clarifications. related to this phenomenon, during or before the pandemic context. Thus, U.S. The Department of Education (2010), the European Union through the Eurydice Report (2020) or the think tank Expert Forum (2020) analyzed from various perspectives the situation of digitalization at international and national level, accurately outlining a profile of the factual situation.

We already know that effective online teaching does not just mean taking the content of the lesson and transmitting it using technology. The online learning environment comes with specific challenges and resources, which require both teachers and students to adapt and change the way they work. Digital learning is increasingly replacing traditional educational methods. No matter how much or how little technology is integrated into the classroom, digital learning has come to play a crucial role in education. How? By making students more interested in learning and broadening their horizons. Digital tools and technology develop effective self-teaching skills for students. They become able to identify what they need to learn, find, and use online resources, and apply the information to school, homework and projects. This increases their efficiency and productivity.

In addition to the increased level of student involvement, digital tools and technology develop critical thinking skills, which underlie the development of analytical reasoning. Children who explore open-ended questions using their own imagination and logic learn to make decisions more coherently, as opposed to mechanically memorizing lessons in the textbook.

2. Problem statement

Given the changes brought about by the introduction of online teaching, 6 months away from the start phase, we intended to find out what is the opinion of teachers who teach in primary education (rural and urban) on the strengths and weaknesses of this digitized process. We believe that a better knowledge of these aspects can lead us to a better management of the factual dictation, with positive effects on students, teachers, or decision makers.

3. Research questions

We considered it necessary to find out what are the advantages and disadvantages of online teaching that teachers for primary education perceive and what is their opinion on how these distance learning activities take place. For this purpose, we invited 10 primary school teachers (7 from urban and 3 from rural) to participate to an on-line in-depth interview based on two open-ended questions?

- 1) *Mention at least 5 benefits brought to you by online learning, in the order of the importance*
- 2) *Mention at least 5 difficulties brought to you by online learning, in order of their importance*

4. Findings related with research question no. 1

Following 2 meetings for discussions on the proposed topic (one related to advantages and another to disadvantages), some basic ideas were crystallized, which we will detail separately, in accordance with the answers provided by the interviewees.

Advantages of online teaching for teachers

- Because parents are partners of younger children in

the teaching process, more consistent relationships can develop between school and family, parents can understand more easily and empathize more with the effort of a teacher. Thus, the teacher-parent relationship also develops.

- Parents can explore with their children different platforms, online tools and thus learning takes place in adults as well.

- At the management level of the classroom, the dynamics change and parents can provide the right framework for learning.

- Adapting to online teaching encourages teachers to collaborate with each other, sharing their materials and teaching practices much more easily, at great distances.

- There are teachers who have previously participated in or taught online courses and who are more familiar with some methods. Many of them want to share their knowledge with those who need support.

- The flexibility of making the schedule is an aspect mentioned as advantageous, because it allows the teacher to make decisions related to establishing synchronous and asynchronous activities with students

- The chance to meet students in a new setting is another advantage mentioned by teachers

- New learning opportunities that can be capitalized as a way of restructuring the contents and the traditional teaching style

- The possibility for teachers to work together, as a team, is considered a very important element in managing the crisis situation, as it facilitates the possibility to make decisions together for the benefit of students and to support each other.

Advantages of online teaching for students

- Moving courses online encourages students to have more autonomy in learning, making the most of their creativity.

- Temporarily moving the learning process to the online sap, can sustain the pace of learning and can increase students' confidence in their own abilities and resources to be self-taught.

- The student's comfort is higher being in a personal space

- There is no more noise, children have more time to rest, they do not have to wake up very early in the morning to take public transport

- Students' curiosity can be more consistently stimulated through technology that can do homework more interesting

- In some cases, students who were more disinterested in class lessons became more involved in online

- The flexibility of the schedule ensures an increased freedom for the student to organize his program in agreement with other aspects that until now were not considered by the school (for example the professional program of the parents)

- The possibility for the teacher to record an entire sequence or lesson, which the student can access whenever he feels the need for clarification or additional support in understanding
- Some students feel more comfortable expressing their opinion online, feel listened to and encouraged to speak
- The introduction of interactive elements facilitated the transition to online and students became more interested in the courses, understood more easily, and became more active in live meetings.
- Some students see this form of teaching as something new, treat it with curiosity.

5. Findings related with research question no. 2

Disadvantages of online teaching for teachers

- The difficulty of knowing the real load with homework of students where there is no communication between teachers
- Lack of sufficiently high-performance equipment or insufficient equipment (eg families with teachers and students and must use equipment at the same time),
- In some cases, teachers were caught unprepared and did not know how to use the platform. Those who already used certain online tools adapted more easily
- Accommodation with applications, which was compensated in some cases with individual study (frequent)
- The relationship with the parents was difficult in some cases because they did not have enough skills to use the technology
- Lack of appropriate equipment
- Teachers consider that a major shortcoming of the platforms provided when going online is the lack of direct interaction with students
- Teachers fail to track students and see their level of assimilation of the information transmitted, and the assessment process is thus difficult.
- Teachers were trained from tutorials and did not receive support because they did not master technical skills
- Teachers do not feel ready to go online and adapt courses in this format.
- Sometimes they feel demotivated to make the switch, do not have the necessary technical equipment or the internet connection does not allow them to hold live meetings with students. They feel that they do not have the skills to use the various online platforms available.
- Working with very large classes, online debates are long and tiring, and preparing materials takes a long time.
- A major drawback of online teaching platforms is the lack of direct interaction with students. Teachers fail to track the progress of students and see their level of assimilation of information transmitted and the assessment process is thus difficult.

Disadvantages of online teaching for teachers

- Impossibility of all students to participate in online lessons,
- Limiting human contact,
- Lack of an e-mail address (in urban and rural areas)
- Using multiple applications at the same time creates overwork and confusion
- The family does not have the necessary technical equipment for the student to attend classes
- Poor internet connection (rural and urban) or missing
- The reaction of the students was positive at the beginning, but the interest is lost along the way
- Children lack interaction with school, socialization
- Some students do not have devices and have to wait for their parents / depend on their parents' service schedule
- Some activities can be tiring and overwhelm them / some students are stressed
- The learning process is not uniform, and some students do not adapt easily and do not understand the content of the lessons
- Students do not know how to use the platforms provided or, in the case of young children, parents do not know and therefore cannot support them
- In some cases, mentioned by teachers, families have the necessary technical equipment, only that in a family there are several students, sometimes teachers, which means that not everyone can have access to the equipment.

6. Conclusions

Although distance learning offers definite benefits to teachers and students (continuity, flexibility, and mutual support), teachers make efforts to adapt to online teaching due to the short time available. In addition, it is difficult for them to ensure that all students, especially the disadvantaged or young, will remain motivated and will continue to participate in online classes.

The positive aspects mentioned by the respondents were related to innovation, ie the freedom to experiment in the teaching activity, the flexibility and the wide range of work tools and the involvement of students and the improvement of the relationship with them.

Almost all teachers reported difficulties, the most common being access to technology for both students and teachers, as well as the increased workload and stress level associated with working from home. Several difficulties were identified related to the support provided to students, as well as to the level of digital competence of both students and teachers.

Respondents believe that concrete support in the form of more educational resources would help them overcome obstacles. Several clear guidelines from the Ministry of Education, as well as professional development activities such as quick courses on online teaching and opportunities

to exchange resources, ideas and solutions to obstacles, would also be useful.

These findings give decision makers and school principals a few early indications that distance / online teaching and learning, although difficult, can have lasting positive effects, opening up interesting perspectives for innovation and new ways of working, especially when supported. of adequate and timely professional development efforts.

If we look at the positive side, however, many teachers see this crisis as an opportunity to learn new skills, to learn more about themselves and their students. Most respondents feel that they have a responsibility to be with their students and to guide them through this period.

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Multiculturality and interculturality in the educational system

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Multiculturality and interculturality in the educational system

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Abstract

Keywords:

culture; global education;
otherness; multicultural
educational environment;
intercultural competence;
cultural values

The structured elaboration of a personal system of values, in line with the culture to which we belong, represents a lasting process, parallel to development, which involves completions and restructurings, adaptations and modifications of the cognitive, attitudinal, affective and axiological system. The conditions of the modern world, oriented towards globalization, no longer allow the isolation of cultures, and the mobility of people creates favorable conditions for the intersection and mutual influence of cultures. For this reason, the development of the capacity to decode cultural meanings and to rationally select multicultural elements that lead to the flexible and creative reorganization of values different from those of the culture of origin, is a desideratum of the education and training of individuals.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Kultur; globale Bildung;
Andersartigkeit;
multikulturelles
Bildungsumfeld;
interkulturelle
Kompetenz; kulturelle
Werte

Die strukturierte Ausarbeitung unseres eigenen Wertesystems verbundet mit der Kultur, zu der wir gehören, vertreten ein dauerhafter Aktionsansatz, parallel zur Entwicklung, was bedeutet, Vervollständigungen und Umstrukturierungen, Anpassungen und Modifikationen des kognitiven, einstellungsbezogenen, affektiven und axiologischen Systems. Die auf die Globalisierung ausgerichteten Bedingungen der modernen Welt erlauben keine Isolation von Kulturen mehr, und die Mobilität von Menschen schafft günstige Bedingungen für die Überschneidung und gegenseitige Beeinflussung von Kulturen. Aus diesem Grund ist die Entwicklung der Fähigkeit, kulturelle Bedeutungen zu entschlüsseln und multikulturelle Elemente rational auszuwählen, die zu einer flexiblen und kreativen Neuorganisation von Werten, die sich von denen der Herkunftskultur unterscheiden, führen repräsentiert ein Desiderat die Bildung und Ausbildung von Individuen.

1. Introduction

The education of the future cannot be separated from the global problems of the world, and any reform in the educational system presupposes the opening of the school towards this theme. In this context, the training and development of young people acquires new meanings and orientations, because school instruction and education, through all the theoretical and practical components must align with current international trends, which aim to create a society open to all cultures. Therefore, such an approach would allow both the maintenance of desirable values of one's own culture and the infusion of positive multicultural influences, capable of causing conscious changes in one's values.

To achieve this goal, changes are needed to target both teachers and students, given that cultivating an education for change is a challenge for anyone. The globalization of

political, economic and social life frequently leads to situations in which individuals change their own cultural values, perceptions and judgments, related to personal or educational experiences that involve multicultural interactions. In this context, the objectives of education are aimed at training people to be able to appreciate different cultures coexisting in a multicultural society, agreeing to evolve in contact with these cultures so that diversity becomes a positive element of change, enriching the overall cultural, social and economic life (Sauvé, 2005).

Due to the inherent changes in the contemporary society, the educational field supports permanent adaptations and modifications of its main directions of action. This fact led to the emergence of references to a new concept relevant to modern educational paradigms, this being the concept of global education. This concept aims to

focus on the educational problems of a world characterized by change, dynamism, independence and pluralism, analyzing the connections of interrelationships, diversity of values, critical thinking, etc. and promotes global and integrated perspectives (Ionescu, 2011).

2. Multiculturalism and interculturality, culture and axiology

Culture is not a social reality in itself that can be understood objectively, but presents a multitude of meanings, causalities and points of view. Culture presupposes a certain personal ethics but also an ethic of otherness, and what matters more is the observation and clarification of the relationship with others than the knowledge of cultures. In relation to this approach, intercultural education is considered as a critical transmission of the knowledge of plurality, resulting from interactions and reciprocities. In the current context, pluralism is promoted as a value and purpose of education, as a way of knowing what is universally human or singularity expressed through differences (Latour, 2010).

Due to the increase of the mobility of people, favored by the possibility of free movement in the European space, the Romanian society is more and more open to multicultural and intercultural influences. As in many other countries, new challenges appear for the educational system in Romania in the teacher-student relationship, determined to a significant extent by the increasingly varied cultural characteristics of individuals. In this sense, in the didactic activities it is necessary to reconsider the elements of culture, tradition and spirituality of the students, who are more and more likely to come from diverse multicultural environments. In addition, the intercultural experience of teachers and students can lead to the improvement of the communicative, cognitive and affective-relational dimensions in the educational space, as well as the formation of behavioral skills imposed by cultural diversity.

Although there are sometimes confusions and overlaps of the concepts of multiculturalism and interculturality, the two phrases refer to distinct areas of social reality. While the notion of multiculturalism refers to the interest in promoting differences between different cultures, an interest determined by coexistence in a multiethnic environment in order to facilitate the accommodation of minority ethnocultural groups in a different cultural space, the notion of interculturality involves focusing on relations between different cultures, on the promotion of the values and particularities of each culture designated by a certain race, religion or ethnicity, with the end goal being the creation of bridges across the borders of various cultural areas.

In line with the previous idea, we are increasingly talking about a cultural relativism, which brings into question the limits to which we can talk about the peculiarities of a culture, beyond which we can find cultural similarities. At the same time, cultural relativism requires a

certain caution in expressing appreciative or derogatory opinions when we talk about the specifics of a culture, because we must analyze the multitude of differences in all planes of human existence and thought in the context of a particular culture (Nedelcu, 2008).

The opening of borders and the proximity of other cultures have led to the emergence of intercultural dimensions in all sectors of development, including education. Constance Sirois specifies that the purpose of intercultural education is to help individuals identify themselves by taking into account the differences between individuals and communities, to locate these differences in their context, to show their relevance, to explain their importance but also to demonstrate that they are multiple and original expressions of the relationship between oneself and others, as well as between oneself and the universe he populates, representing one of the many facets of his desire for knowledge (Sirois, 1995).

The pattern represented by culture is of great complexity, being structured in a long time and associated with everything that means knowledge, life experiences, values, beliefs, attitudes, conceptual meanings, etc. which supports the establishment of new systems of representations on reality and the approach of new action behaviors in correspondence with them (Jandt, 2018). Educators must take into account that there are certain characteristics specific to each culture, which determine the different valorization of some aspects related to daily life, and these characteristics can be influenced by contact with other cultures. At the same time, cultural influences specific to cultures other than the one of origin may cause definitive, total or partial behavioral changes, especially in young people, but mature enough to make a critical analysis of multicultural values. Given the tendency to migrate in order to complete personal education or provide economic activities, cultural influences are much stronger in terms of profession, education and relationship with the close social group (friends, colleagues, etc.). Observing the axiological changes due to multiculturalism, we can see that they are less obvious in people coming from cultures with a strong and certified tradition, and the adoption of elements foreign to their culture of origin in terms of vision and social behavior is done following a process of critical analysis, freed from the constraints of preconceived ideas (either favorable or unfavorable to a particular culture).

The appeal to the multicultural and intercultural experiences of the young people and to the judicious analysis of the symbolic level of different cultures favors the reorganization of the system of personal values, determining the structuring of intercultural competences. Multiculturalism and interculturality must be taken into account when building a functional and tolerant educational environment, in which interpersonal communication plays an essential role. Since the 1980s, communication has become a major area of interest, frequently associated with the concept of communicative competence, gradually

adding the notion of transnational communication (a notion first used by Manfred Bock at the Conference of the Association of Modern Foreign Languages, 1982). This term reflects not only the relationship between two foreign languages but also a certain culture of their origin. Basically we cannot separate communication from culture, and in a multicultural environment, communication must be permanently associated with the cultural particularities of the participants in the communication process. Interculturality is based on linguistic interaction because, as E. Sapir has expressed since the beginning of the twentieth century, “language does not exist outside culture, that is, outside the socially inherited system of practices and beliefs that determine the texture of our lives” (Sapir, 1921, p. 100).

In this sense, we must look at intercultural competence in close correlation with communication competence, in a process of learning and cultural and intercultural transformation, through which man can adapt to another culture. However, it also implies the pre-existence or development of communication skills that favor the interaction between individuals, beyond the cultural differences that define them, cognitive elements that lead to a logical, flexible thinking, oriented to axiological elements, valuing information selected from other cultures or a certain intercultural awareness that allows the acceptance of truly precious elements specific to other cultures (Rakotomena, 2005).

Various socio-cultural analyses make attempts to identify the cultural specificity from various corners of the world. One of the analyses that arouses interest in achieving knowledge of cultural specificity is the one developed by L.R. Kohls & J.M. Knight (Kohls, 2004), who made a list of 13 contrasting values that explain how people are formed, how they assimilate culture and act in correspondence with it. Although this analysis reflects the value system of American culture, the set of 13 cultural values can be appreciated as a guide to any other culture and can be a starting point for any cultural study, making multiple comparisons between the cultural characteristics of different peoples, without necessarily associating them with positive or negative qualities. The respective values are: 1. Personal control over life versus Responsibility of fate and destiny; 2. Change versus Stability/tradition; 3. Time control/planning versus Time relativity/improvisation; 4. Equality, lack of prejudices versus Inequality/hierarchy, prejudices; 5. Individualism/independence versus Altruism/group well-being, dependence; 6. Activism/ personal initiative versus Passivity/innate/inherited right; 7. Competition versus Cooperation; 8. Orientation towards the future versus Orientation towards the past; 9. Action/work orientation versus Immobility/survival orientation; 10. Informal relations versus formal relations; 11. Frankness, openness/honesty versus Attitude of avoidance/incorrectness; 12. Practical

orientation/efficiency versus Theory/inefficiency; 13. Materialism/object acquisitions versus Idealism/expanding relationships with others.

A reflexive training based on the identification of the dominant values of one's own culture and the values characteristic of the representatives of other ethnicities, races, etc. leads to the structuring of intercultural competence, understood as the ability to manifest an open, receptive and flexible attitude in relation to the perspective of other cultures, adopting its specific elements, even if this adaptation requires changing a set of attitudes or behaviors specific to one's own culture.

3. The relationship between intercultural training - intercultural competence

In order to achieve intercultural training, we need elements of intercultural education and forms of intercultural learning. The difference between the two concepts mentioned above relates to the main elements that determine the intended changes at the level of individuals. Thus, while intercultural education focuses on educational programs with an emphasis on forming attitudes of tolerance, collaboration, availability for group integration, etc., intercultural learning emphasizes the cognitive elements that lead to a universal intellectual thinking, based on flexibility, on elements of inter-knowledge and exchange of information with those belonging to other cultures.

Although not all those involved in intercultural formation split the two orientations, for a better understanding of how individuals change, it is necessary to make this delimitation. For example, the tendency to focus mainly on the formation of attitudes necessary in intercultural formation, such as tolerance, can lead to a real lack of interaction between groups, with minorities being passively tolerated but not accepted or valued. In the opposite sense, the emphasis on the elements of intercultural learning leads to an excessive rationalization of the elements of knowledge of the specifics of other cultures, but in the absence of awareness of their values and way of life.

Therefore, in intercultural-oriented educational practice, it is necessary for the two orientations to coexist and to establish common specific objectives, such as: clarifying one's own cultural identity; acquiring knowledge regarding the specifics of other cultures; identifying stereotypes, prejudices, etc. present in different cultural spaces; the formation of skills imposed by cultural diversity; formation of positive intergroup attitudes; stimulating participation in various intercultural actions.

In the conception of the pedagogue M. Ionescu, intercultural education develops a pedagogy of interpersonal relationship, helping the student define himself in relation to others. In this way, intercultural training can give a new direction to pedagogy, without replacing the didactic or technical competence of teachers, but complementing it. To achieve such a goal, intercultural

learning must have the following characteristics: be transversal (applicable to all areas of education); be longitudinal (applicable to all contents of the study disciplines); to be beyond strictly formal learning models, also involving non-formal and informal models); be applicable in all phases of educational programs (design, implementation, monitoring, evaluation); to respect the principles regarding intercultural education, which means that this education respects the student's cultural identity, to provide each student with the cultural knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary for active participation in society, contributing to the development of respect, understanding and tolerance for individuals, , ethnicity, groups and nations from a social, cultural or religious point of view (Ionescu, 2011).

The consistent approach of the specific elements of intercultural training favors the development of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence is one of the most necessary competencies of the human individual in modern society. For its formation and development it is advisable to intervene as early as possible, knowing that at the age of childhood and youth, change can be easier.

Intercultural competence (Rakotomena, 2005) is the result of interactions between: 1. the communicative and the behavioral dimension; 2. the cognitive dimension and 3. the affective dimension.

At the same time we must look at intercultural competence as a process of cultural and intercultural learning and transformation, through which man can adapt to another culture. In this sense we must support the guidelines of constructivist pedagogy, which promotes the idea that learning does not take place only by confronting students with the point of view of the educator or theories presented in books and textbooks, but by confronting different points of view and different experiences. In this way, the educated person will be able to build his own opinion, as an active subject in the learning process. Programs focused on intercultural training should contribute to the optimization of educational activity in general, balancing the communicative dimension with the cognitive and affective dimensions, in the context of an educational environment characterized by otherness, diversity and multiculturalism. The results obtained could be taken into account in the context of curricular adaptations at all levels of education, in order to achieve approaches focused on intercultural education and intercultural learning. Such a result would facilitate a better social and professional integration, favoring the interactions between the members of the society, in all frames of existence.

Given the influence that intercultural education can have on communication in general and on pedagogical communication in particular, it would be appropriate for it to develop an applicability in all areas of education, both in formal and non-formal education, or informal (Gobel,

2010). The goal would be forming a set of acquisitions that would include cultural knowledge, attitudes, behaviors and competencies that would favor the educational activity as a whole. The development of communication skills on the background of intercultural learning is the core of a good social integration, in any society, even if it has a strong multicultural character. For this reason, ensuring higher mobility in education and training by increasing the supply of programs for teachers or students, focused on exchanges of experience in education systems of other states could play a significant role in enhancing the intercultural nature of instructive-educational activities, with positive effects in general.

To achieve this goal we must discuss the principles of constructivist pedagogy, which brings to the forefront of training not only the ideas and opinions of the educator or various supporters of explanatory theories related to the educational context, but also the concrete experience of the student, in which he forms his own opinions and arguments that prove his ability to learn actively. For this reason, it is appreciated that the experiential intercultural elements can support the efforts to achieve an effective educational process with greater impact. Interaction (especially in formal settings) with everything that involves elements of different cultures can influence the vision of the world, the way of perceiving and understanding those around you, respect for the elements of diversity (Thiéblemont-Dollet, 2003).

4. Conclusions

In strict correspondence with the pace of development of society and its overall transformations, it is necessary to take into account another challenging aspect for pedagogy: the realization of an education focused on multicultural and intercultural content. In the 21st century, the concept of intercultural education is associated with cultural diversity and equal opportunities. Education can no longer be conceived as an activity granted only to the majority groups, to their needs and interests, without an openness towards other cultures or minority groups.

Analyzing this information we can deduce the significance of the concerns of educational systems around the world to introduce in initial and continuous training the issue of intercultural education. By nature, each individual tends to focus on his or her own cultural identity, but this excludes involvement in transformative learning that is equally relevant to others. This is the reason why modern pedagogy militates for the intercultural formation of children / young people and even adults.

In conclusion, intercultural education develops a pedagogy of interpersonal relationships, helping the student define himself in relation to others. Through exercises of reflection and rational analysis of cultural particularities and meanings attributed to various values in different cultures, as well as by promoting analysis and discussion on this topic can ensure communication, intercultural mediation and the formation of intercultural skills, based on

knowledge, understanding and learning due to intercultural experiences, defined by experiencing difference and otherness (Reynolds-Case, 2013).

Emphasizing the intercultural character of instructive-educational activities and even expanding intercultural training in adult education could lead to improving the behavioral dimension and the formation of positive intergroup attitudes in the micro or macrosocial space, determining an educational framework based on a good relationship, where respect for each other and the recognition of the cultural values of others is an essential condition for an effective education. The issue of multiculturalism and interculturality remains topical as long as the school of the future acquires an increasingly pronounced multicultural character.

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The Effect of a Pilot Group Psycho-education Program on the Death Attitude and Life Perception in the Case of an Adult with Intellectual Disabilities

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The Effect of a Pilot Group Psycho-education Program on the Death Attitude and Life Perception in the Case of an Adult with Intellectual Disabilities

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Abstract

Often people with intellectual disabilities are protected from exposure to death, dying and end-of-life issues, but this protection leaves the person unprepared for the grieving of unavoidable losses, and unaware of the changes implied by the old age of their caregivers. Considering the person with an intellectual disability as an immature being, lacking the ability to feel complex emotions, contributes to the tendency that both professionals and families have to avoid speaking with them about the difficult topic of death. Our goal is to design and implement a psychoeducational program that approaches the topic of death as a natural stage in life, for adults with intellectual disabilities. The effects that psychoeducation about death had on both death attitude and the perception of life are discussed based on a case presentation of one of the group members.

Keywords:

intellectual disability; death attitude; end-of-life issues; psycho-education

Zusammenfassung

Oft werden Menschen mit geistiger Behinderung vor Todes-, Sterbe- und Lebensendprobleme geschützt. Jedoch sind diese Personen dadurch nicht vorbereitet, um mit der Trauer um unvermeidbare Verluste umzugehen und sind sich der Veränderungen nicht bewusst, die das Alter ihrer Pflegekräfte mit sich bringt. Weil Personen mit einer geistigen Behinderung oft als unreife Wesen betrachtet werden, denen die Fähigkeit fehlt, komplexe Emotionen zu fühlen, trägt dazu bei, dass sowohl Fachkräfte als auch Familien es vermeiden, mit ihnen über das schwierige Thema Tod zu sprechen. Unser Ziel ist es, ein psychoedukatives Programm zu entwerfen und umzusetzen, das sich mit dem Thema Tod als natürliche Lebensphase für Erwachsene mit geistiger Behinderung beschäftigt. Die Auswirkungen der Psychoedukation über den Tod sowohl auf die Einstellung zum Tod als auch auf die Wahrnehmung des Lebens werden anhand einer Falldarstellung eines der Gruppenmitglieder diskutiert.

Schlüsselworte:

intellektuelle Behinderung;
Todeseinstellung;
Lebensendprobleme;
Psychoerziehung

1. Introduction

The loss of a loved person is a universal experience that most people lived or will live throughout their lives and can sometimes be dramatic for a number of people. Some can overcome the grief experience, while others need professional help in order to deal with the psychological consequences of grief, a complex and unique process for each individual (Humphrey & Zimpfer, 2008). Experiencing loss is universal and ubiquitous, but the manner each person goes through the process is very personal.

Various steps in the grief process have been identified and described as overlapping in the case of typically developed individuals: shock, disbelief and denial; intermediary acute mourning and social withdrawal; and restoration (Shuchter & Zisook, 1994, in Summers & Witts, 2003). The intensity and length of loss-related pain differs from one person to the other and each person experiences it

differently, depending on a number of personal, relational, contextual factors.

2. Grief and mourning in people with intellectual disabilities

The experience of grief and mourning has been considered legitimate in the case of persons with intellectual disabilities. Beginning with the '80s, Oswin (1991) approached the normality of pain and sadness in persons with intellectual disabilities and acknowledged the implications of loss-related grief in this population.

Two major factors have been identified to explain the lack of awareness of the grief experience: (1) the use of euphemisms for the taboo subject of death (such as, death as somebody's going to heaven, or going to sleep), in an attempt to avoid the difficult emotional significance, and (2) the attitude toward people with intellectual disabilities as unable to function emotionally in a way that would help them feel complex emotions. Thus, people with intellectual

disabilities are confronted with a “double taboo” when it comes to loss and suffering, resulting in their mislabelling as behaviourally challenging (Oswin, 1991) and their mistreatment with solely behavioural interventions or medication following the loss of a dear one. Also, they can be excluded from burials or other mourning rituals of the family, as well as from discussions about their own mortality and life-threatening physical illnesses (Lord, Field, & Smith, 2017). The misunderstood sadness can be associated with several consequences, from self-harming behaviour to the loss of bowel control (Summers & Witts, 2003), as well as the higher risk for complicated grief (Irwin, O’Malley, Neelofur, & Guerin, 2017).

Generally, the caregivers tend to avoid speaking about the loss of a family member or friend in front of a member with intellectual disability, due to the hypothesized lack of ability to understand the meaning of loss, as well as the family need to protect the person from suffering. Protecting persons with intellectual disabilities from finding out about death is a common phenomenon, even though they are surrounded by events related to death and loss. People with intellectual disabilities experience the same profound emotions and suffer from the loss of loved ones as any other person (Grey, 2010), although the “eternal children” attitude still persists among professionals (Lord, Field, & Smith, 2017).

Although internationally people with intellectual disability have a lower life expectancy (Lord, Field, & Smith, 2017), the need to prepare them for the death of family members is an important issue. Having an intellectual disability does not have to mean dying at a young age and people with disabilities are exposed to the loss of dear ones and the bereavement that follows.

For a number of reasons, the mourning process differs from person to person and sadness for the death of a significant one is a normal emotional response. Although the intellectual disability does not necessarily imply a different experience of loss, the chances are higher for a person to need special care in such moments (Grey, 2010).

The amount of support varies from individual to individual, often being restricted to the need for practical life changes (Grey, 2010), but there are situations in which people with intellectual disabilities need support from professionals in overcoming the bereavement process (Lord, Field, & Smith, 2017).

Depending on the severity of the intellectual disability, a person might be dependent on others for assistance with day to day tasks. This dependency can increase the complexity of the grieving process and the healing process after the loss can be longer. Several factors can impact this process and the understanding of the messages about death, dying and the rituals around the grieving process are one of these important factors (Grey, 2010, Hodges, 2002).

3. Assessment and intervention on death and life significance in intellectually disabled populations

Some authors suggest that the experience of grief is not totally related to the comprehension of the concept of death and that people with intellectual disabilities have only partial understanding of the causality, finality, cessation, universality, and inevitability of death (Lord, Field, & Smith, 2017). Depending on the level of intellectual functioning, the ability to understand the death concept varies greatly.

Only recently the topics of death, dying, end of life have raised the interest of researchers, due to the fact that they are sensitive, taboo topics, avoided by caregivers and considered too distressing for people with intellectual disabilities (Stancliffe, Wiese, Read, Jeltis, & Clayton, 2017). Consequently, the paucity of assessment instruments developed or adapted for this category was noted and the need to use adapted instruments was emphasized.

Also, support and intervention programs for bereavement related issues in persons with intellectual disabilities are quite scarce. Irwin et al. (2017) identified various interventions according to Read’s model of support and noted that the first level refers to the need of education, information delivery and sharing experiences in groups. Most people with intellectual disabilities live and/ or work within specialized services, where support for bereavement, end of life and loss-related topics is most likely to be offered (Tuffrey-Wijne & Rose, 2017), although protection of beneficiaries from death-related topics is often encountered in such settings.

The topic of death and especially the attitude toward death have been related to the concept of meaning of life (Kang, Lee, Park, Kim, Jang, & Lee, 2010, Jung, 2013), a significant factor in the field of mental health, related to the wellbeing and lifestyle that people experience. Thus, a positive correlation was reported between the attitude toward death and the meaning of life in various populations and the authors recommend the inclusion of the meaning of life concept in educational programs that approach attitudes toward death.

4. Method

The current study aims to investigate the effectiveness of a psychoeducational group program targeting the development of the awareness of death as a natural stage of life in adults with intellectual disability. Targeting the concepts of life and death, the program aims at changing the attitude toward death and the increase of the significance of life within a group setting.

4.1. Participants

A convenience sample of 6 adults (4 women and 2 men) with intellectual disabilities, all beneficiaries of a day-care centre for adults with disabilities situated in a small Romanian town was selected. All the participants were middle aged adults with ages between 32 and 48 years, from

urban areas, all living with their families. Regarding the severity of the disability, two of the participants presented mild intellectual disability, one moderate disability and three severe disability. The participants' diagnostics were homogenous: epilepsy and spastic cerebral palsy, associated with a mild vulnerability toward depression, but the severity of the neurological symptoms varied. All the participants graduated from inclusive education institutions, with at least 8 years of studies.

The group participants were members of the same day centre for people with disabilities, so they were familiar with each other and all were motivated to participate due to the fact that the group theme met their specific need to find out more about the concept of death, a sensitive theme that they did not approach very easily with their family members. Participants who had a tendency to become group deviants were excluded, as suggested by Yalom & Leszcz (2015). Motivation, satisfaction of needs and satisfaction from relationships with other members were three important inclusion criteria identified by Yalom & Leszcz (2015) for a successful group therapy. Although our group was mainly psychoeducational, inclusion and exclusion criteria were considered important in order to insure the effectiveness of the activities.

4.2. Instruments

The topic of death has been rarely approached by research in the field of intellectual disability, and therefore instruments assessing death attitude, awareness and other end of life issues are usually adapted from those used for the general population. Some cautions regarding the linguistic accessibility need to be taken in order to decide that an instrument is appropriate to use for intellectually disabled people: avoiding negative wording, past tense, using simple words, short sentences, clear vocabulary, avoiding complex terms, using concrete examples and images to explain abstract terms. Also, the response scale needs to be simple, in order to ensure that the items are understood (Stancliffe et al., 2017).

The Death Attitude Profile – Revised (DAP-R, Wong, Reker, & Gesser, 1994) was used in the current study to measure the attitude toward death in adults. The scale is composed of 32 items and for each item the agreement or disagreement is rated on a Likert-type scale. Five dimensions of death attitude are being measured: (1) Fear of Death (7 items), (2) Death Avoidance (5 items), (3) Neutral Acceptance (5 items), (4) Approach Acceptance (10 items), and (5) Escape Acceptance (5 items).

The Perceived Life Significance Scale (PLSS, Hibberd, 2013) was used to assess the extent to which participants acknowledged the value associated with goals, relationships or various aspects of present and future experiences. The scale assesses the intrinsic value of one's activities, as well as various activities in the lives of adults. The scale consists of 19 items, with answers reflecting the agreement or disagreement rated on a Likert-type scale.

The scale consists of three subscales: (1) Active significance (8 items), (2) Receptive significance (5 items), and (3) Negative significance (6 items). The scale is useful in the assessment of the effectiveness of psychotherapeutic interventions on the perception of life.

The wording of the items was an aspect that was carefully considered during the linguistic adaptation of the instruments and was considered accessible for intellectually disabled people.

4.3. Procedure

The participants volunteered to be included in a therapeutic group and the informed consent was obtained from all of them. Also, families and caregivers were informed about the goals of the psychoeducational program.

Both scales were given to the participants in written format for completion and the first author assisted each participant in reading the items and rating them on the Likert scale. Each time a participant tended to respond desirably, a verbal signal was sent to ask for a reconsideration of the answer. The cautions cited by Stancliffe et al. (2017) were considered and both the instruments were evaluated as appropriate for the participants, in both the manner of item wording and the nature of the Likert scale. The assessment was performed in two stages, before and after the group psychoeducation program, in order to determine the changes in death attitudes and perception of life following the participation to the group activities.

The research activities lasted 8 weeks and were structured in three main stages: (1) pre-intervention (baseline) assessment, (2) group sessions of psychoeducation, 2 sessions/ week for 5 weeks, (3) post-intervention assessment with the same measures as in stage 1.

Meaningful benefit for the group members was targeted, so the methods, strategies and activities designed for the purpose of the psychoeducational group were carefully selected and adapted for the specific of the members' disabilities and personal resources.

The activities within the ten sessions of the psychoeducation program were inspired from Neimeyer (2017) and Rogers (2007). Abstract concepts were exemplified, visual material was used, and various analogies were made with real life situations. Each experiential exercise was processed within the group discussions and each participant had the chance to develop hope, to share information with others, to strengthen empathy, altruism, socializing, and to have a cathartic experience during the session, considering part of the primary factors identified by Yalom & Leszcz (2015) for the change that participants make in their lives after group therapy.

Table 1. Brief presentation of the theme and content of the psychoeducational group sessions

Session No.	Content	Materials
1	Group opening: information on the sessions, establishment of a set of rules, creation of a calendar, planting of seeds to follow their development	Wheat seeds Coloured pencils to create a calendar
2	Presentation of “Life cycles in humans”, death as a natural life stage, identification of own life stage	Power Point presentation Card with life stages
3	Presentation of the story “Grandma’s dead” (Pașca, 2008) and discussion of questions referring to death	Power Point presentation of the story
4	Role play, grandmother’s death funeral	Puppets for adults
5	Identification of grief-related emotions, own and other group members emotions, group discussion about emotions	Pictures with emotional expressions
6	Emotional regulation basics, expression and emotional control of powerful emotions	Breathing buddies Various objects for grounding exercises
7	Group collage on the topic of “Life after death”	Glue, materials for collage
8	Group interactive activity: means to remember deceased significant persons	Hand puppets for adults
9	Assessment and closure: answering questions about death, dying, after life	
10	Assessment and closure: discussion about the wheat seeds, comparison with human life and development	Wheat planted in session 1

Group cohesiveness was qualitatively monitored during the ten group sessions and acceptance, support, deepening of relationships (Yalom & Leszcz, 2015) were reinforced during each session while participants shared their reactions and feelings.

5. Results. Case presentation

All the participants in the group participated in the psychoeducation program with interest and were actively involved in the group activities. Their interest was high due to the specific life stage, as all of them were adults who were confronted with the loss of family members or relatives.

Some of the participants responded desirably to the measures and we hypothesize the presence of the acquiescence in participants’ reports. We will detail the results and experience of one of the group members, as well as the context of her life that modelled her response to group psychoeducation.

Group participant AG is a 32-year old woman, living in the town in which the day centre is situated. She graduated four grades in a mainstream school and has an equivalent of eight years of educational background. She is a beneficiary of the centre for twenty years.

She lives with her parents, both retired in the same year that the group took place and has one sister living in a big city with her family and the participant describes their relationship as good.

Regarding the level of independence in daily living activities, the participant is encouraged by her family to take responsibilities, needs some amount of help in accomplishing her routines, but sometimes rejects the help from her mother with verbal and physical aggressions. There is a high degree of latency in her daily routines and a low capacity to adapt to changes.

Nine years before the group, both AG’s maternal grandparents, who lived in the same house with her, died only a few months apart. The parents chose not to tell AG about their death and in order to protect her they sent her away to an aunt until each of the funerals was over. The participant realized what happened, but never asked questions and several changes in her behaviour were immediately noticed by the parents: she refused to go to the church, she protested when she encountered persons wearing black, she refused to listen to religious music, and she never since then entered in the room in which her grandparents died.

During the baseline assessment, the participant stated her belief that after death people go to angels, but other spontaneous ideas about death, dying of after death experiences did not emerge during the pre-test phase.

We noticed, that apart from her tendency for desirable responding to the questions of the two questionnaires, an increased level of fear and avoidance of death can be observed and a low acceptance of the death as part of life. Regarding the perception on life, the scored showed a moderately positive perception, with a low tendency toward negative perception.

Table 2. Participants' raw scores at baseline and post-intervention

Participant	Assessment ¹	DAP-R ²					PLSS ³		
		1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3
AG	1	46	35	28	40	25	38	28	14
	2	32	35	21	45	29	46	25	9

¹stage of assessment: (1) baseline, (2) post-intervention

²DAPR-R subscales: (1) Fear of Death, (2) Death Avoidance, (3) Neutral Acceptance, (4) Approach Acceptance, (5) Escape Acceptance

³PLSS subscales: (1) Active significance, (2) Receptive significance, (3) Negative significance

The figures below present the changes in scores that were obtained following the participation in the group sessions for the participant's attitude toward death (DAP-R) and perception of life (PLSS). Although not very spectacular, the slight changes in the participant's scores show the relevance and usefulness of such programs. The participant included in the group was a person with intellectual disability that lost some close family members

and was still living with her family, both her parents were still alive. Therefore, her personal confrontation with death was related to the loss of her grandparents many years ago, a loss that was never worked through. Her reported level of fear of death was high, as well as her tendency to avoid death. At the same time, she also reported a high level of acceptance of death. The participant's need to understand the concept of death is obvious.

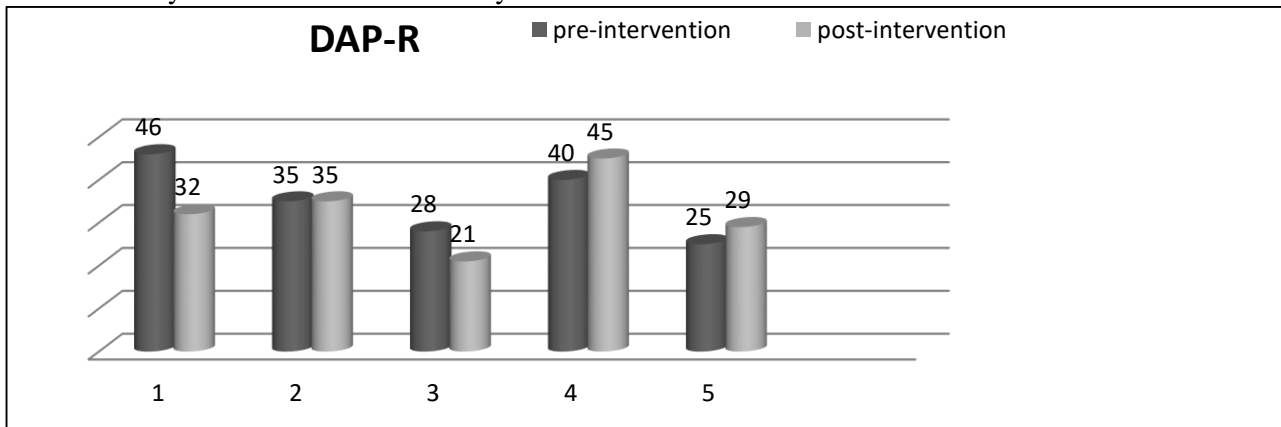


Figure 1. Participant's scores for DAP-R at baseline and post-intervention

DAPR-R subscales: (1) Fear of Death, (2) Death Avoidance, (3) Neutral Acceptance, (4) Approach Acceptance, (5) Escape Acceptance

AG has a concrete level of understanding things and the concept of death is hard to understand, especially in a context in which she was protected from suffering by avoidance of exposure to end-of-life rituals in the family.

After the psychoeducational group, a slight increase in death acceptance and a decrease in the fear of death, as measured with the DAP-R, were noticed, following the exposure to grief and death-related group discussions and activities. For our participant, who reported a very high

level of fear, it is obvious that psychoeducation cannot be the only intervention.

Although not very consistent for the participant, the changes in scores prove that an intellectually disabled person could benefit from psychoeducation regarding death and end of life issues. Her acceptance of death as a normal part of life can have a decreasing effect on her fear of death and can be a buffer against problematic grieving.

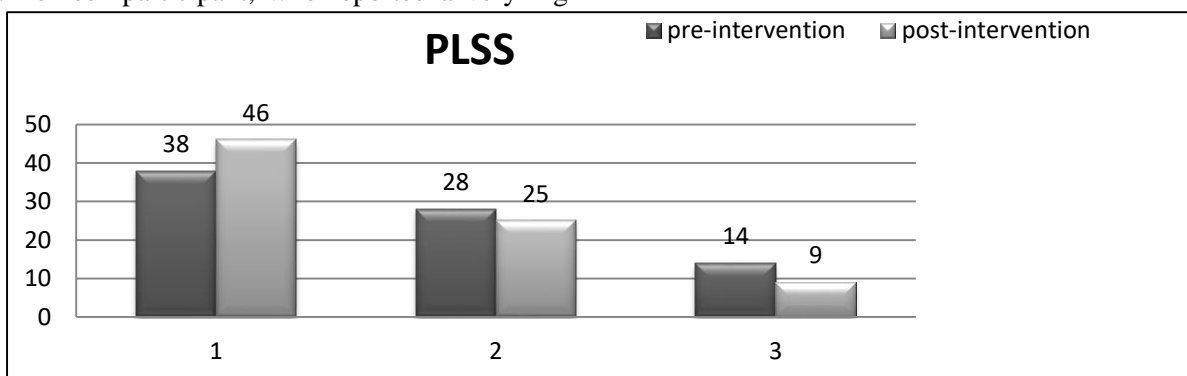


Figure 3. Participants' scores for PLSS (Active Significance) at baseline and post-intervention

PLSS subscales: (1) Active significance, (2) Receptive significance, (3) Negative significance

With respect to the perception of life, the participant's scores slightly increased for active significance of life, and slightly decreased for receptive and negative significance, showing some positive effect of the exposure to death-related topics on the value that the participant attributed to her life.

A relation between death acceptance, low fear of death, and life significance can be acknowledged in the case of AG. Although not generalizable based on a case presentation, an association can be noticed between the decrease of fear of death, the increase of acceptance, and the increase of significance of life.

Following the group psychoeducation, there were some changes in the participant's behaviour around the issue of death, the mother noticed a more natural way of asking and discussing about death from AG, a more direct and less avoidant approach of the topic. Also, some new behaviours emerged with respect to the grandparents' room, as the participant started to walk into the room, look through the personal stuff, she started to process their death, affirming that they were old, ill and their time had come for them to die.

6. Discussion

Some changes were noticed in the scores of the case we presented, following the 5-week psychoeducation program, showing slight changes in both death attitude and perception of life of the participant. Although the changes in scores were not spectacular, which was not expected after a short psychoeducation program, such intervention could significantly impact the members of a group that go through life events related to loss, grief, death and end of life (such as the death of a family member), or those who have personal reason to be more receptive, or are in a stage of their life that makes them interested in such topics.

The report of the results shows that there is a relation between death attitude and perception of life, the participant showed increase in the acceptance of death and also showed the increase of active significance of life.

The concrete level of understanding, specific to persons with intellectual disabilities, determines several difficulties in the understanding of the death concept. There is a tendency to avoid the discussion of this topic with intellectually disabled people, due to the desire to protect them from strong negative emotions that family members, as well as the staff from the day-care centres. The scores show that persons with intellectual disabilities do have a certain degree of awareness of death, as well as a certain degree of fear related to death. Avoidance of topics concerning death may lead to a risk of misinterpreting death as a unnatural phenomenon.

A certain degree of valuing of one's own life was added to the participant's perception of her life by the fact that she directly approached the topic of death.

The group sessions positively impacted all the members, the open discussions about a sensitive topic had

a positive effect on their exposure to a taboo subject that is sometimes avoided by caregivers, in a life stage in which loss is inherent for each of them.

7. Conclusions

Our study shows that implementing a psychoeducational program for the development of death acceptance has an effect on the perception of death as a natural stage of life. Adults with intellectual disabilities are confronted with the ubiquitous experience of loss and death, as they are at the life stage when their parents are getting old, their grandparents are death or close to dying, so the need to openly discuss the taboo topic of death is stringent.

Although significant changes can be obtained in a longer time period, some people with intellectual disabilities can have benefits even from such a small number of group sessions, depending on their life circumstances and events, as well as disability-related factors, such as the severity of their disability. Family factors, such as the amount of discussions that caregivers are open to have, can furthermore impact the persons' attitude about life and death.

One important limitation of the current study is the use of assessment scales developed for the population with typical development. Although the phrasing was accessible for the participants' level of understanding, some of them might have had difficulties interpreting some of the items that they did not signal to the first author who helped them fill in the assessments. Also, a tendency toward desirable responding and acquiescence were noted. Therefore, the results should be considered with caution.

Another important limitation is the small group number of participants, meaning that our results cannot be generalized. Our goal to pilot a psychoeducation program was mainly to show a manner of approaching the sensitive topic and to present some possible activities, but there is a need to expand the research to a much larger population in order to be able to draw more general and consistent conclusions.

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The importance of humour and charisma to facilitate students' motivation for learning

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The importance of humour and charisma to facilitate students' motivation for learning

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Abstract

Keywords:

charisma, games' functions, learning, interpersonal relationships, humour

The article presents a synthesis of qualitative studies regarding the importance of using humour and games in learning. Humour has a wide range of functions that make it a valid instrument if used in classroom. It can be used to raise students' motivation and it promotes their psychological and emotional development. This paper presents the results of an enquiry conducted upon a sample of 698 students from the IVth to the VIIIth grade. Among the items we have also included different topics related to the importance of interactive strategies designed to support learning through laughter and to make lessons more attractive. At a theoretical level we will investigate if teacher's charisma is related to the ability to use it in the classroom on one hand and if and how learning is eased. Correlational analysis revealed specific results showing that using humour in education is beneficial to increasing students' motivation.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Charisma, Spiele, Funktionen, Lernen, Zwischenmenschliche Beziehungen, Humor

Der Artikel präsentiert eine Synthese von qualitativen Studien bezüglich der Bedeutung des Einsatzes von Humor und Spielen beim Lernen. Humor hat eine breite Palette von Funktionen, die ihn zu einem validen Instrument machen, wenn er im Klassenzimmer eingesetzt wird. Er kann eingesetzt werden, um die Motivation der Schüler zu erhöhen und er fördert ihre psychologische und emotionale Entwicklung. In diesem Beitrag werden die Ergebnisse einer Untersuchung vorgestellt, die mit einer Stichprobe von 698 Schülern der vierten bis achten Klasse durchgeführt wurde. Unter den Items haben wir auch verschiedene Themen aufgenommen, die sich auf die Bedeutung von interaktiven Strategien beziehen, die das Lernen durch Lachen unterstützen und den Unterricht attraktiver machen sollen. Auf theoretischer Ebene untersuchen wir, ob das Charisma des Lehrers einerseits mit der Fähigkeit zusammenhängt, es im Klassenzimmer einzusetzen, und ob und wie das Lernen erleichtert wird. Die Korrelationsanalyse ergab konkrete Ergebnisse, die zeigen, dass der Einsatz von Humor im Unterricht zur Steigerung der Motivation der Schüler beiträgt.

1. Introduction

Since ancient times humour has proved to have an important role in enhancing relations between people, adjusting behaviors and education. Within the learning process, humour can be used both as a strategy and an instrument to enhance and enrich the content and learning methods.

According to the Oxford Dictionary the word ludic is defined as „tending to play and have fun, make jokes, etc., especially when there is no particular reason for doing this”. Ludic covers everything that facilitates building knowledge in a free and spontaneous manner. It enhances activities with joy satisfaction and enthusiasm while giving access to knowledge and better understanding the world. If implicated in ludic activities children's imagination and

creativity is improved while informal learning is increased as children aren't focused upon language but upon games and fun. Knowledge gets real (Constantinides, 2009).

If we take a look at the most important aspects we notice that ludic and humour are similar in terms of fun and amusement. Humour though uses more language and less games. Therefore this paper uses both terms as they can be switched according to the objectives.

Activities implying ludic and humour elements have significant effects in motivating students. Motivation is a primary learning mechanism and lately it works as a continuous force sustaining cognitive efforts needed in learning and operations with the new knowledge regardless the subject (Enever, 2015).

Teacher can be perceived as a leader within the classroom as he is coordinating a group or activity.

Charisma represents a tool to influence other's behaviors and to earn the loyalty of the group. (Macarie, 2007, quoted by Karim, Mansir andSaparudin, 2020). Charismatic leaders can imbue students with motivation, share their prospective and provide openness to the ideas and the needs of the members. (Kelinman, 2004, quoted by Karim, Mansir andSaparudin, 2020).

Humours psychosocial's component can be also found within al socio-cultural groups. Besides the roles related to belonging to a group and inclusion, humour has an instructive function. That is the reason why introducing humour in classroom and discovering its effect has become a research topic.

2. Theoretical frame and literature review

The scientific literature has demonstrated through a large number of studies that there is a tangible connexion between *expressing ludic through humour and reducing conflicts, and improving the quality of relationships*. (Berger, 1956; Gorham andChristophel, 1990; Sidelinger, 2014).

The teacher-student interactions are getting improved by ludic elements. Smith, Ascough, Ettinger andNelson (1971) have conducted a study on a number of 215 students. They were asked was to solve an academic task. Students were divided into two groups. One group had to perform a task containing funny elements in a proportion of 30%, and the other had to perform a task with no funny elements in it. The results have shown that exposing students to fun decreased their anxiety level and increased their academic performance.

Kane, Suls andTedeschi (1977) determined that in the classroom there are many psychosocial functions of humour that are activated, such as: reducing pressure, improving the negative emotions' level in difficult situations, facilitating the process of getting to know each other or simply the entertainment.

It's been proved that humour has a positive impact on interpersonal relationships and on the group cohesion (by group we mean the class group)(Sprowl, 1987). Teachers who bond with their students are more likely to use humour in teaching (Gorham, 1988). In the same time people using humour are characterised as being more nice and attractive compared to people who don't.

In a positive situation people are more available to relating with others (Gorham andChristophel, 1990). Deiter (2000) explains that using humour in the classroom becomes a tool teacher use to maximize students' results and there's no negative impact on teacher's reputation or authority.

Humour is also a way to reduce emotional barriers that occur in communication. Moreover humour has an important contribution to a conducive learning environment. Therefore it becomes a pedagogical

instrument that allows the merger between formal linguistic features and social-cultural features of the group (Askildson, 2005).

Lovorn (2008) emphasizes the importance of using humour in preadolescence both by teachers and parents. The explanation consists in the fact that exposing regularly the pre-teens to humour leads to social and intellectual development if humour is structured and correct.

An additional argument is offered by Morrison (2012) who identifies ten reasons why he encourages the using of humour in the classroom:

- a) All discussions containing humour led by a teacher are better remembered by students on long-term;
- b) Humour helps creating coping mechanisms while helping children relax in difficult situations or with difficult tasks;
- c) Humour leads to positive reactions such as stimulating interactions and commitment;
- d) Humour helps students focus better and for a longer period of time;
- e) Humour wipes fatigue and stress both for students and teachers;
- f) Humour doesn't help students to learn the entire content but eases the learning of the message and context
- g) Humour stimulates creativity;
- h) Humour facilitates communication and interactions;
- i) Humour is useful in the process of change;
- j) Humour is... free and fun.

Using humour has benefits for all ages, starting with pre-schoolers and finishing with college students. The most frequent types of humour are the jokes, fun images, stories and pictures and all those can be successfully used both in school and on-line for all subjects (Ivy, 2013).

However there are also negative aspects of using humour in teaching as some studies are showing. Furthermore we present a few limits of using humour in schools: ridicule students who break the rules, emphasizing features that make students different (discriminating students). All the above are leading to negative reactions and conflicts between or inside a group (Cann, Zapata and Davis, 2009).

One of the main conditions when using the ludic resource in classroom is to create a context or situation that is conducive to this. This is a resource teachers have to be fully aware when they choose to use it and it has to be related to teacher's objective. The most frequent objectives are related to: making a change in a student's behavior, getting students focused, the transition from one topic or task to another (Shibinski and Martin, 2010).

Humour has two components: the cognitive one and the emotional one. If students cannot understand their teacher's humour they won't be able to process the message. From this point of view it is compulsory that humour is accessible to student's age range and knowledge (Banas, Dunbar, Rodriguez and Liu, 2011).

Hellman (2007) presents a set of rules teachers have to follow when they choose to use humour in the classroom:

- they have to carefully choose the time
- the professional climate must not be affected by the using of humour;
- even if the teacher choose to explain some concepts using humour he then has to review the content in a scientific manner;

Students appreciate teacher's qualities when they manage to create a psycho-social climate that is conducive to modern learning (where examples and funny stories are used, combined with information from the media). All these strategies will direct students' focus or change negative angles towards information or events. The satisfaction will therefore be maintained (Sidelinger, 2014).

Grant (2015) uses the term "good teacher" to depict this particular type of a teacher: his lectures are attractive to students, he is charismatic and a good practitioner and also thinks about the teaching process. Teacher's behavior influences the learning process of his students.

Lin and Huang (2016) explain in their study that students' interests for learning are increased when their teachers are charismatic and decreases is teachers are not. The conclusions of the study are that one of the indicators that predicts the students' success is *teachers' charisma*.

Charismatic teachers are admired by other people as they have a pleasant and genuine appearance, by presenting contents in an original manner and the persuasive speech (Juvan, 2017). Dobrovská (2018) made a list of components of the charismatic teacher's activity:

- a) The teacher is an expert in his field while the content is processed and adapted to the particularities of the group;
- b) When framing the topic he includes original approaches as a consequence of a profound reflection;
- c) He is self-taught and focused upon examples and explanations that are accessible to students and their needs. This always happens as this teacher is open to new ideas and modern resources;
- d) He is an authentic person presenting an authentic and significant information;
- e) The presentations are coherent and can combine both contents and details;
- f) He is assertive and gives confidence to students;
- g) He is positive, dynamic and stimulates students to be implicate in different activities;
- h) The charismatic teacher has acting skills to keep students focused;
- i) He uses non-verbal language and voice tone in teaching to enhance the content;
- j) He has a good image on himself and gives his students confidence;
- k) He is fully aware on the importance of the subject and the context of the subject he teaches;
- l) He leads students to cognitive and spiritual development.

Charisma is seen as a vector of performance and innovation in educational systems. But innovation is only possible if the managers are open-minded when it comes to change and teachers are available to the new ideas (Ismail and Mydin 2019).

3. Research design

3.1. Aim and objectives

The research represents a selection of some particular items concerning interactive teaching and using humour selected from a research which included different topics.

The starting point of this research was the following question: To what extent the teaching strategies using humour as a teaching instrument are perceived by the students of different age range as playing a positive role in learning?

The aim of the research is to assess the role of interactivity in teaching-learning process as well as the role of humour in: increasing learning motivation and perception of learning difficulty.

In order to achieve this goal, we evaluated the results obtained after applying a questionnaire that included several items corresponding to the proposed objectives.

The objectives of the research are:

- O1. To assess to what extent interactivity correlates with the perception of students upon the learning process;
- O2. To assess to what extent interactivity correlates with the perception of students upon the education' goal;
- O3. To assess to what extent interactivity correlates with the perception of students upon the importance of humour/laughter in classroom.

3.2. Methodology: the instrument and the procedure

In this research we used a questionnaire that includes two dichotomized Likert scales. The scale has a number of 10 items and investigated students' opinions about:

- The interactivity of teaching
- The difficulty of learning
- Their perception upon learning objectives
- Their confidence in teachers.

3.3. The sample

698 students answered the questionnaires according to tables and diagrams below:

Descriptive statistics of the sample

By gender: 309 (44.3%) of students were boys and 389 (55.7%) were girls. The number of boys and girls and percentages are shown below:

Table 1. Sample distribution by gender

Gender	Number	Percentage
Boys	309	44.3 %
Girls	389	55.7 %
Total	698	100 %

Students' distribution according to their grade: the distribution was relatively homogenous (there were slightly

more students in the IXth –Xth– XIth grade as shown in the table below:

Table 2. Sample distribution by grade

Grade	Number	Percentage
IV th	67	9.6 %
V th	54	7.7 %
VI th	45	6.4 %
VII th	49	7.0 %
VIII th	55	7.9 %
IX th	125	17.9 %
X th	115	16.5 %
XI th	115	16.5 %
XII th	73	10.5 %
Total	698	100 %

We have also considered important to the accuracy of the aims of the research to include both students from urban and rural environment. Sample distribution by urban – rural area of residence is shown in the table below:

Table 3. Sample distribution by residence area (urban - rural)

Residence area	Number	Percentage
Urban	485	70 %
Rural	213	30 %
Total	698	100 %

4. Results. Data analysis

Under the data analysis, exploration of data has been made with descriptive statistics and graphical analysis. The students' answers to every item or group of items were independently analysed.

4.1. Analysing the extent to what students prefer charismatic teachers (teachers that are using humour and are flexible)

Considering all data presented above we can assert that students think that: learning is difficult as they are not involved in interactive activities comprising humour; humour would make lessons more attractive and also would support learning; therefore the learning process is dull and meaningless to students when teachers are severe and they lack charisma and humour.

Data analysis was exhaustive. From this analysis we concluded that only for 215 students (less than 30.8 %), serious teachers (those whose interests are mostly related to teaching and less to bonding with students) are the ones they prefer.

A number of 483 students (69.2%) prefer charismatic teachers as they are perceived as facilitators, as teachers that bond with students and make teaching-learning activities meaningful. Therefore, this is the type of teacher most students prefer. The distribution of these perceptions is represented in the table below:

Table 4. The extent to what students prefer charismatic teachers

Item - <i>The preferences for serious and charismatic teachers</i>		Results	
		Number	Percentage
Answers	Serious teachers	215	30.8 %
	Charismatic teachers	483	69.2 %
	Total	698	100 %

4.2. The extent to what students prefer fun but meaningful activities

Our aim was to study how much learning facilitators can provide active learning, interactive and dynamic activities. In order to do that we studied their answers to the questions about boredom and meaningful laughter during lessons.

Data analysis revealed that most of students perceive lessons are not dynamic nor active and interactive. 63% of the students think lessons are boring and not challenging. It is very possible that for this reason lessons are seen as difficult (by 58% of the students) when there isn't meaningful humour (see Table 5):

Table 5. The perception on learning

Items	Percentage
<i>Teaching-learning activities are boring and less challenging when there is no meaningful humour</i>	63%
<i>Learning is considered more difficult when there is no meaningful humour during the lessons</i>	58%

As the number of students who scored for the two variables as shown in the table above (the lack of interactive activities and the difficulty of learning) we decided to explore from a statistical point of view if there is an interrelation between the variables and humour. Therefore we calculated the Pearson correlation coefficient. The data collected through this method is shown below:

Table 6. Pearson correlations between responses to “interactive activities”, “the difficulty of learning” and “humour and meaningful laughter during lessons”

Variables		Perceived interactive activities	Perceived difficulty of learning	Perceived humour and meaningful laughter during lessons
Perceived interactive activities	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.822**	0.765**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	698	698	698
Perceived difficulty of learning	Pearson Correlation	-0.822**	1	0.125**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	698	698	698
Perceived humour and meaningful laughter during lessons	Pearson Correlation	0.765**	0.125***	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	698	698	698
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

Table 6 shows that all three variables are interdependent with both positive and negative values ($p < 0.001$). The Pearson correlations for the variables introduced in the analysis are statistically significant. All data presented in the table above led us to the following conclusions:

- Interactivity in learning perception is negatively correlating with students’ perception upon the difficulty of learning ($r = -0.82$ - statistically significant). *The more interactive lessons are the fewer students perceive learning as being difficult.*

- Interactivity in learning perception is positively correlating with students’ perception upon the aim of learning ($r = 0.76$ - statistically significant). *If lessons are interactive there is much more humour and laughter in the classroom.*

- The extent to what students perceive the difficulty of learning is not correlated to their perception upon the importance of humour and laughter during lessons ($r = 0.12$ - statistically significant). *We can conclude that during difficult lessons, charismatic teachers who also use humour will reduce the difficulty level of learning. Humour can be used in lessons regardless the difficulty level.*

5. Conclusions

The answer to the primary question is that there is a large extent up to which lessons involving humour is perceived by the students as having a positive role in the learning process regardless the grade (we included students from the IVth to XIIth grade).

The aims of the research were met and the results are indicating that:

i) Interactivity in learning is negatively correlating with students’ perception upon the difficulty of learning ($r = -$

0.82). *The more interactive lessons are the fewer students perceive learning as being difficult.*

ii) Interactivity in learning is positively correlating with students’ perception upon the aim of learning ($r = 0.76$). *If lessons are interactive there is much more humour and laughter in the classroom.*

iii) The extent to what students perceive the difficulty of learning is not correlated to their perception upon the importance of humour and laughter during lessons ($r = 0.12$).

The main conclusions from the results are:

a) The more interactive are the lessons (perceived), the less difficult the students perceive learning.

b) The more interactive are the lessons (perceived), the more increased the quality of humour and laughter is (declared).

c) When it comes about difficult lessons, charismatic teachers using humour will contribute to the diminishing of the perceived difficulty of learning.

A general conclusion of this research after the analyze of the results is that integrating humour elements in teaching (using specific techniques and instruments correlated to the subjects) could be a useful way to capitalize those elements supporting learning. Humor becomes a natural extension to social interactions within the group. This way, academic acquisitions are more likely to be considered from a formative perspective. Also, academic acquisitions will meet the specific competences as well as transversal competences.

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Measuring cohesion indicators in middle school: membership, implication and satisfaction

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Measuring cohesion indicators in middle school: membership, implication and satisfaction

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Abstract

The current article investigates the validation of a scale designed to measure cohesion within class groups (middle school level) taking into account various number of cohesion indicators, such as: belonging to a group and analysing the relationships between its members, the level of implication and participation of the members in activities, the satisfaction of the members towards being part of their group related to the benefits. The questionnaire that includes the scale was distributed to a sample (the selection was determined theoretically). All the respondents were middle school pupils. The results are tracking how the cohesion scale is validated taking into account the statistical perspective and the content of the items in relation with the research's objectives.

Keywords:

membership, group cohesion, class climate, cooperation, psycho-social group

Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Artikel untersucht die Validierung einer Skala, die entwickelt wurde, um den Zusammenhalt innerhalb von Klassengruppen zu messen und dabei eine Reihe von Kohäsionsindikatoren zu berücksichtigen, wie z. B.: die Zugehörigkeit zu einer Gruppe und die Analyse der Beziehungen zwischen ihren Mitgliedern, der Grad der Einbindung und Beteiligung der Mitglieder an Aktivitäten, die Zufriedenheit der Mitglieder mit der Zugehörigkeit zu ihrer Gruppe in Bezug auf die Vorteile. Der Fragebogen, der die Skala enthält, wurde an eine Stichprobe verteilt (die Auswahl wurde theoretisch bestimmt). Alle Befragten waren Sekundarschüler. Die Ergebnisse verfolgen die Validität der Kohäsionsskala unter Berücksichtigung der statistischen Perspektive und des Inhalts der Items in Bezug auf die Ziele der Forschung.

Schlüsselworte:

Mitgliedschaft, Gruppenkohäsion, Klassenklima, Kooperation, psycho-soziale Gruppe

1. Introduction

The group of pupils can be defined as a group of individuals connected by relations (similar goals and interests) and common features.

When thinking about a class group from a psycho-social perspective we must associate this with a psycho-social group. The class group is mainly oriented towards learning but many other components are also involved such as formative and relational ones (Johnson and Johnson, 2003; Senge, 2016).

The class group becomes a group the very moment when its members are participating in solving common tasks in order to reach an objective shared by the entire group. This way the group helps each and every member to stay focused upon the task and members help each other. Instead of having the teacher control members'

behaviorpupils are taking this responsibility as well as the group (Hadfield, 1992).

The work environment and the colleagues involved, getting involved into different competitions with an increased degree of efficiency and cooperating in order to solve particular tasks determines both changes at a cognitive level and behavioral and relational level (Hogg, 1992). The way the group dynamics is built during the fifth grade will be the foundation upon which the class group culture will be constituted during the middle school.

The purpose of the present study is to validate the content of a scale designed to determine statistically the intensity of some particular cohesion indicators as we aim to further evaluate the correlations between the dependent and independent variables of the present research.

2. Theoretical background

The group cohesion represents a phenomenon through which the members of a group are attracted to the group by the specific functions: control, influence, pressure to uniformity. The result will be a strong allegiance and unity experienced by “us” (Cristea, 2015).

Moreover, this approach is a particular one to which the international agreements have to answer when it comes to some particular attributes of the group such socialising and integrating within the educational environment. The cohesion determines obedience to the groups’ rules, stability and also provides behavioral control to its members (Hogg, 1992).

Pupils are social beings with social needs such as acceptance, membership and power that must be accomplished within groups (Sausage 1991). If their social requirements are met then they find the real capability to build a cohesive group. This is the path educators should choose to build cohesion through promoting it between pupils. OECD also defines cohesion through its social dimension as a sense of belonging to the school’s community and the educational environment (OECD, 2010).

In 2015’s Pisa testing pupils were asked to report how they feel inside the school community: whether they feel left-out or they can easily make friends as they feel to belong to their school or by the contrary, they feel uncomfortable, if they feel that their classmates like them or if they feel alone. Same questions were asked as part of PISA enquiries leading to the capacity of the educational systems to monitor changes that occurred in the commitment of pupils towards their school communities. As school is a primary environment accommodating social interactions of adolescents the results of these subjective evaluations indicate whether the educational systems are endorsed to evaluate pupils’ well-being or not.

The answers given by pupils to these questions were used to build the indicator needed to measure the sense of belonging. The indicator was then standardized with a medium value established at 0 and a standard deviation of 1 within all OECD member countries. On this scale the positive value indicates that the pupil proves a higher sense of belonging compared to the medium value of the indicator reported by the EU member countries.

On average, in 2015, in member countries, 73% of pupils indicated that they feel like they belong to their school. 78% of the pupils agreed they can easily make friends at school. 85% expressed their disagreement to the assertion that they feel alone in school while 83% disagreed with the idea that they feel left-out by their school community. An average of 82% felt accepted by other pupils and peers while 81% disagreed with the assertion that they feel uncomfortable at school. Most of the pupils feel like they are socially connected to their schools. Even so, in some countries we identified the presence of

representative minor groups whose members felt isolated or lonely (OECD, 2017, p. 118).

Comparing the results of the PISA enquiry in 2004, 2012 and 2015 we notice that within all OECD countries the sense of belonging has decreased on average between 2012 and 2015. The percentage of the pupils who have disagreed or strongly disagreed regarding the topic of loneliness has decreased as an average with approx. 6 points during the time we took into account.

This particular trend indicates a gradual decrease of their sense of belonging to their schools (2003-2015). In 2003 approx. 7% of the pupils reported they feel like strangers; by 2012 this ratio increased with 4% and by 2015 it increased by 10%. The ratio hasn’t significantly decreased in the member countries between 2003-2015 (OECD, 2017, p. 119).

The culture of the class group represents „the group’s way of life, that includes all the habits, rules, values, myths and rituals” (Negovan, 2006, p. 151). The class culture is included by: the way the learning process is conducted, the characteristics of the physical environment and the interactions between its members (ibidem, p. 151). How these things are taking place inside the class group is determined by the cohesion level of the group (Sălăvăstru, 2004).

The cohesion determines the psycho-social climate of the class represented by the psychological state-of-mind of the group. This is an essential factor when it comes to class management (Woolfolk, 1993).

The class management is determined by specific particularities of the activities taking place within the group. The psycho-social climate determined by a high cohesion level is defined by the following features:

- a. „Trust and mutual exigencies of the members of the group;
- b. The benevolent and pragmatic critics;
- c. Freedom of opinion concerning the issues of the group;
- d. Lack of pressure from teachers to pupils and giving pupils the right to take important decisions for the whole group;
- e. Accurate briefing of the members of the group concerning the problems and the status of different issues;
- f. The level of the satisfaction concerning the belonging to the group;
- g. The level up to which and the mutual assistance the members get into various situations that imply emotional frustrations” (Krásiko, 2007, p. 142).

An investigation conducted in 12 schools in the UK, Senior (1997), indicated in her study based upon observations and group interviews the main characteristics of the cohesive class as described by the pupils in middle school: a sense of respect and trust, acceptance of the abilities and limits, a sense of cooperation and mutual support, a sense of relaxation and comfort, a safe environment.

The same author conducted another research implying four secondary classes (the 5th and the 6th grade). She then shared the idea of integrating specific cohesion activities as she reported that teachers use different types of tasks in order to adjust to the social and pedagogical priorities. For example, collecting information tasks are used as teachers are aiming to reach a particular pedagogical goal but at the very same time teachers are using these strategies to promote cooperative learning between pupils. They have to interact to complete the tasks therefore focusing rather upon the information then upon the appearance.

The final result is that pupils will get to know each other better and the respect level will increase. Mutual acceptance will then be reached (Senior, 2004).

Combining learning with cooperation techniques in classroom activities can be really beneficial to increase group cohesion. It contributed to

- reducing the anxiety
- promoting interactions
- increasing self-confidence
- raising motivation
- opening new opportunities for pupils to develop intercultural understanding respect and friendship
- creating social skills, they need in the process of acceptance of different opinions and getting to a consensus
- obtaining a greater efficiency in learning and increasing pupil's focus (Crandall, 1999, pp. 233-239).

Brumfit (1984) says the class group should be built as a psychological group in order to ensure the efficiency of the work and facilitate an active interaction between the pupils.

Dörnyei and Murphey (2003) say particular subjects should be conducted as group activities because within a „good” group teachers and pupils enjoy the learning process and feel comfortable in a pleasant, challenging and supportive environment. The key factor is *common motivation*.

Theoretical sources (George, 1990; Hackman, 1990; Hogg, 1992; Kaymak, 2011) and studies that focused upon cohesion research within groups (Beal, Cohen, Burke and McLendon, 2003; Casey-Campbell and Martens, 2009; Karau and Williams, 1997; Moody and White, 2003) as well as researches focused upon cohesion in class groups (Bulgaru, 2015; Fotopoulou, Zafeiropoulos and Alegre, 2019; Zakriski, Seifer, Sheldrick et al., 1999; Wilt, Veen, Kruistum and Oers, 2018) have mentioned a few theoretical and applicative prerequisites we used in this study in elaborating a scale comprising the most used reliable and valid cohesion indicators in order to measure this phenomenon at secondary classes.

Our study focuses upon an objective we chose from the doctoral approach therefore we will further refer to validating the content of the cohesion scale as described in the section below.

3. The research's design

3.1. Aim and objectives of the research

The aim of this research is to create and validate the content of a scale to measure the cohesion phenomenon in middle school groups of pupils.

The objectives of the research are:

O1. To create a scale to measure the cohesion phenomenon in middle school pupils and to validate its content

O2. To use the scale in order to measure cohesion in middle school pupils through the following indicators:

- a. The extent of belonging to the class group with the emphasizing of the relations between pupils
- b. The implication and participation at common activities level
- c. How satisfactory the quality of being a member of the group is through identifying benefits the members get from their group

The indicators above are expressed by the items of the questionnaire presented in Annex 1.

O3. To evaluate the measure up to which the scale provides significant information concerning the cohesion phenomenon within the class group.

3.2. The research sample

The scale was implemented on a number of 580 secondary pupils from various schools in Romania (boys and girls, from both urban and rural environments from five counties).

Sampling was theoretical and exhaustive and all pupils belonged to the classes we have included in the middle school lot we have previously identified.

The sample's distribution was heterogeneous as we were less interested in the differences related to social and demographic features and more interested in studying the climate of the class groups. We also referred to the suggestions from various studies to correlate the sample's accuracy with our research aims (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007).

563 questionnaires were valid and therefore this is the dimension of the final sample of our research. If significant differences will occur the results will be discussed accordingly.

3.3. Methodology: the instrument and the procedure

The instrument we used was a Likert scale questionnaire with five options (the scale as proposed for validation, see the Appendix). The scale as designed by us following the objectives of the research.

The questionnaire comprises, apart from the data-collecting questions, a number of 24 items constructed to measure several dimensions of cohesion. 12 of these items are negative.

The questions cover three aggregate indicators designed by us combining the information provided by methodological literature (Hogg, 1992; Kaplan, 1990), as follows:

Table 1. Indicators, abbreviations, and item's quotation

No.	Cohesion indicator	Abbreviations	Positive quoted items – Questions	Abbreviations	Negative quoted items – Questions	Abbreviations
1	The group belongingness concerning the relationships between pupils	A	5, 11, 13, 21	A_positive	6, 8, 10, 22	A_negative
2	Implication and participation in group's activities	B	1, 9, 17, 19	B_positive	2, 4, 16, 18	B_negative
3	Satisfaction provided by the membership through identifying benefits	C	3, 7, 15, 23	C_positive	12, 14, 20, 24	C_negative

The above items include already validated elements regarding relation between cohesion and different variables. As example we can provide research papers that studied statistical correlations between cohesion indicators and other variables (Bettenhausen, 1991; Carron and Brawley, 2000; Hogg, 1992; Erdley, Nangle and Gold, 1998).

The research instrument was conceived according to the rules and limitations as mentioned in scientific researches. Also, in preparing questions data analysis and qualitative interpretation of the results we used reference scientific studies, validates in other enterprises as well. (Bryman and Cramer, 2008; Chelcea, 1994; Kaplan, 1990).

The scale was implemented to subjects from secondary school to measure their understanding upon the questions and if they can identify themselves by answering them. The data was analysed under the aspect of the accuracy of the measuring process and the internal consistency of the inner values. The reliability and validity of the scale in measuring the constructs was tested by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient. This coefficient varies between 0 and 1 but in order to significantly influence the latent variable the minimal value has to be 0,7(Hair et al., 2006).

4. The results

The answers to the scale's questions produced the following results (aggregated data):

Cronbach's Alpha' coefficient values for latent variables exceeds the minimal value (A=0,775; B=0,727; C=0.711) meaning that the subject managed to answer the questions.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient values for latent variables

The latent variable	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
The belonging to the group aiming pupils' interrelations (A)	0,775	8
Implication and participation to group's activities (B)	0,727	8
The level of satisfaction given by the membership through identifying the benefits pupils get from their group (C)	0.711	8
Total	0.888	24

The result confirms the fact that the scale can be validated as being reliable and can be used with secondary pupils and can be replicated within similar investigations.

The descriptive statistics for the entire sample provide information about cohesion for each indicator.

The belonging to the group (*Apositive*) is being identified as high proving positive relations between pupils:

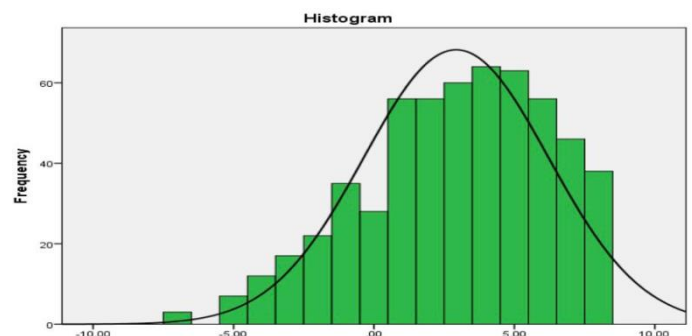


Figure 1. The belonging to the group (*Apositive*), for the entire sample

The Gauss's curve in Figure 1 (the answers' distribution depending upon scores associated with pupils' answers) is right-oriented. The meaning of this orientation is that the respondents considered that assertions targeting this indicator are suitable to them. We took into consideration all data collected for the entire sample. Furthermore, the statistically significant trend is related to bonding with mates (standard deviation is 3.293 and the score for average value is 2.925)

All the above being taken into consideration we can assert that relatedness within the class group (relating with others, appreciation, openness, assertiveness) gives to the majority of subjects the sense of belonging to the group and most of its members feel good as members of their groups.

The reversed items related to the belonging to the group (A negative) refer to the appreciations concerning the sense of exclusion and poor bonding with peers and group. That indicates a complementary distribution from the A positive set of questions:

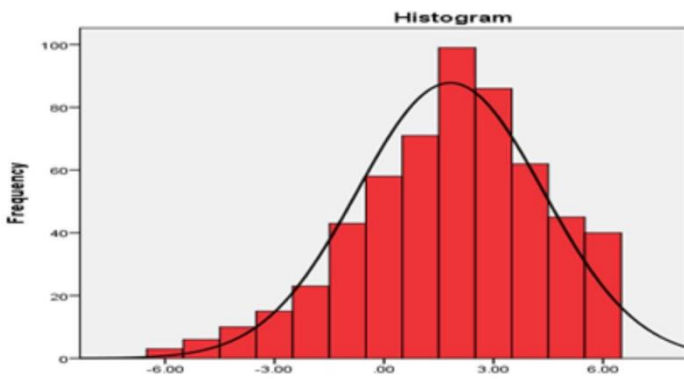


Figure 2. The non-belonging to the group (A negative), for the entire sample

In this figure we can observe a standard deviation of Gauss's Curve. The value is 2.549 and the average score (statistically) is 1.815. As a consequence, the aggregated answers are placed under the average theoretical score related to the entire sample. Therefore, less than 50% of pupils feel they cannot establish positive connections with the group (they feel disliked, they do not ask for help or hide their problems, their opinions are not valued).

Implication and participation to group's activities (Figure 3):

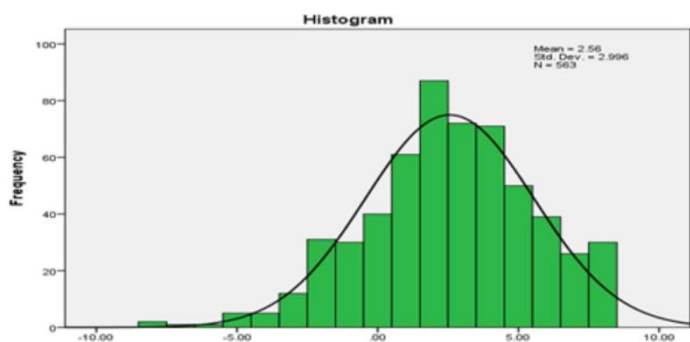


Figure 3. Implication and participation to group's activities (B positive), for the entire sample

Analysing this indicator, we notice that statistical data suggest an average level of implication and participation of the group (B positive). The score average is 2.556 and standard deviation is 2,996 meaning that pupils appreciate the dimension of the cohesion being weaker compared to the relatedness one.

The general trend of the sample's opinion gets confirmed by the distribution of the results we've got for the implication and non-implication indicator (B negative):

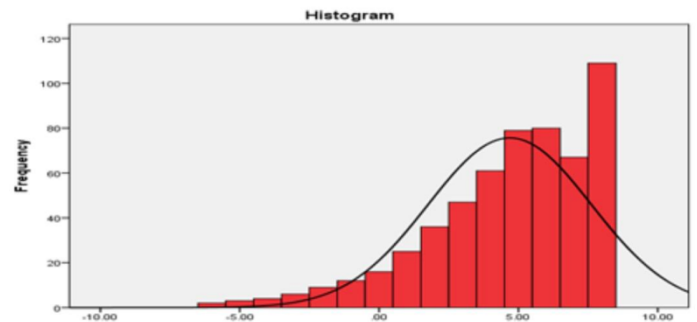


Figure 4. Non-implication and non-participation to group's activities (B negative), for the entire sample

According to the histogram above pupils have given higher scores (the average is 4.689) to the reversed items describing implication and participation in group activities. This aggregated indicator refers to a range of elements such as: cooperation, activism or confidence about the power and strength of the group, in relation to the common objectives.

This leads us to the conclusion that we are getting a disturbing signal when it comes to the configuration of the components of groups. Many pupils feel excluded or do not feel empowered by the class's opinion to carry on different tasks, they do not resent pleasure when they perform various activities and are not committed.

The degree up to which pupils get satisfaction or non-satisfaction is somehow similar if we refer to the indicator „The level of satisfaction given by the membership through identifying the benefits pupils get from their group”. This conclusion is only valid within the context of the discussion about group belonging and related only to particular dimensions as follows:

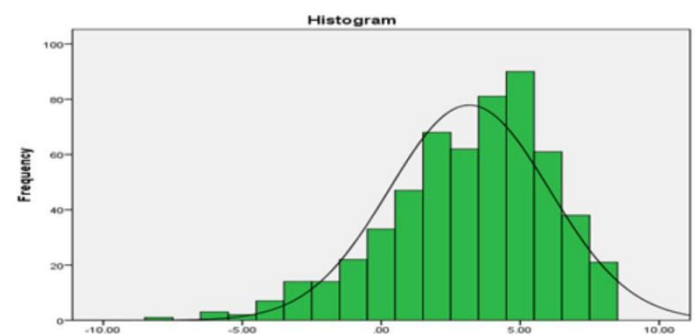


Figure 5. The level of satisfaction given by the membership through identifying the benefits pupils get from their group (C positive), for the entire sample

The score's average for these answers(they feel good at school, they feel happy when the group is successful and proud to be its members, they feel they can ask other members for help) is 3.168 therefore is placed at a higher rank while the standard deviation is 2.890. But if we look at the scores registered by the reversed items of this indicator, we can appreciate that the group belonging indicator reveals that pupils do not perceive the membership as a benefit or a satisfaction. The average score is 4.920 the highest compared to the other average scores related to cohesion indicators. The standard deviation for this aggregate indicator is 2.965 as shown in the figure below:

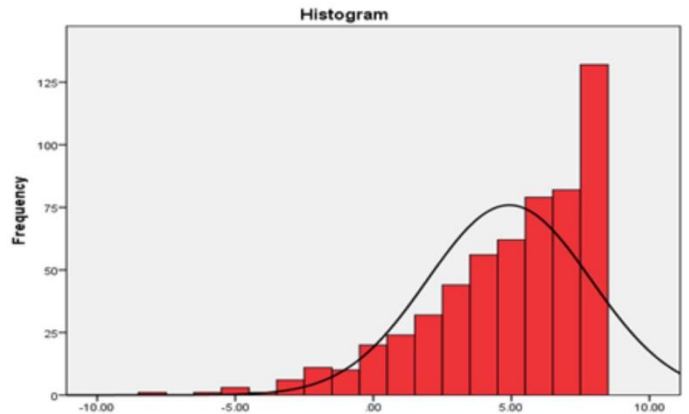


Figure 6. The level of non-satisfaction given by the membership (C negative), for the entire sample

The items of this indicator are significant for the issues generated by assessing the non-belonging to their group by many pupils: getting help from peers gets the lowest value, pupils hardly feel they are part of the group, a good result is individual not collective and there isn't pride for being a member of the group.

The results including significance tests as they were calculated for the entire sample are shown below (Table 3):

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the entire sample

	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic
Apositive	-7.00	8.00	2.925	3.293	-.474	-.361
Anegative	-6.00	6.00	1.815	2.549	-.477	-.009
Bpositive	-8.00	8.00	2.556	2.996	-.332	.106
Bnegative	-6.00	8.00	4.689	2.932	-1.027	.848
Cpositive	-8.00	8.00	3.168	2.890	-.690	.335
Cnegative	-8.00	8.00	4.920	2.965	-1.100	.990

Score average per class groups is shown in Table 4:

Table 4. Average score per class groups

CLASS	A-POSITIVE	A-NEGATIVE	B- POSITIVE	B-NEGATIVE	C-POSITIVE	C-NEGATIVE
V	3.0694	1.4965	2.6849	4.1806	3.2708	4.7413
VI	3.2410	1.8415	2.4074	4.7125	3.4699	5.2651
VII	2.3597	1.4965	2.2878	4.8074	2.9275	4.2662
VIII	3.0863	2.2589	2.7107	4.9695	3.1357	5.3618

As we can see from the data above the indicator that measures the belonging to the class group for the VIIth and the VIIIth grade gets a higher positive score than the one for the Vth and VIth grade. However significantly many pupils in the VIth grade report an increase of the non-belonging sense. That also happens because they need to psychologically and socially adapt to the specific puberty stages.

Furthermore, the indicator assessing the implication and participation within common group activities is quite low as a global score (is situated below the average scores) and slightly increases in the VIIIth grade. The graphics of the reversed items is also linear but here we must emphasize that significantly more pupils contributed with their appreciations towards the obstacles preventing implication and participating in groups' activities.

The satisfaction level given by the quality of being a member of the group registers a higher-than-average score for the Vth and the VIth grade. It lowers for pupils in the VIIth and VIIIth grade. Instead, the reversed items (describing a lack of satisfaction for this issue) is the highest for VIth and VIIIth grades both in the general image of the scores and within this indicator. This can lead us to the conclusion that the educational system fails when it comes to facilitate integration for the members of class groups. Here we appreciate that integrative activities should also refer to giving consistent and efficient legitimacy to group members and also support for pupils who feel lonely or shy or rebel pupils as a reaction to rules, tasks or group demands.

5. Conclusions

Considering all data presented above we can elaborate the following conclusions and discussions:

- This research confirms the results of other studies indicating multiple dimensions of the cohesion, the complexity of the factors that intervene within the process of establishing relationships between pupils and within its dynamics. As this is preliminary research, we cannot firmly assert overall conclusions but it sets particular trends that have been checked using specific and valid instruments. It is the starting point from which we will extend our research the very moment the scale becomes valid. Furthermore, we will begin the correlational statistical analysis of the variables generated by the research's objectives.

- It is compulsory to determine through further testing if all members of a class group have the same thoughts and feelings about the cohesion of their group. But the results we will get using the scale are promising. As we know what sensitive cohesion elements are and the exact grade they tend to appear we can then identify solutions in order to reduce the sense of non-belonging, isolation, inadequacy.

- The results we have reached are not necessarily positive for schools but it is possible to correlate results showing vulnerabilities concerning the dimension of cohesion with existing resources (human and material resources, other). This way we can avoid the syndrome of „us, teachers" vs „they, the pupils". Cohesion in school refers also to teachers-pupils relationships.

- From all results we have got through this research, participation and commitment to group projects seems to be the weaker indicator. Therefore, we consider it is important to identify the origin of this perception. It is possible that socio-cultural homogenous groups that are constituted by pupils with high academic performances to experience a higher sense of cohesion. A probable cause is that those particular groups have more self-confidence granted by results and other rewards while groups having less well-prepared pupils may become defensive. That being the case, those pupils will segregate from the „successful" group in terms of interests and activities. The question arising is how can we transform the process so that it becomes a desirable one? From poor academic results-

humiliation-losing interest for school and group leaving we have to aim towards high academic performance-pride-acknowledgement-inclusion. If we manage to do so then we can ensure cohesion of the class-group. We will continue our research in order to discover using analysis and applicative instruments to answer this question.

- The main limitation of this study is the manner we dealt with the aggregation of the scores provided by individuals' responses we have treated as a group construction. Klein, Danserand Hall (1994) proved that in order to create a reliable opinion's image all individuals should get the same score on a particular variable. If this is the case (very unlikely in sample-based research) all individuals in a group would get even scores from aggregated indicators of the scale's items. But the present research is based upon particular perceptions of a particular issue (consisting in both appreciations and opinions about the cohesion) rather than upon the objective construct of this notion. Also, measuring the relatedness, participation and belonging we have used in this study through the validation of the scale was obtained at a group level by diminishing the variance of the construct itself.

- This study uses transversal data to solve a problem that is a longitudinal one at his core (the evolution of the sense of cohesion from the Vth to VIIIth grade). The temporal effect of the groups' dynamics is a very interesting subject, As a consequence, the dynamics of the building of the cohesion as a longitudinal phenomenon would justify additional investigations.

- This study comes as an addition to the conclusions of other valid studies. The subject is very actual and gives lots of opportunities as it needs to be deeply investigated. Many studies we have mentioned in the theoretical section (Bettenhausen, 1991; Casey-Campbell and Martens, 2009; Kaymak, 2011) encourages researchers to investigate factors and previous events that led to the cohesion of the group as a known phenomenon with a wide range of positive effects on the dynamics of the class group and underlying the academic performance. These studies prove that there are many values connected to the personal as well as team's effort related to cultural relational values (including friendship), the desire for success and attitudes towards performance that are disseminated through the group. From this point of view our study didn't referred to elements that may be significant when it comes to the interpretation of the results. Specifically, we mention the effects of past group's experiences that may have had generate effects on subjects, collective low self-esteem and group performance over building group's cohesion.

- If people responsible for the management and architecture of the cohesion strategies in schools would gather valid information about specific conditions that have a positive impact upon building and developing class groups in secondary school that would obviously generate positive effects upon the class's climate and academic performance. These effects would be gradual and

progressive and so from the Vth to VIIIth grade the group would become a real support for its members with positive influences on the well-being and academic performance of each and every member. The scale that makes the object of this research was designed to be a valid background instrument to help accomplish the above goal.

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Appendix
SCALE FOR MEASURING PUPILS CLASS
COHESION

By completing this questionnaire, you will contribute to a research on pupils' opinions on how they feel at school.

Don't worry, all the answers you enter in this material will be treated with the utmost confidentiality. No one but the researchers will have access to your answers.

You need to know that there are no right or wrong answers. Choose the one that suits you best. The important thing is to be honest!

Please fill in the following data:

Gender	I am a girl	I am a boy
Age (in years)		
Grade		
I am living in	urban	Rural area

Below you will be presented with a series of 24 sentences about how you feel at school. Please read them carefully and for each of them choose the answer that you think fits you best. The correct answer is marked with an X in the field of your choice.

No.	Sentence	Your answer				
		It doesn't fit me at all	It fits me a little	It fits me half	It fits me a lot	It totally fits me
1	My classmates involve me in their activities					
2	My classmates exclude me from various actions					
3	I feel good at school					
4	I have no duties in the children's team					
5	I feel attached to my classmates					
6	I feel like I don't like my classmates					
7	I rejoice when my class is a winner in a competition					
8	When I have difficulties, I do not turn to my classmates					
9	I like the activities carried out with classmates					
10	When I have a problem, I hide it from my classmates					
11	I communicate easily with the children in the class					
12	I don't get help from classmates					
13	When I need support, I turn to my classmates					
14	I don't feel like I belong to this class					
15	I'm proud to be a pupil in this class					
16	I don't like to get involved in activities with my classmates					
17	In class I have different tasks					
18	It is difficult for me to participate in group discussions					
19	I have the courage to express my personal opinion in front of classmates					
20	When the class gets a good result, I think it is not the merit of the whole group					
21	Classmates help me when I need it					
22	My opinion matters little to my classmates					
23	When problems arise, I turn to my classmates					
24	I'm not proud to be a pupil in this class					

Thank you!

Development of a Neuroscience Motifs-based Teacher Training Program for Pre-Service Teachers in Special Education in Israel

Efrat Luzzatto, Alina. S. Rusu

Development of a Neuroscience Motifs-based Teacher Training Program for Pre-Service Teachers in Special Education in Israel

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Abstract

Keywords:

Curriculum Change;
Curriculum Planning; Pre-Service Teachers;
Neuroeducation; Teacher Training Program

In the last two decades, there is an increasing interest in the connection between neuroscience and education. However, there is a gap between the declarative statements about the importance of implementation of neuroscience in education and the small number of suggested programs which actually present an implementation in practice. This study describes the development, design and the planning of implementation of a Neuroscience Teacher Based Teacher Training Program (NMTTP) for Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs) in special education track. In addition, this study presents the current literature addressing neuroeducation and curriculum, describes the gap in knowledge concerning it and focuses on the need for constructing a neuroeducational curriculum, specifically when dealing with learning disabilities. The structure of the neuroscience-based training program, its main topics and its originality are presented and discussed.

Zusammenfassung

Schlüsselworte:

Lehrplanänderung;
Lehrplanentwicklung; Lehrer in Ausbildung;
Neuropädagogik;
Lehrerausbildungsprogramm

In den letzten zwei Jahrzehnten ist ein zunehmendes Interesse an der Verbindung zwischen Neurowissenschaften und Bildung zu verzeichnen. Es besteht jedoch ein Missverhältnis zwischen der in der Literatur dargelegten Wichtigkeit der Umsetzung der Neurowissenschaften in der Bildung und der geringen Anzahl bestehender Programme, die tatsächlich als eine Umsetzung in die Praxis bezeichnet werden können. Diese Studie beschreibt die Entwicklung, das Design und die Einführungsplanung eines neurowissenschaftlichen Ausbildungsprogramms für angehende Lehrer der Sonderpädagogik. Darüber hinaus fasst diese Studie die gegenwärtige Literatur zur Neuropädagogik in Lehrplänen zusammen, weist auf bestehende Wissensdefizite hin und konzentriert sich dabei auf die Notwendigkeit, einen neuropädagogischen Lehrplan zu erstellen, insbesondere für die Ausbildung von Schülern mit Lernschwierigkeiten. Die Struktur des auf den Neurowissenschaften basierten Ausbildungsprogramms, seine Schwerpunkte und sein faktischer Nutzen werden vorgestellt und diskutiert.

1. Introduction

Neuroeducation (NE) is a growing interdisciplinary field, which is based on the synergic connection between neuroscience, cognitive science, psychology and education in an effort to improve the theoretical and practical understanding of learning and education (Devonshire & Dommett, 2010; Nouri, 2013; Rodgers, 2015; Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2018). Although NE has gained importance in the educational communities in the recent years, there is still not enough information on how it is implemented in the classroom (pedagogical practice, curricular content), especially in the context of teacher training (Murphy, 2017).

In terms of interest in NE in Israel, the level is increasing in the last few years (e.g. Achva Model of Neuropedagogy, 2016), but the assimilation and implementation of NE elements in teacher training colleges

is still in its early stages. This study focuses on describing a teacher-training program and a suggested curriculum, which would allow the implementation of motifs from neuroscience in a reading class for pre-service teachers (PSTs) in the field of Special Education in Israel. Hence, the main objective of this research is to describe the development, design and the planning of implementation of a Neuroscience Teacher Based Teacher Training Program (NMTTP) for Special Education Pre-Service Teachers (PSTs).

This study follows the curriculum design principles for developing modules in education suggested by Remesh (2017). According to these principles, the curriculum design contains several components, such as: educational description, targeted need assessment, objectives, educational activities, assessment methods and evaluation.

The study is divided into the following parts: 1. A general review of the literature addressing the curriculum and NE. 2. A detailed description of the research field and the intervention program design. 3. A section presenting the particular aspects of the neuroscience motif-based training program (NMTTP).

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1 General Aspects of Curriculum Design

Curriculum is considered the crux of an educational process (Remesh, 2017). According to Remesh (2017), curriculum is a blueprint, which is systematically planned and leads to changes in learners in four domains: cognitive (knowledge and intellectual skills), affective (feelings and attitudes), interpersonal (social behavior and relationships with others), and psychomotor (physical skills). Clement & Lovat (2012) refer to curriculum work as a decision-making process that involves the selection of content and the crafting of pedagogies that are relevant to the targeted learners. The difference between curriculum and syllabus is that while the second one is a static element, the curriculum is a dynamic and moving one (Remesh, 2017). According to this, a curriculum design should be systematic, yet flexible, especially on the way to accommodate implications of varying educational contexts. A module is a subunit of curriculum, and the steps in curriculum development are applied also in developing modules (Remesh, 2017).

2.2 Neuroeducational Curriculum

In recent years, attempts have been made to implement neuroscience knowledge and research findings into pedagogy and classroom teaching for advancing teaching and learning (Friedman et al., 2019). According to Tokuhama-Espinosa (2017), the knowledge derived from neuroscientific research might offer new perspectives on understanding the mechanisms of teaching and learning. Curtis & Fallin (2014) state that, in order to meet the challenges of teaching in today's educational settings, there is a need for a new breed of teachers who are interested in not only what they teach, but also how the brain learns. Ergaz et al. (2018) claimed that there is a growing agreement among educators that neuroscience can serve as an important turning point in initiating evidence – based pedagogical and educational practices, which in turn might serve to empower teachers' professional performance.

A clear review of concepts from the NE field can help educators identify neuromyths, which are common misconceptions that can influence program-related decisions made by schools or districts. As summarized by Tokuhama-Espinosa (2017), the 2016-2017 International Delphi Panel on Mind, Brain, and Education Science sought

to document the advances the field has made over the past decade and to acknowledge the challenges that remain, which can serve to guide the agenda for development and research into the next decade. Within the different challenges presented in the committee, one of the main ones is the integration of NE into General Teacher Education. The other challenges refer to the integration into the education system and to the process of raising the general public understanding and use of NE concepts, thus convincing educators about the importance of understanding learning processes for improving educational outcomes. The challenges also included the understanding that most educators do not have the scientific grounding to be able to appreciate the significance of this implication and the need to help teachers use neuroscience ideas in the design of curriculum. In addition, it was recommended that more research should be conducted to determine specific course recommendations to teacher colleges in order to increase teachers' basic understanding of the human brain and learning processes, by providing a mental framework for teachers to understand distinct psychological factors that might influence the classroom practice (Tokuhama-Espinosa, 2017).

Clement & Lovat (2012) address the issue of neuroeducational curriculum and claim that this issue raises at least three interrelated questions for the curriculum work. The first is whether neuroscience is to be regarded among that corpus of disciplines that comprise the educational foundations. The second is whether, in fact, it is possible to “translate” neuroscientific knowledge to education in ways that preserve the epistemic interests of both disciplines and the third is whether usable knowledge can be generated from neuroscientific information that teachers can employ in their curriculum work. After discussing these questions, it was concluded that it belongs to the field of curriculum work where and whether neuroscientific knowledge must be translated into usable knowledge because it is here that teachers apply educational theory to practical problems. According to the authors, the translation of educational neuroscience into knowledge that teachers can use in curriculum work, depends a lot on the accessibility of the neuroscientific knowledge and the connections with practical issues.

Based on the literature discussed above, it seems consensual that brain research can help teachers enhance their educational and teaching capabilities. However, despite this assumption, only few studies address the implementation of NE in the classroom. Dubinsky et al. (2019) claimed that the problem is how to provide accurate neuroscience content to meet teachers' needs to evaluate educationally related claims. According to the authors, the role could easily be assumed by neuroscientists themselves

offering courses to pre-service and in-service teachers, and pedagogy specialists can help teachers navigate the connections between the content and the techniques modeled during the workshops (Dubinsky et al., 2013). In line with this, Dubinsky et al. (2019) presented a project called "BrainU", which was created as a professional development program to provide teachers with an opportunity to learn neuroscience. BrainU was originally developed to provide K–12 teachers with sufficient neuroscience content knowledge so that they could successfully teach their students about the neuroanatomy and the functionality of the brain. The curriculum was written for middle and high school classrooms covering knowledge about basic synaptic connectivity, sensory and motor functions, learning and memory, the autonomic nervous system, emotional processing, motivation and reward circuits, adolescent brain development, and diseases of the nervous system including addiction. Pedagogy specialists helped teachers navigate the connections between the content and the techniques modeled during the workshops. Teachers also read primary neuroscientific and educational literature to develop the capacity to critically analyze overinterpretations connecting the fields. Beyond their content, these lessons were modeled in the professional development workshops, incorporating active-learning and learner-centered strategies that included model making, observation, exploration, experimentation, data analysis, interpretation, and discussion. BrainU modeled assessing prior knowledge, constructing explanations, and identifying, discussing, and overlaying misconceptions with appropriate new concepts. Attention was paid to implementing equitable and culturally sensitive classroom practices. According to the authors, teachers completing BrainU workshops acquired neuroscience knowledge and were able to teach it successfully to their students. The results indicated that the neuroscience knowledge impacted teachers' view of learning and of their students' potential. Importantly, multiple sets of BrainU participants linked the idea of synaptic plasticity to the efficacy of learner-centered pedagogies that promote higher order thinking and profound learning in their students. From their experiences, teachers indicated that learning neuroscience was welcomed and had positive, perhaps transformational, impact on their professional practice (Dubinsky et al., 2019).

Friedman et al. (2019) were also interested in the implementation of neuroscience in education, and discussed three main open questions related to the implementation process: First, what are the neuroscience content areas or neuroscientific findings that are crucial to teaching and learning? Second, how to provide teachers with the relevant neuroscience concepts in a way that changes teaching

practices and interactions with students? Third, how can neuroscience knowhow be translated into educational practice in practical terms? In order to answer those questions, the authors developed a three-year Neuropedagogy Adaptation Project (NAP) to expose practicing teachers to neuroscientific knowledge for productive classroom practices (Friedman et al., 2019). The teachers who participated in the program stated the importance that educators be equipped with basic knowledge in the field of neuroscience and familiarity with its structure and functions. According to the authors, NE can also improve teaching abilities by suggesting innovative teaching practices, enhances productive learning and improves teacher-student relationships (Friedman et al., 2019). This is especially pertinent when preparing novice teachers for their future role, and emphasizes the importance in integrating neuroscience in the teacher-training curriculum, as well as in professional development seminars for in-service teachers. Murphy (2017) agrees with this interpretation, by saying that teachers' practices should be informed by current neuroeducation research and theory. This knowledge will serve students well, and legitimize teaching as a profession.

In conclusion, it seems there is a gap between the declarative statements about the importance of implementation of neuroscience in education, and the small number of suggested programs, which actually present an implementation in practice. The existing programs presented above indicate that there are positive results and enthusiasm from the participants regarding the induction of neuroscience into their work. However, it also seems that there is still no specific curriculum to guide the implementation of NE in education.

2.3 NE Curriculum Regarding Learning Disabilities

The potential of NE in elucidating the core cognitive and neural deficits and the efficacy of training and intervention program seems apparent, since neuroscience can provide valuable knowledge about the brain abnormalities that accompany these deficits. The different levels of understanding of learning disabilities such as dyslexia, dyscalculia or ADHD might shed light on possible treatments and the best methods to teach the children who suffer from them (Gabrieli, 2016; Rueda 2020). According to Stern et al. (2016), it appears that for a better understanding of human learning in academic settings, constraints set by the architecture of the human brain have to be taken into consideration. Moreover, educators should be able to know how students, especially in special education, best require, retain and apply knowledge in creative ways, since conventional ways of teaching often do

not attain the expected achievements among those with difficulties. The field of NE has much to offer in this regard (Hardiman, 2012a), since neuroscience may have profound implications for individuals with disabilities (Kosaraju et al., 2014). Nevertheless, reviewing the databases of articles addressing the combination of the keywords "NE" and "learning disabilities" does not yield a large amount of research. Most of the researches deal with the neurological explanations of different learning disabilities (LD), such as dyscalculia or dyslexia and the implications of those findings (e.g., Bravo, 2014; Katzir & Pare-Blagoev, 2006; Kearns et al., 2019). Only few researches suggesting a curriculum regarding courses dealing with learning disabilities and NE can be currently found in the literature. Dresler et al. (2018) suggest a theoretical and empirical guide of the benefits of neuroimaging, which can help people who work with different aspects of LD. In their model, four components reflect the ways NE can inform learning disabilities. The first component is represented by the mechanisms, meaning the neural and cognitive substrates underlying a specific dysfunction. These mechanisms should be investigated based on multifactorial causal framework of learning disabilities. The second component is diagnosis/prognosis. The knowledge of the nature of the mechanisms involved in a specific learning is essential in contributing to the diagnosis and early detection of the disorder. Reliable diagnosis based on multifactorial causal framework of learning disabilities are likely to increase the reliability of individual's learning disabilities' prognosis and to predict accurately their developmental trajectory. The third component is intervention training. A better prognostic knowledge based on a theoretically grounded diagnosis can initiate neuroscientifically informed intervention training students with learning disabilities. The fourth component is community and education. According to the authors, the first three components lack a direct applicable educational relevance, and do not offer practical solutions. To do so, transferring systematic knowledge into the community and education practice is necessary. Time should be invested in the effort to improve the connections and interactions between the different components and especially developing effective interventions (Dresler et al., 2018).

2.4 Particularities of PSTs Training in Special Education in Israel

Special Education studies in Israel seek to train educators in learning processes for children with special needs in all educational frameworks, such as segregated frameworks for ages 6 – 21, such as: mental disabilities, multi-problem learning disabilities, communication

disabilities, sensory disabilities, emotional and behavior disorders, as well as inclusive frameworks integrating children with special needs in the normative classes, in special education classes in normative schools and in other frameworks such as community and regional support centers (Hoffenbartal, 2014). Within this track, there are two areas of specialization in Israeli Special Education system: The Special Education Single Course of Study and the Dual-Major Course of Study: Special Education and another discipline. The PSTs in the Special Education Single Course of Study participate in practical work in special education classes once a week for five hours. The PSTs of the Dual-Major Route participate in practical work twice a week for five hours each time – one day in special education and the other in a mainstream class in a mainstream school. The curriculum design is based on two major principles/approaches: The first is a humanistic approach, which respects human diversity and regards it as a resource for advancing each individual in the educational domain. The second is the inclusive educational approach directed to the integration of children with special needs into mainstream school life. The program grounds knowledge in the areas of the characteristics of populations and disabilities in special education, unique treatment approaches for children with different levels of disabilities, integration and inclusion of children with special needs in mainstream frameworks, working with multi-disciplinary teams, relationships with the family and more. During the three years of studies, the PSTs acquire knowledge in the area of special education, while focusing on the characteristics of populations and disabilities in special education (mental disability, autism, learning disabilities and more); knowledge of the Special Education Law and the Inclusion Guidelines, and the nature of coping on academic, social and emotional levels. The courses reflect the complexity of teaching populations with special needs such as PDD, learning disabilities, hearing and sight impairments, emotional and behavioral disorders and more. In addition to the courses in the college, the PSTs practice teaching in different schools once or twice a week. Moreover, each semester they practice for a full week in the classes and experience the daily routines at school. In the second year of practice, the PSTs teach a special education class, usually with pupils with learning disabilities, in a teaching unit they decide on with the class teacher. In addition, they choose one pupil from the class, and they practice the diagnosis and reading intervention program they learned in the reading courses. Every year, the PSTs are required to take a mentoring course, which accompanies their practice teaching and enables them to acquire tools for developing programs for special needs populations, developing remedial teaching and assessment methods,

becoming familiar with alternative communication methods and with unique curricula and technologies in special education (Hoffenbartal, 2014).

This study focuses on developing a NE-motifs based program (NMTTP) for PSTs during their second year of study in the Special Education track. During this year, the focus is on interaction between the PSTs and a group of pupils. Specifically, the PSTs practice teaching pupils with learning disabilities and their focus is on teaching a small group of pupils from the class, in addition to teaching the whole class. One of the mandatory courses in the special education track and in which the NMTTP was implemented, i.e. "*Reading Disabilities - Theories and Intervention Programs*", deals with teaching reading to pupils with special needs, especially those with learning disabilities. The course has several units, as they follow: the *introduction unit*, which deals with the definitions of reading and dyslexia and the spoken language components in relation to reading; the *models unit*, which presents several of the main models explaining the route to proper reading; the *diagnosis unit* which demonstrates mapping a diagnosis to identify students with reading difficulties; and the *reading comprehension unit*, which deals with a variety of causes of reading comprehension difficulties, and presents various strategies for dealing with them. The studies in this course combine frontal teaching together with more innovative teaching styles, and, throughout the course, different proposals for learning strategies are presented and suggested. Subsequent to the above is an online course named: "*From Diagnosis to Developing Instructional Programs in Reading for Pupils with Reading Difficulties*", which focuses is on one pupil chosen from the learning disabilities class of practice. The PSTs learn to write a pupil's profile, which comprises different aspects such as: academic, social, cognitive, family aspect, reading habits, attitudes toward reading etc. They practice the diagnosis studied in the reading course and they learn to create an intervention program focusing on the pupil's specific difficulties in reading while implementing it in their practice. Both courses are linked and discussed in the reading course.

In this study, the strategy of developing the structure of a neuroscience motif-based training program (NMTTP) was based on creating a module (Clement & Lovat, 2012), by adding content and methods to an existing syllabus, implementing it in class and assessing it as reflected in students' interviews and lesson planning by the pre-service teachers.

3. Research Methodology

3.1 Program Design

The topics chosen for the NMTTP were based on the guidelines of the *Brain Targeted Teaching Model* (BTT) by Hardiman (2012) and on the ideas of Tokuhamma-Espinosa (2011) presented in the guide to brain-based teaching, as well as by several original lessons developed by the corresponding author (EL). Hardiman (2012) created a model based on six brain targets: (1) establishing the emotional climate for learning, (2) creating the physical learning environment, (3) designing the learning experience, (4) teaching for mastery of content, skills and concepts, (5) teaching for the extension and application of knowledge- creativity and innovation in education and (6) evaluating learning. Tokuhamma-Espinosa (2011) referred to similar as well as additional topics in her guide, such as neuromyths, emotional state and motivation, attention, the academic fields related to NE such as language and math, and evidence based solutions for the classroom. The NMTTP was drew based on the principles mentioned above, but specifically connected the vast ideas of NE with reading. Moreover, innovative topics such as mirror neurons or spaced learning were implemented and added, as detailed below. The following nine topics were included in the structure of the NMTTP:

1) *Learning in context* refers to the connection between prior knowledge of the learner and the new information in the context, which can be used to perform the learning task. It is generally assumed that learning in context will increase performance in knowledge acquisition, recall and transfer (Norman, 2007, in Bergman et al., 2015). Hardiman (2012b) suggests that prior knowledge is used to categorize stimuli which are combined with new knowledge to create patterns of thinking and learning. In the NMTTP, and because of the importance of this concept, learning in context was a central concept which followed the entire program.

2) *Neuroplasticity* - refers to the nervous system's capacity to change as a result of influences from the external environment or internal environment states during an organism's development and life span (García Carrasco et al 2015). The concept was taught and mentioned several times during the NMTTP, in relation to adjusting teaching for pupils with learning disabilities and the different teaching methods which can fit the plasticity principle.

3) *Neuromyths* - Neuromyths are semi-scientific assumptions which were made as a consequence of overgeneralization about the human brain often being used to justify ineffective approaches to teaching. According to the OECD (2007), neuromyths are '*hypotheses which have been invalidated, nevertheless leave traces and if these have captured a wider imagination, "myths" take root*' (OECD,

2007, P. 108). According to Tokuhamma-Espinosa (2011), neuromyths are typically produced due to a partial fact or a single study or in some cases outright misinterpretations of data. In the NMTTP, a special lesson was dedicated to this topic, which is one of the major justifications for the importance of evidence-based teaching and NE.

4) *Brain and reading* - Reading and dyslexia are major concepts in the reading course. Neuroimaging has led dyslexia research to a better understanding of the mechanisms involved in its different subtypes, providing measures that correlate with a myriad of behavioral data (Boets et al., 2013). Due to technological advancement, neuroimaging shows the effect of intervention programs in reading in pre-and post-training researches (Dresler et al., 2018; Partanen, 2017). Different researches relating to this were presented in class as part of the NMTTP lessons.

5) *Metacognition and the brain* - Metacognition is the process of considering and regulating one's own learning and thinking processes (Tokuhamma-Espinosa, 2011; Young & Fry, 2008). It refers to the ability of a person to rethink his thinking, steer his cognitive process in correspondence to his conclusions, and to monitor and control his cognitive processes (Goswami, 2008). The use of metacognitive strategies elicits different neural activation patterns than the use of strategies involving less cognitive effort (Moss et al., 2013).

6) *Mirror neurons* - Mirror neurons are neuronal cells that fire both when an individual performs an action and when the individual sees or hears another perform a similar action (Keysers et al., 2003). In the NMTTP, the mirror neurons were mentioned in the diagnosis unit, referring imitation to learning and empathy.

7) *Working memory and the brain* - Working memory is a complex cognitive system in which information is held in awareness so it can be manipulated (Baddeley, 1992). It helps us hold some information in our mind while doing other things. Working memory is an inseparable part of

processes of retrieval and learning new information. In the NMTTP, a special lesson was dedicated to this topic, with relation to reading, attention and reading comprehension.

8) *Physical activity and its importance to learning* - The typical classroom setting in which students "sit and get" was challenged by research findings showing that the brain is more active when learners are moving around (Sousa, 2010). It appears that movement allows the brain to access more long-term memory areas, thereby helping students make greater connections between new and prior knowledge (Sousa, 2010). During the NMTTP, the students study and practice physical activity in learning (e.g lesson no. 8, the working memory lesson) and were encouraged to get their pupils to move around in the classroom.

9) *Spaced learning* - The concept refers to learning in chunks, with breaks between those chunks. Research has found the neurological mechanism that explains why this spacing effect is important for the consolidation of memory (Hardiman, 2012). Spaced learning is a learning method in which highly condensed learning content is repeated three times, with two 10-minute breaks during which distractor activities, such as physical activities, are performed by the pupils. Several studies indicate that spaced learning helps consolidation of information in memory and contributes to academic success (Ram-Tsur & Litmanovitch, 2018; Smolen et al., 2016). In the NMTTP, the spaced learning is presented and practiced in class, with critical thinking about its implications to teaching.

4. Results

4.1 Proposed procedure for the implementation of the NE-based program

The NMTTP spread over one academic year (two semesters). It comprised **10 major lessons** (each lesson had a total duration of 90 minutes, including the reading lesson content) during the academic year, which are presented in brief in Table 1.

Table 1. An overview of the NMTTP lessons.

Lesson	Purpose	Key concepts	Teaching methods	Materials needed or other variables
1	Presenting the purpose of the study	Neuroeducation	Discussion	-
2	Emphasizing the importance of learning in context	Synaptic networks Learning in context Hebb's law	Metacognitive discussion Presentation	Synaptic network presentation
3	Emphasis of the brain plasticity.	Neuroplasticity	Multi-sensory use in teaching. Combining movies in teaching	Plasticine Youtube movies on the topic of Neuroplasticity Quiz game

4	Acquaintance with the concept of neuromyths and discussing the importance of evidence-based teaching	Neuromyths	Casting votes on phrases relating to the brain and confrontation about them	Signs similar to traffic lights for "True" or "False"
5	A brief introduction to recent literature about the connection between brain and reading	Imaging devices	Critical discussion: Ethics Presentation	Presentation
6	A general introduction to metacognition and the brain	Metacognition Metacognitive questions Metacognitive strategies and reading strategies	Role play Creating a conceptual map	Memo notes Cognitive/ Metacognitive questions
7	Acquaintance with the concept of Mirror Neurons and learning by imitation	Mirror Neurons	Modeling Demonstration	Reading diagnostic kit
8	Expanding the understanding of the concept "Working Memory" and its connection to the brain by a physical-cognitive experiment	Working Memory Physical activity and the brain	Active physical learning An experiment	The Jellyfish Game
9	Providing systematic exposure to metacognition and metacognitive strategies in relation to the brain	Metacognition Metacognitive skills Metacognitive knowledge Metacognitive strategies	Presentation Demonstration by dealing with pre-reading strategies	The Japanese exercise
10	Acquaintance with spaced learning and metacognitive-critical thinking about it	Spaced learning and its benefits according to evidences from the brain	Experience in the classroom combined with spaced learning	A ball

4.2 Structure of the NMTTP Program

The ten lessons of the NMTTP (see Table 1) refer to the original reading course and implementation of concepts and motifs from neuroscience into the lessons, at the content level and with proposed teaching methods. Almost each lesson plan was constructed with a similar **outline**:

- *Report status: Reading Course* - A short review of the status of the reading course and the specific unit currently studied;
- *Important concepts from the NE field*
- *Recommended teaching methods* which are aimed to encourage active learning and are grounded on evidence-based information from the literature;
- *In practice* - The lesson's steps in detail;
- *Implications for teacher training*: Proposed questions and discussions with the PSTs about the implications of the lesson to their work and their professional identity development;

- *What else?* Recommendations for more reading, connections to other lessons, etc.

The units of neuroscience in the reading class were presented at the beginning of each lesson, but, if needed, the neuroscience elements were discussed in a flexible manner throughout the whole lesson. With the exception of the pre-planned lessons, the other lessons followed the original syllabus, which focuses on content regarding reading. In all the lessons, two main motifs of the NMTTP were included: learning in context and metacognition. To emphasize this point, after the concepts of learning in context, which were presented in the 2nd lesson, each lesson began with a rehearsal on the previous lesson in different creative ways (such as: playing with a ball, fun-quiz, role play, case studies etc.) with continuous rehearsals about the importance of synaptic connections in learning concepts. Each lesson, or part of the lesson which was dedicated to understanding brain functions, was summarized through urging metacognitive discussion with the PSTs about the

possible implementations of the new concepts in practice, critical thinking about the advantages and disadvantages of each teaching method chosen to teach the concept etc.

4.3 Proposed Assessment of the NMTTP Implementation

The final step in describing an intervention program or a curriculum design, according to Remesh (2017) is describing its *assessment*. The assessment of the NMTTP was done in several ways, such as: first, semi-structured interviews with PSTs from the classes participating in the study, describing the process of implementation as perceived by them; second, tracking and locating the motifs and methods of the NMTTP in the PSTs' lesson plans for special education pupils; third, open-ended questions tracked the concepts from the NE field and the perceived importance of NE in a mid-term and final exam of the students in the reading course. Finally, through specific questionnaires, several psychological variables can be assessed pre- and post-program, such as: changes in attitudes toward the assimilation of change in teaching methods, change in general teacher self-efficacy and teacher self-efficacy to implement motifs from NE in class.

The results regarding the implementation and assessment of this neuroscience-based program in Israeli pre-service teachers were already published in a paper by Luzzatto & Rusu (2019), but the paper did not include the detailed description of the curriculum of the program. A number of 90 PSTs participated in the NMTTP program, which was conducted during the academic year 2017-2018. The main findings from the quantitative part indicated that the PSTs' self-efficacy regarding the use of concepts from NE in teaching was significantly higher among the Experimental group before the intervention and higher among the Comparison group after the intervention and the attitudes toward implementation of neuroscience in education were high in both groups before and after the intervention (Luzzatto & Rusu, 2019). The findings from the qualitative part have not been published yet, but they also indicate general positive attitudes toward NE and the NMTTP, and show implementation of motifs from the NE field as reflected in the PSTs' lesson plans.

5. Discussions and Conclusions

The aim of this study was to describe a neuroscience intervention program and a suggested curriculum for implementation of motifs from neuroscience in a reading class for pre-service teachers in Special Education track. In addition, this study presented the current literature addressing NE and curriculum, described the gap in knowledge concerning it and focused on the need for constructing a neuroeducational curriculum, specifically

when dealing with learning disabilities. According to Dressler et al. (2018), practical applications based on neuroscientific knowledge should be continuously evaluated throughout real-world implementation to determine their effects. To do so, more interdisciplinary collaboration between neuroscience and real-world education is needed, which may result in new concepts and messages that are both supported by science and are educationally informative (Howard-Jones, 2014). Nevertheless, NE programs, especially those which include implementation are relatively scarce in already existing courses (Murphy, 2017).

For educators in general, and PSTs specifically, a NE program or NE-implementation based curriculum would be beneficial on several personal and professional dimensions. This study introduces a neuroscience intervention program in an existing reading course for special education PSTs. The intervention program, in part, is reflected in a change in the curriculum. The included neuroscience concepts were considered in relation to learning disabilities, especially dyslexia, which was the focus of the course. However, the intervention program's main concepts were also aimed to encourage a general change so that teaching will become evidence-based, as well as a change in teaching methods and the way PSTs relate to their methods of teaching including the rationale of their choices.

According to García Carrasco et al. (2015), neurosciences can bring to education much more than the understanding of the brain and more than answers to problem situations. The neuro-educational argument may extend the understanding of learning and education in general. Reviewing the current literature dealing with NE reveals that, although many of the studies emphasize the importance of NE as an innovative teaching content and method (e.g Ansari et al., 2012; Murphy, 2017), only few studies describe implementation of NE in practice. Within these programs, particular features of the NMTTP can be found, as detailed below:

a. Implementation in an Existing Syllabus

Among the few curricula or syllabuses discussing NE, it seems that the prominent ones are studied separately from other courses, and not from an interdisciplinary or integrative point of view. For example, Warner & Tempelson (2010) suggest a course-embedded guided inquiry project for 20 elementary education teacher candidates enrolled in a course called "*Learning and the Brain*". This course was aimed for brain-targeted math games and activities. During the formulation stage, the participants suggested creative ideas for curriculum development and together with a teacher in residence they collected lesson plans consistent with their developing ideas and insights about the neuroeducational paradigm. In 2007,

Blake & Gardner described "*The First Class in Mind, Brain and Education*" which dealt with the connection between biological, psychological and educational aspects of learning while using innovative teaching methods. According to the authors, the course trained students to evaluate research findings and engage in new forms of integrative thinking. One of the final requisites of the course was a project that entailed empirical research, curriculum design, or a theoretically oriented essay. Yet, this course was taught separately from other courses. Another example mentioned above is the Neuropedagogy Adaptation Project (NAP) as presented in Friedman et al. (2019) research. While the NAP's participants studied an elective course, which connected neuroscience and education from a general perspective, the NMTTP'S participants took an obligatory course and the concepts from the neuroscience field were implemented with concepts from the reading field, with constant relation to the reading lesson planning for pupils. Rooks and Winkler (2012) discussed the advantages of multidimensional interdisciplinarity courses: (1) students learn that knowledge is not compartmentalized and that in the real world, knowledge is transferable and cumulative; (2) interdisciplinarity courses allows students to understand how to marshal a wide range of skills and knowledge bases to solve pressing social, economic, and technological problems; (3) it encourages different ways of learning, specifically more collaborative approaches that promote dialogue and problem-solving capacities.

Curtis and Fallin (2014) suggested implementation of NE concepts into music lessons. According to the authors, collaboration between the different fields must occur in two levels, in both content and capacity. One of their suggestions for such collaboration is through curriculum, which can help students understand more clearly the connections between what is taught and why it is of value for them to know and understand. In spite of this suggestion, it remained in the theoretical perspective, while the NMTTP took this idea and transferred it into a practical level. Unlike other programs, such NAP or BrainU, which focus on teaching students neuroscience or NE in a separate course or program, the NMTTP intervention program insisted on implementation of motifs from the neuroscience field in an existing reading course, from a point of view that the best transfer and implementation will occur when content is part of a current lesson. Therefore, the principles of the NMTTP can be adjusted to almost any other course, with accommodations.

b. NMTTP Chosen Topics and Concepts

Although the topics for the NMTTP were based on the guidelines of the Brain Targeted Teaching Model (BTT) by Hardiman (2012), and the ideas of Tokuhama- Espinosa (2011), it also included other motifs and emphasized

specific topics and concepts which were relevant to the reading class in the special education track. Also, although some of the topics in the NMTTP were similar to the NAP (Friedman et al, 2019), the NMTTP also dealt with other aspects that weren't mentioned in the NAP, such as metacognition, mirror neurons, spaced learning and more. The NMTTP was reflected in an original, special implemented module in the curriculum of the reading course, and the principles of it can be integrated in many other courses as well.

c. Implementation in a Teacher Training Program

The few programs dealing with implementation of NE are directed to in- service teachers. According to Dubinsky et al. (2019), their project, BrainU, serves as a model program for teaching neuroscience to both preservice and in-service teacher audiences. However, the fact is that this project was tested only for in- service teachers. Moreover, the Neuropedagogy Adaptation Project (NAP), as proposed in the Friedman et al. (2019), links the knowledge regarding the function of the brain and educational processes, similarly as some of the topics in the NMTTP. However, this program was also aimed to in-service teachers and educational staff who already work in schools, and they participated in the NAP as part of their master degree. The NMTTP, however, is aimed to PSTs in their first degree, based on the idea that implementation of NE during the training period might have a beneficial effect as their professional identity develops in this stage. PSTs who practice NE might, hopefully, implement it into their lesson planning, and thinking and teaching methods more easily than in- service teachers who already have specific habits of teaching.

d. Implementation of a Program for Special Education Teachers

Although different researchers talked about the importance of NE to achieve a better understanding of special education in general and learning disabilities in particular (Hardiman, 2012a; Kosaraju et al 2014; Stern, et al, 2016), few studies have made the connection between these fields in practice. The different intervention programs reviewed in this study weren't targetted for special education teachers. However, the NMTTP took place in a special education track course, and was aimed to consider the different needs of pupils with reading difficulties regarding concepts and methods from the neuroscience field. Since children with learning disabilities have difficulties in embracing learning strategies on their own, there is a possible contribution of a program focusing on evidence- based methods to improve teaching and learning in this population.

e. Consideration of the assessment of PSTs self-efficacy and attitudes toward change

Although this point is not a direct characteristic of the NMTTP, examining its impact on PSTs self-efficacy to implement motifs from NE in their teaching and examining the program's impact on their attitudes toward change and implementation of neuroscience motifs is a way of assessing the NMTTP impact.

In terms of identified *limitations*, it is important to mention that the NMPPT was design as an original training program for Israeli PSTs in the field of special education. One of the characteristics of the program was that it was implemented in an existing reading course, due to the advantages of interdisciplinary learning (Rooks, & Winkler, 2012). Since the syllabus of the reading course already existed as a whole, it was sometimes difficult to implement the motifs from the neuroscience/NE field, since there was pressure to teach the original material of the course. Future studies may better formulate the correct form for embedding NE content into an existing course. Although the results of the implementation of the program are not presented here, data indicate promising results regarding the influence of NE training program on PST's self-efficacy and the opening of the Israeli PSTs towards implementation of motives from neuroscience in education.

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Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide

by Laura Șerbănescu, Mușata-Dacia Bocoș, Ioan Ioja

Reviewed by Constantin Cucos, Romița Iucu

Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide

by **Laura Șerbănescu, Mușata-Dacia Bocoș, Ioan Ioja**

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The paper "**Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide**" (280 pages, ISBN: 978-973-46-8245-4), published in 2020 at the Polirom Publishing House in Iași, Romania, in the Education Sciences collection, is the result of constant concerns and exemplary collaborations between the authors, Laura Șerbănescu, Mușata-Dacia Bocoș and Ioan Ioja. The long experience of the authors and their solid contribution to the design, implementation and evaluation of the training system for teachers in Romania is like a "guarantee of good execution", for a distinguished paper with a strong impact on the community.

Data about authors

Laura Șerbănescu is a Professor Phd in the Teacher Training and Socio-Human Sciences Department of the Polytechnic University of Bucharest. For ten years she worked in the Ministry of Education, gaining a rich experience in teacher training, participating in the development of educational policies and implementation of strategic projects, including the project funded by the European Social Fund Quality, innovation, communication in the system of continuous training of teachers in higher education (2010-2013). The main scientific fields approached are teacher training, general pedagogy, educational policies, and educational management. Among the published papers, we mention: Analysis of the Teacher Training System and the Training Needs of Higher Education Teachers (coordinator 2013), Perspectives on the Training of University Professors in the Field of Pedagogy and Educational Psychology (co-author, 2014), Educational Management Treaty for Primary and Preschool Education (co-author, 2015), Pedagogy. Fundamentals of Pedagogy. Curriculum Theory and Methodology, Vol. I (coordinator, 2015), Pedagogy. Theory and Methodology

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The current context of continuous training for teachers

Teacher training is a key to progress, prestige and efficiency of any education system. The amplitude and profile of education in school or university is also questionable by the training course, of first instance or which is added later, of those who will train others. In a formative exercise, it is important both the giver and the receiver. The receiver must be known, conquered, trained. This book will be about the giver. Giving to others (knowledge, motivation, value positioning etc.) is a very important exercise. It is important what and how much you convey to others; it's even more important, how you do it, how you teach others, how you teach yourself.

The reform of an education system, through the related norms and the adjacent practices, must also target the specific subsystem of training and professional development of teachers. Unfortunately, school policies do not often naturally link sectoral changes such as system, curricular, didactic, procedural etc. reforms with teacher training policies or strategies. Of course, initial training cannot anticipate future developments or challenges, which is why smart, open, flexible sizing of lifelong learning pathways is required. We need an integrative perspective and a continuum between initial training and that during the exercise of the profession, permanent openness to new problems and incentives.

The training segment for future teachers is part of the educational system and, as such, will bear the stamp of the whole to which it is subsumed. As the educational system is, so will the route or profile (cultural, professional, social) of those who will educate others. It is important to create alternatives that evade generalized pressure, to maintain its value autonomy so that, regardless of the context, to ensure the preparation of a responsible, creative, involved teaching staff.

At present, it is unanimously accepted that European education systems, and not only, deliver results to the extent that training systems succeed in providing them with the best, most motivated and best-employed teaching staff. This means that the future of contemporary society depends, to a very large extent, on the quality of training of educational actors in the education system: "Of all the

factors in the school environment, teachers are considered to have the greatest impact on student learning outcomes. (...) Any policy effort aimed at improving learning outcomes - or effective education and training - must closely examine the role of teachers and look for ways to help them excel in their required profession" (*Education and training monitor 2019 - Romania, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture*, p. 18, https://ec.europa.eu/education/sites/education/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2019-romania_en.pdf). As we can see, taking into account the deep plea of the authors, the aspects of public policies related to the design of excellence in the teaching profession combine very closely with the landmarks better anchored in concrete decisions, which also support the financing of active processes, dedicated to teacher training, compared to total spending on education: "At the same time, in the EU, over 60% of public spending in the education sector is aimed at teachers" (*Ibidem*, p. 18). The above information, so well structured and coming from a source of maximum credibility, by presenting the willingness to invest in this field, shows us, not necessarily the state of the financial allocation, but especially the prestige enhanced by the teaching profession in many European countries. This is also one of the deep desires of the book *Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide, the search for the prestige of the teaching profession / career* (we could say, in a Proustian style in which, literally, a term is missing), through an efficient management of the continuous training system.

Converting in a more applied way the issue of interest of the paper, but also customizing our analyzes on the Romanian realities, the authors put in the foreground the system of professional training, in order to highlight its primordial needs for high quality continuous training. This is all the more so as, another large-scale study, the OECD, addresses rather a number of issues or challenges, including those related to human resource management and training system management: "Several countries are already facing or they are about to face teacher shortages, either in general or in specific areas, or in certain geographical areas. Given the percentage of teachers at least 50 years old, the 23 EU countries that participated in TALIS 2018 will have to renew almost a third of their own teachers in the next decade. At least five EU countries will have to renew about half of their secondary school teachers in the same period (the same is valid for Romania)" (*Ibidem*, p. 19). The above observations are strongly impregnated by the critical notes on the specific processes of teaching career management, in which the need to strengthen the teaching profession, recruitment, training and evaluation of staff, in accordance with the highest standards, becomes a necessity to the level of scientific reflection, but also in terms of designing management and leadership solutions for systemic gears.

We do not believe that the future field of training can be left out of specific professional frameworks. Taking into

account the fact that some of the members of the group of authors have distinguished themselves so far by promoting this idea, the professionalization of teaching career, they now come up with a concrete proposal to professionalize the management system of continuing education programs, offering us, with skill and clarity of writing and technical support for training processes.

Many voices, from the field of expertise of education sciences, have spoken about the evolution in the field of training and professional development of teachers in the last period, but leaving ample room for everything to come, a stranger who we are convinced that it is already enveloping spirits and careers. A UNESCO study finds that almost 1.3 billion secondary and tertiary school students around the world have been unable to attend school due to the ongoing health crisis, which, undoubtedly, has begun to have a huge impact on global education ... causing, as many voices in the global public space say, one of the greatest learning crises: "I fully anticipate that this period will be remembered as the only one, the biggest disruption the training has ever seen. Learning will never be the same! Learning will be forever changed!" (Gary Hepburn, "The Great Disruption: How COVID-19 Changes Education Instruction", Medium, March 26, 2020, https://medium.com/@bcurran_25513/the-great-disruption-how-covid-19-changeshigher-education-instruction-6d608e35129 - accessed at 26.04.2020). But, under these determined conditions, the impact on teachers and their training has been taken into account, will we witness in the near future and a crisis of the training system? Will there be effects on professional development; will most of the changes be expected in that direction?

All the more important is the paper that the authors propose for reading and study to the generation of teachers, but also of experts in the field of education, who will be forced to face a challenge never seen before, given that, in our view, the most important topic of the training agenda is, not necessarily the re-learning of the skills required by the new exceptional conditions in which teachers will work in the future, but especially the process of giving up what they have learned/ "Professional learning" (adapted translation from English for the notion of "unlearn"), in order to make room for anew learning and re-learning. Everything that will be guided in the future by the teacher training system will be largely related to this process and continuing education will not be ignored.

Alvin Toffler, among many other predictions that earned him well-deserved public respect, touched on an extremely sensitive topic for the future of today's society, marked by a major challenge: "The illiterate of the 21st century will not be the one who can't write and read, but the one who will not know how to learn, to give up what he has learned/ to lose the habit of learning (the English translation for «unlearn») and to relearn".

The structure of the book

The book proposes an almost exhaustive picture related to the training of teachers, starting from the normative dynamics, the reference of professional competences, structuring, administration and monitoring of training programs, profile and curricular structure, strategic and methodical specificity of professional development, determinants and results of psycho-pedagogical training activities to those who serve education and teaching.

Conceived in a theoretical-reflective but also applicative-practical manner, the book has guiding virtues for managers or entities concerned with the design and implementation of training programs in the teaching register. Bringing to attention international training models and paradigms, comparative perspectives are opened that facilitate a better significance of the local teacher training framework. The practical training formulas are not forgotten, from the psycho-pedagogical modules provided by the profile departments to the didactic master's degree, which will be implemented starting this autumn.

The authors' plea convinces us of the need to strengthen the dignity and professional identity of the contemporary teacher subjected to pressures that often erode or affect their status (from decision makers, parents, students, etc.) or marginalize them socially, even economically. The competency framework, detected and described by the authors, aims precisely to emphasize the importance of professionalization and the construction of a complex professional profile of great importance for today's or tomorrow's society.

At the same time, the authors consider the issue of the insertion of graduates - teachers in the education system, an issue still unresolved, even if both the legislative framework and European practices require us to more carefully absorb and mentor beginner teachers in the first years of internship. Adjacent mentoring programs are fragmented, discontinuous and not convincingly, strategically and economically supported. The authors bring particularly strong arguments in the sense of the importance of entering the profession, transmitting, almost explicitly, to political decision makers, a message to build and ensure monitoring routes and appropriate professional guidance in the first years of teaching.

With the same acuity are discussed about the programs of continuous training of teachers which involves a pluralization of perspectives for targeting training needs - both from the perspective of beginning teachers and managers, student outcomes, educational climate, organizational culture etc., which can lead, each but also correlated, to relevant results. All these perspectives, transposed in unitary and integrated practice, acquire an addition of adequacy to a dynamic reality, having virtues that are not only predictive-anticipatory, but also effectively transformative-reforming.

Conclusions regarding the relevance of the book

Through the paper "**Management of continuous training programs for teachers. Practical guide**", the authors propose a welcome guide for the construction of training programs that allow a convenient operationalization in relation to open training contexts and topics, customized in relation to diverse and expanding needs, depending on future evolutions and dynamics. Well designed and structured, the volume contains numerous answers, solutions and suggestions that can cover multiple contents dictated by new professional requirements and challenges. In addition, the volume inserts at the end a series of exercises, work tasks, creative, dubious applications, which contributes to increasing the interactive and incentive dimension and makes it a source of generating other and new heuristic solutions.

The subject of the book is approached systemically and professionally assumed by the authors, who offer us an editorial product that can lead, with the help of decision makers, directly and safely, to another side of Romanian education.

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