The Compulsory Education in Romania inside the Context of the European dimension of education

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Authors note

The teaching and research activities carried out currently as a Lecturer Ph.D., on the major field of education sciences, materialized in teaching / evaluation educational actions (for the initial training of the future teachers), preparation of training materials (courses, guides, etc.), but also in designing and implementing research / development / training projects (especially sighting the continuous training, the primary and secondary education teachers' improvement), and in carrying out researches on topics directly related to certain issues of school education, and also in a scientific contribution materialized in a series of articles, studies published in famous national and international journals, are especially focused on the following *areas of interest*: *General Pedagogy, Curriculum Theory, Classroom Management, Educational Communication, Educational Policies, Theory and Practice of Evaluation.*

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Abstract

A major factor in creating a modern European society in its economic and social development is the European cooperation in education and the development of the European dimension of education and training. The European dimension, as the basic component of education policy represents a finality which aims at overcoming the national particular elements specific to the European education systems, respecting diversity, emphasizing pluralism and interculturalism. Making the European dimension at the level of education and training involves linking two factors: increased cultural identity of each nation and affirmation of cultural diversity, which generates tolerance, interculturalism and respect towards each other. Some of the recommendations from the documents of educational politics applied to the compulsory education in Romania are: considering the duration and the activities in the compulsory education as a whole, operating inside the formal structure with the curriculum cycles defined in the documents of the National Curriculum, improving the coherence of the curriculum according to the curriculum cycles, their succession, education for all disregarding the social origin and the intellectual capacity, the elimination of the school abandonment with efficient solutions adapted to each situations, recovery for those in abandoning situations and ensuring efficient alternatives for re-education/ educational recovery. The curriculum is the fundamental instrument for achieving the goals of the compulsory education in Romania. The curriculum, created in approach to the new requirements of the basic education and to the European tendencies, contributes to the development of the students' personality according to the needs of a society based on knowledge. It also contributes to gaining new basic competences required by society and economy and to the formation of students for life-long education.

Keywords: pre-academic education, compulsory education, European dimension of education, basic education, Romanian educational system.

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Zusammenfasung

Ein Faktor von großer Bedeutung bei der Schaffung der heutigen europäischen Gesellschaft, auch in der sozialen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklung spielt die Europäische Zusammenarbeit für Bildung, die Entwicklung der europäischen Dimension der Bildung und Ausbildung. Die europäische Dimension, als grundlegenden Bestandteil der Bildungspolitik, stellt ein Ziel um übertreffen die nationalen bestimmte Elemente der europäischen Bildungssysteme, der Achtung der Vielfalt, um Pluralismus und Querkulturalität zu übertreffen. Die Verwirklichung der europäischen Dimension im Bildungswesen und Bildung Systeme erfordert die Korrelation von zwei Elementen: Hervorhebung der kulturellen Identität eines jeden Volkes und die Anerkennung der kulturellen Vielfalt, der Toleranz, Querkulturalität und Achtung zwischen den Menschen erzeugt. Einige der Empfehlungen aus den Unterlagen der Bildungspolitik angewandt, um die obligatorische Ausbildung in Rumänien sind: das Angesicht der Dauer und die Aktivitäten in der Pflichtschule als Ganzes; der Betrieb innerhalb der formalen Struktur mit dem Lehrplan definierte Zyklen in den Dokumenten der nationalen Lehrplan; die Verbesserung der Kohärenz des Lehrplans nach dem Lehrplan Zyklen; die Bildung für alle ungeachtet der sozialen Herkunft und der geistigen Kapazität; Die Beseitigung der Schule Aufgabe mit effizienten Lösungen an die jeweiligen Situationen, Lösungen für jene, die in der Aufgabe Situationen sind und die Gewährleistung einer effizienten Alternativen für die Umerziehung/ pädagogische Wiedergewinnung. Der Lehrplan ist das grundlegende Instrument für die Erreichung der Ziele der obligatorischen Schule in Rumänien. Der Lehrplan, erstellt in der Herangehensweise an die neuen Anforderungen an die grundlegende Ausbildung und der Europäischen Tendenzen, trägt dazu bei, die Entwicklung der Schüler Persönlichkeit je nach den Bedürfnissen einer auf Wissen basierenden Gesellschaft. Es trägt auch zur Gewinnung neuer Grundkompetenzen von Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft und die Ausbildung der Studenten für lebenslange Bildung.

Schlüsselworte: pre-akademische Ausbildung, Schulpflicht, europäische Dimension der Bildung, Grundbildung, rumänische Bildungssystem

The Compulsory Education in Romania inside the Context of the European dimension of education

1. Introduction

The conditions of the contemporary society, characterized by fast development of science and technology which results in a strong dynamics of world social life, calls for the necessity of education for stability and desirable social change that should give an answer to the challenges of the 21ˢᵗ century, education which is founded on: the real democratization of education, ensuring equal opportunities to education for all children, creation of conditions for educating all citizens, achieving a high quality education at all levels, affirming and respecting the principles of lifelong learning at all ages and all forms of education.

The third millennium education projects aim at transforming traditional educational practices to pracices based on new principles specific to the contemporary education and pedagogy: global education, lifelong learning, inclusive education, education for all, equal opportunities, partnership in education. In-depth learning, based on action and empowerment of the learner, vocational skills, integration of application knowledge structures, interactive teaching, inter-and transdisciplinary curriculum are just some concepts and ideas on which modern pedagogy has been based. These have been generated by switching European societies towards globalization and the knowledge society, by the need for synchronization between society and the development of education, by the new assessment results in the education systems, by the need of education integration and globalization.

2. European perspectives upon education

Inside a contemporary socio-economical context, humanity considers education as invaluable and fundamental instrument for further training of all individuals; active and productive individual transformation; building relationships between individuals, groups and nations; developing social aspects; diminishing poverty, social exclusion and ignorance. For these reasons, the evolution of education is a priority on a world scale. The existence of The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century, created in 1993, is perfectly justified by its role in studying and analysing the problems of education and learning during the twenty-first century, also in making suggestions and recommendations for the decisional factors in the domain.

To satisfy the requirements which must be subordinated to education in the 21ˢᵗ century, widespread transmission of a growing volume of knowledge and information, on the one hand, and on the other educated individuals making available the tools needed to guide the future, the International Commission for Education in the 21ˢᵗ century, (created in the early 1993 with the aim of studying and analyzing the problems of education and the education in the 21ˢᵗ century, and to formulate suggestions and recommendations to decision makers at the highest levels) aims at to organizing education around four basic types of learning: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together, learning to be (Delors, 2000). *Learning to Know* involves knowledge acquisition tools: the ability to use letters and numbers, to solve problems, to acquire general knowledge and specific knowledge in order to widen the field. *A link to learn how to act* in particular the problem involves the acquisition of vocational training

and skills to enable individuals to cope with different situations, the capacity to be effective at work, the adoption of appropriate social behavior, the development team, and the capacity to assume responsibilities. *Learning to live together with others* requires self-understanding, understanding others, avoiding conflicts, peaceful settlement of conflicts, cultivation of respect for the others, for their culture and spiritual values, working together to achieve common goals. *Learning to be* involves developing one's own personality, the ability to work independently, the ability to take responsibility, to develop critical thinking, imagination and creativity, development of communication skills, valuing culture, development of a personal ethical code.

The end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st mark numerous changes in the education and formation systems and the educational policies in Europe, generated by the directives and recommendations of the European Councils, the European Committee or the European Parliament, as well as by the education and formation programmes initiated by them.

The development in perspective of educational systems in Europe and the placement of education in the larger framework of the measures of improvement in the area of occupation and economic reform have been essential reference points in the *Lisbon Conference* of the European Council in *March 2000*. During this Conference the role of education has been emphasised, as integrant part of social and economic policies, in the consolidation of European competitiveness in the world and the ensuring of our societies' cohesion. The European Council established as a priority objective (in Lisbon, 2000, then restated and completed in Brussels in 2005) for the year 2010, that the European Union should become "the most competitive and dynamic economy based on knowledge in the world, capable of sustained growth, with more and better work places, and a higher social cohesion", placing permanent education at the core of every EU state's policy. The specific goal established by the European Council in Lisbon was to set the future objectives of educational systems for the following ten years. The operative conclusions targeted: the adaptation of the educational and formation system to the challenges of the society of knowledge; the substantial increase of the investment in education; lifelong learning; the reduction to a half by 2010 of the number of those who do not surpass the level of mandatory education; the creation of a European frame for defining key competences for continuous education (the technology of communication and information, foreign languages, social skills, entrepreneurial education, technological education); the increase in mobility and the recognition of qualifications; the European résumé/CV, as way to appreciate the people's abilities, for finding a workplace in Europe. The development of a quality educational and professional formation system represents a key element of this strategy (Tăuşan, 2012).

A major factor in creating a modern European society in its economic and social development is the European cooperation in education and the development of the European dimension of education and training. The European dimension, as the basic component of education policy represents a finality which aims at overcoming the national particular elements specific to the European education systems, respecting diversity, emphasizing pluralism and interculturalism. Making the European dimension at the level of education and training involves linking two factors: increased cultural identity of each nation and affirmation of cultural diversity, which generates tolerance, interculturalism and respect towards each other (Bunescu, 2007).

At the level of educational policy, the European dimension involves the following:

- Emphasizing the importance of vocational skills required by a democratic society (cultivating creativity, the ability to make decisions, problem-solving, being able to choose, to take responsibility, to argue and support their views, to communicate, analyze and evaluate critically, to participate in collective activities, to establish constructive relationships);

- Focus on language courses, on the study of their literature and social sciences;
- Special emphasis on computer use in education;
- Decentralization of decision making in the curriculum and establish the aims, structure and content of education especially in the light of student interests and skills relative to social context;
- Providing a school environment consistent with the ideals of a democratic society, favorable to growing its specific values (mutual respect, tolerance of other views, accountability, ability to respect promises);

The Council of Europe has paid special attention to the European dimension in education, as evidenced by the various resolutions and recommendations reached by the ministers of education at various conferences, and developing policies, programs, projects promoting European integration of the teaching-learning process.

In the European Union's Treaty of Maastricht (1992), which introduced new powers in education, the European dimension in education is revealed by: the study of foreign languages, encouraging mobility of students and teachers, recognition and equivalence of diplomas, institutional cooperation, developing exchanges of information and experience in education (Marcu, 2004).

3. Priorities of the national politics for the compulsory education

The evolution and development of society, of the contemporary world, depends on the way in which the educational system meets the socio-economic requirements, through their transformation into educational approaches, and the extent to which it produces competences and develops human resources, both from the perspective of professional formation and the perspective of the development of creative, self-formative abilities which will allow the integration and continuous adaptation of the labour force to the scientific and technological evolution. The measure of a society's development can be rendered not only through economic indicators but also through those that refer to education, to its quality and to the way knowledge and learning are organised.

The national educational system evolves and improves according to the economic and social development and the national cultural specificity, its functioning being based on the following principles:

1. The principle of ensuring and guaranteeing the right to education;
2. The principle of organising the public educational system, the private and the confessional educational systems;
3. The principle of developing the education in all stages in the Romanian language, also in the language of the national minorities and in an international language;
4. The principle of general compulsory education;
5. The principal of free public education.

The quality of the educational system is reflected by the following indicators (Codorean, 2006: 62-64): the explicit establishment and the conscious assumption of the goals; the access and the equality of chances to education; the flexible character of the system (transferrable credits, possibilities for a second chance); the quality of the curriculum (creating the curriculum on psychologic, pedagogic and anthropologic criteria); the quality of the teaching personnel; the quality of the infrastructure; the financial resources allocated to education; the evaluation and self-evaluation mechanism in the quality of the process (national exams according to the modern methodology); the responsibility for the use of the human and material resources; scientific competitiveness.

The modifications brought to the Law for education 84/1995 in 2003 and 2004 led to: the extension of the compulsory education from eight to ten classes, ensuring the growth of the general level of education for the graduating students in the compulsory system of education and the correlation of the legal employment age with the age of graduating the compulsory education; a change in the financing system of the pre-academic education through an extended autonomy of the local authorities; the revision of the structure in the national educational system as expression of the harmonisation with the European politics.

According to The Law for Pre-academic Education, the educational ideal of the pre-academic educational system is the free, complete and harmonious development of the human individuals and the real assumption of a value scale, necessary for the construction of an economy and a society based on knowledge.

The principles that govern the pre-academic education in Romania are:

1. The principle of efficiency, in obtaining maximum educational results through the management of the existing resources;
2. The principle of relevance, for the needs of the individual, social and economic development;
3. The principle of quality, which states that the pre-academic activities are in coordination with reference standards and international good practices;
4. The principle of equity, according to which the access to learning opportunities presents no discrimination;
5. The principle of decentralisation, which grants that the main decisions are taken by the actors directly involved in the process.
6. The principle of public responsibility, which states that the educational institutions have a public responsibility for their performance.

According to the same legislative act, the main goals that direct the formation process of the young generation at the pre-academic education are: the formation and the development of specific key competencies required by the adult life: the formation of motivation for the active participation to the social, economic and political life in ensuring a sustainable development; the formation and assumption of a set of values in the behavioural and career orientation of the graduating student, ensuring a rapid integration on the labour market and in the social life.

Emphasizing the role of compulsory education among the tasks proposed at the resolution *"School at a Crossroads" - Change and continuity in the curriculum of compulsory education*, the National Council for Curriculum suggests:
- Establishing clear priorities for educational policies, focusing on compulsory education, given its relations with other levels of education, including higher or tertiary education;
- Increased consistency of the curriculum for compulsory education through the development of interdependencies between disciplines in the curriculum areas both horizontally (at the same level of schooling) and vertically (in the curricular cycle);
- Considering the development of compulsory education as a priority, with adequate budgetary allocations and by stimulating partnerships between schools, communities, employers, unions, economic and cultural units.

In the same study, proposals are made on the policies applied in compulsory education:
- Considering the educational level of compulsory education as a whole, distinct and specific, based on the continuity of primary and secondary education stage. To ensure this continuity, it is recommended: considering the duration and curriculum of compulsory education activities as an integrated whole, operating within the formal structure of education with curriculum defined in the regulatory cycles of the

National Curriculum, to improve consistency of compulsory education curriculum based on curricular courses and their sequencing.

- Schooling for all, regardless of environment (social, residential, ethnic) background and level of intellectual capacity and eliminate school leaving by adopting effective solutions tailored to each situation;

- Recovery of all those who have left school or were not enrolled, by providing effective alternatives of coming back to school / school recuperation.

Basic education, performed in compulsory education, provides the necessary skills to access further learning, lifelong learning, an idea given in the first key message of the Memorandum on Lifelong Learning, developed by the European Commission in October, 2000: "new basic skills for all ". The new basic competences mentioned in the conclusions of the European Council in Lisbon, concretely presented in a list of areas of knowledge and competence broadly defined, of interdisciplinary nature, can be also encountered at the level of compulsory education in Romania, being included in *The National Development Plan 2007-2013*:

- the study of at least two foreign languages (the first foreign language appears in the curriculum as compulsory from elementary education, and the second starting from the 5th grade);
- the interest in culture, achieved both in the formal system of education, in the curricular area "Arts", and in extracurricular activities;
- the training in information and communications technology area is realised in the elementary and secondary school in optional subjects or extracurricular activities and, starting with the first level of high school (or Arts and Crafts school) it is included in the common branch;
- the development of competences of the type "learn how to learn" is a priority at the level of compulsory education;
- entrepreneurial culture is achieved at all levels of compulsory education, in subjects such as practical abilities (elementary level), technological education (secondary level), entrepreneurial education and elements of education for business (high school level or professional schools).

The new configuration of competences is generated by the need for each person's active participation to the economy and society of knowledge, in the productive activity, family life and all levels of life in the community (locally and at European level). In order to achieve active and responsible participation in the productive and social activity of the community, there is a need to become aware of and put into practice the new perspective on the role of the school: shifting the accent from the content of subjects to the formation of adaptation skills (learning how to learn), assimilating values, attitudes, lifestyles, putting into practice the things learnt, offering models and actions necessary to the adaptation to the real world (Marga, 2005).

V. Chiş (2005:31) synthesises the following general competences and basic abilities necessary to all students/adults in various areas, as prerogatives of the school of the future: knowledge about self as subject engaged in different tasks; knowledge about others and interaction abilities; learning abilities, learning how to learn; predisposition for continuous learning, throughout the entire life; responsibility as a member of community/society; mental and physical health; critical thinking, creativity and productivity; active participation to the economic and social life.

The main goals of the compulsory education in Romania, according to the European politics in

the domain aim the following directions (according to *The Reform of The Compulsory Education in Romania*, page 14):

- For classes form I to VIII (ages from 6 to 14 years): achieving basic competencies, including new competencies necessary for a society based on knowledge: the preparation of the students for a life-long learning process (communication, writing, reading, mathematical calculations, digital and informational alphabetization, scientific and technological culture, entrepreneurial culture, communication using international languages, civic culture and behaviour, democratic citizenship, critical thinking, the capacity to adapt to new situations, team working, interest for personal development and learning).
- For classes IX and X (14 to 16 years students): the real equality of chances, ensuring base education for all students, the concomitant promotion of stability and social change; the preparation of the students for the adult and active life, for spare time, family and society; the preparation and the motivation of the students to continue the educational process in a continuously changing world.

The fundamental instrument to achieve these goals is the curriculum. The curriculum for the compulsory education, created as approach to the new requirements of the basic education and the new European tendencies in the field, contributes to the development of the students' personality in harmony with the needs of a society based on knowledge. It also contributes to the achievement of new basic competencies solicited by society and economy and to the formation of the students in a life-long process.

The national curriculum for the gymnasium is based on 8 categories of key competencies, which determine the formation profile of the student:

- Competencies for communication in the native language and two international languages;
- Fundamental competencies for mathematics, science and technology;
- Digital competencies (using informational technology for obtaining information and solving problems);
- Axiological competencies (as set of necessary values for an active and responsible participation to the social life);
- Competencies for the management of the private life and the career evolution;
- Entrepreneurial competencies;
- Competencies for cultural expression;
- Competencies for life-long learning.

According to the new approach upon the curriculum, the documents of educational politics and the psychic and pedagogic characteristics of the students, the formation profile for the compulsory education was created and included in the national Curriculum. It consists of a set of competencies, attitudes and values with transdisciplinary character, formed/ achieved as a result of the new curriculum: to show creative thinking; to use various communication modalities in real life situations; to understand the process of belonging to various communities; to prove the capacity to adapt to different situations; to contribute to a qualitative life environment; to understand adequately use technologies; to develop investigation capacities and value experience; to build a ser of individual and social values and use it for the behaviour and career orientation.

4. Conclusions

Affirming the necessity of considering the basic education a priority for the national educational system, A. Miroiu (1998:128), identifies the following arguments: it provides with the fundaments for later education and for the development of attitudes necessary for the use of communication and logic and mathematical thinking; it represent the *sine qua non* condition for the fulfilment of individual obligations in family and community; it offers the basic instruments of learning (oral communication, alphabetisation) and its fundamental contents (knowledge, competencies, values, attitudes); it creates the premises for the development of individual capacities; it offers the possibility to improve the quality of life, through responsible decision and continuous learning.

Considering the impact of compulsory education upon the ulterior evolution of the youth and upon the development of the society, also its magnitude as social sector (educated population, teachers, and schools), we highlight the necessity of creating and applying educational politics with increased attention, engagement and responsibility.

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Offices for Students with Disabilities: From addressing individual special needs to increasing public awareness towards disability

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Olga Meier-Popa (special needs educator and physician) runs since 2003 the Disability Office at the University of Zurich, (disabilityoffice.uzh.ch). Before that, she had worked as a physician in her homeland, Romania. She has studied Special Needs Education at the UZH and worked as a carer for people with severe disabilities and also as counsellor for the staff in special institutions. Her research interests are reflected in title of her PhD thesis: "Studying with Disability. Developing Theory and Practice towards Access to Higher Education for People with Disabilities". The thesis reports about the action research at the UZH, based on the social theory (Giddens) and the organizational learning Theory U (Scharmer).

Alina S. Rusu (biologist and psychologist) is currently Associate Professor at the Faculty of Psychology and Sciences of Education (Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania). She has received her PhD title in Natural Sciences in 2004 at University of Zurich, Switzerland. Since 2014, she is the coordinator of Office for Students with Disabilities of Babeş-Bolyai University (centre.ubbcluj.ro/bsd) and member of the Doctoral School Education, Reflection, Development, with a habilitation title in the field of Psychology. Her research interests are very interdisciplinary ones, such as applied ethology, animal-assisted activities and therapy and evolutionary psychology (including educational evolutionary psychology).

Abstract

In this paper we aim to analyse in a comparative manner the structure and the activities of two European Offices for Students with Disabilities (OSD), which, although similar in goals, differ at the level of preponderance of their activities: one is assessing and implementing reasonable accommodations for the students with disabilities (i.e. Disability Office of University of Zurich, Switzerland), while the other one (i.e. Office for Students with Disabilities, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania) is currently more focused on organizing activities and events aiming to increase the level of awareness towards disabilities and access (social and physical) of the academic personnel and students with and without disabilities. Several factors will be discussed below, such as the legislative frames specific for each country, the level of preparedness of each University in terms of access and education (attitudes and knowledge) regarding disability, history of the OSD, number of students with special needs and types of activities offered by the two Offices. The analysis concludes that the different approaches are comprehensible in the view of the specific legal and institutional contexts. Both OSD work with the human rights approach to disability provided by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. They use an interactional understanding of disability, offering not only services for the students but acting also to reduce the social and physical barriers. Such an OSD should be operating at each Higher Education Institution that aims to enhance the full participation of students with disabilities.

Keywords: equal rights; equal opportunity; students with disabilities; office for students with disabilities; access; reasonable accommodation; accessibility; awareness rising; inclusion.

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Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Beitrag strebt eine vergleichende Analyse der Strukturen und Tätigkeiten zweier Europäischen Beratungsstellen für Studierende mit Behinderung (BSB) an, welche – trotz ähnlichen Zielen – den Schwerpunkt auf unterschiedliche Aktivitäten setzen: Die BSB der Universität Zürich, Schweiz, klärt individuelle Situationen von Behinderung ab und setzt Massnahmen für Nachteilsausgleich um, währenddessen die BSB der Universität Babes-Bolyai von Cluj-Napoca, Rumänien sich zurzeit mit Aktivitäten und Veranstaltungen zwecks Sensibilisierung für Behinderung und Zugang (auf physischer und sozialer Ebene) bei den Universitätsangehörigen sowie Studierenden mit und ohne Behinderung beschäftigt. Folgende Aspekte werden erörtert: die spezifische Gesetzgebung in den zwei Ländern, die Bereitschaft der o.g. Hochschulen in Bezug auf Behinderung und Zugang (Wissen-Wollen-Können), die Geschichte der Beratungsstellen, die Anzahl der betroffenen Studierenden und die Tätigkeiten der zwei BSB. Die Analyse kommt zum Schluss, dass die unterschiedlichen Schwerpunkte sich durch die spezifischen rechtlichen und institutionellen Bedingungen erklären lassen. Beide BSB arbeiten mit dem Menschenrechts-Ansatz der UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention und einem relationalen Verständnis von Behinderung, deshalb bieten sie beide Dienstleistungen für Studierende an und engagieren sich zugleich für die Verminderung und Beseitigung physischer und zwischenmenschlicher Barrieren. Solche BSB sollten an jeder Hochschule, die sich für die volle Partizipation der Studierenden mit Behinderung zum Studium einsetzt, eingerichtet werden.

Schlüsselworte: Gleichstellung; Chancengleichheit; Studierende mit Behinderung; Beratungsstelle für Studierende mit Behinderung; Zugang; Nachteilsausgleich; Barrierefreiheit; Sensibilisierung; Inklusion

Offices for Students with Disabilities: From addressing individual special needs to increasing public awareness towards disability

1. Introduction

Based on the World Report on Disability (2011, www.who.int), education brings a significant contribution at building the human capital, by being a key component of the personal wellbeing. The facilitation of access to education of the youth with disabilities is often considered as a shared responsibility of the society, while the exclusion of disabled young persons from education and employment might bring relevant social and economic costs. Thus, World Health Organization (2011) reports that adults with disabilities tend to have a higher level of poverty compared to those without disabilities, but education can decrease this relation of association between disability and poverty. In this light, we consider that, in any European Country that has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities UN-CRPD (www.un.org/disabilities/), the development of special structures addressing the special needs of students with disabilities (i.e. Offices for Students with Disabilities, OSD) should be seen as a necessary strategy for the facilitation of access to education of this category of students, in the direction of improving their quality of life and the development of their individual potential for the benefit of the society they are living in.

This paper is analysing in a comparative manner the structure and the activities of two European Offices for Students with Disabilities, which, although similar in values and mission, have different development approaches to the enhancement of the participation of students with disabilities. On one hand is the Disability Office of University of Zurich, Switzerland (founded 1976), which is assigned to assess and implement reasonable accommodations for the students and attempting to mainstream the disability topic. On the other hand the Office for Students with Disabilities, Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania (founded 2013) which is currently more focused on organizing activities and events aiming to increase the level of awareness towards disabilities and access (social and physical) of the academic personnel and students with and without disabilities.

Several factors will be discussed below, such as the legislative frames specific for each country, the level of preparedness of each University in terms of access and education (attitudes and knowledge) regarding disabilities, history of the OSD, number of students with special needs and types of activities offered by these two Offices in relation to the requests coming from the students and the academic personnel. The comparison aims to understand the challenges, which confront each of the two OSD in their efforts to provide equal opportunity for students with disabilities. Accounting for the different positions of the OSD in the structures of HEIs and for the specific social and political contexts, there is the great chance to learn one from another and develop joint solutions for the best future.

2. *The Disability Office of University of Zurich, Switzerland*

The Disability Office of the University of Zurich (UZH) was founded in 1976 at the Institute of Special Needs Education (SNE) and it was the first OSD in the German speaking European area. We present bellow a short outline of its history and of the social and political background, the latter reflected in the legal provisions regarding disability.

2.1. A parallel history of the disability office at the UZH and Swiss legislation regarding disability

From 1976 to 2002, the Disability Office (from now on OSD or OSD-UZH) operated at the Institute of Special Needs Education, Zurich, Switzerland (SNE). One of the teaching and research assistants was assigned 40% part time employment (PTE), i.e. 2 days a week, to take care of students with special needs. The average number of students was 18 per year, mainly persons with motoric, visual and hearing impairments and several with chronic conditions. As there was no specific legislation regarding the rights and responsibilities of the students with disabilities, the OSD had to campaign for individual solutions, search for financial support, request that study materials be adapted and make exam accommodations. In addition to these tasks, the OSD aimed to increase the awareness of the university staff by organizing activities and events which contributed to social integration (e.g. the monthly Wednesday Meetings for students with or without disabilities). Counselling of the students was based on the principle "helping people to help themselves".

The first university guide for students with disabilities, describing access to buildings and services was published in 1984. The guide moved online in 1999, and was redeveloped in 2013 as uniability.uzh.ch.

In 1996, the OSD held an international conference entitled "Disabled Students – Disabled Studies". Both disability experts and students with disabilities were invited to exchange their experiences and generate knowledge for the future. One conclusion of this conference was that all of the participant countries were offering similar support services, even when the entitlements were different. Countries like Austria, Germany and the United States already had advanced legal provisions related to disability. The lateness of Switzerland might be explained by the fact that public encounters with people with disabilities were rather rare – it had no war wounded, and had a developed inclusive system of institutions for children and adults with disabilities.

In 1999, the new Federal Constitution was finally put into force. Article 8, "Equality before the law", forbade discrimination "in particular on grounds of origins, […] physical, mental or psychological disability" and enabled it to be subject for a legal claim. The Constitution also stipulated that further laws at a federal, cantonal and communal level would have to be created in order to eliminate the disadvantages which may affect people with disabilities. During this time, the Institute of SNE was negotiating with the University about the integration of the OSD into the Central Services of the UZH, an assembly of technical, administrative and counselling offices. The integration took place in 2003, a few months before the enactment of the Federal Law on Equal Rights (FLER, in effect since January 1st 2004). This law, although not directly applicable to the situation of students with disabilities (because UZH is a cantonal institution and thus under the cantonal law), played a major role in improving the situation of students with disabilities at the UZH since Article 2 of FLER contains definitions of the notions Disability (showing an interactional point of view), Person with Disability, and Disadvantage. In combination with the Non-Discrimination Article 8 of the Constitution, this offered the OSD an excellent basis for explanation, clarification and requesting individual accommodation for students with disabilities, as well as the alleviation or elimination of barriers in the environment (i.e. architecture, infrastructure, information and communication technologies – see 2.4).

Between 2003 and 2006 the number of students with disabilities had constantly increased, at an average of 30 students per year, and the first students with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, attention deficit syndrome and Asperger syndrome have started to request support at the OSD. The number of students with chronic conditions and mental health issues was also rising. The restructuring of all the study programs through the Bologna reform led to an increase of up to 120 students per year from the period 2007 to 2013. The new programs, with their frequent examinations and attendance requirements,

generated additional barriers for the students with disabilities, as indicated by their increasing number of requests regarding the examinations, after the implementation of the Bologna system.

2.2. Findings of the Swiss National Survey 2001-2005 regarding student numbers and barriers

The enactment of the constitutional Non-Discrimination Article was followed by a series of research projects focusing on groups of persons who might be subject to discrimination. One of these projects was "People with Disabilities in Swiss Higher Education Institution", a complex research project with a multi-stakeholder approach, based on the WHO concepts of ICF (International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health) and Quality of Life.

The student survey was led at three Swiss HEIs, one of them being the University of Zurich. Some of the findings still maintain their relevance, such as:

- 12% of the students declared a chronic condition (health problem) or functional impairment; a sixth of these (i.e. 2% of all students) specified a classic disability (motoric, visual or hearing impairment).
- Half of the students with a disabling condition (i.e. 6% of all students) a detrimental effect on the relevant activities for studying (according to the ICF definitions) caused by the impairment or chronic condition. Interestingly, there was no correlation between the severity of the impairment or health problem and the level of detrimental effect on learning/participation in studies. A further conclusion of the survey was the significance of the students' personal coping strategies on the one hand and of the support systems on the other, with the students' parents and sometimes teachers being their main motivators and strugglers in childhood and youth.
- Students with disabilities indicated the existence of multiple social (attitudinal), physical, organizational and administrative barriers regarding access to higher education.

Findings of the survey at the HEI, of the interviews with experts (i.e. students and graduates with disabilities), and of surveys at organizations offering support (such as the counsellors of the Invalidity Insurance and of technical aids) may be summarized as follows:

- The HEIs were not prepared for students with disabilities, even though higher education is taking place in inclusive settings. Preconceptions, prejudices and fear of the quality of the higher education, and also of the required resources, were showing in the answers from HEIs.
- *Primary disadvantages* in accessing higher education were often mentioned, especially by students with visual or hearing impairment who had attended special institutions during their primary and secondary education (in order to develop skills to compensate for/manage the impairment using assistive technologies etc.). As the learning requirements at the mentioned institutions were lower than the requirements for applying to a HEI, these students had to catch up by self-study.
- The different support systems (medical, educational, legal and financial) had different approaches and definitions of disability, which meant complicated bureaucracy.

The situation has improved incrementally over the last ten years. For example, almost all of the Swiss HEIs now offer support services for students with disabilities. Also, inclusive classrooms can now be found in every primary or secondary school, and the relational definition of disability given in the ICF and the FLER penetrates all the support systems.

2.3. Key issues in enabling access to higher education for students with disabilities

The findings and recommendations of the research project mentioned above paved the way for the

development of the conceptual approach and practical solutions currently to be found at the OSD-UZH. In order to analyse and improve the situation of the students with disabilities at the university, in 2006, several research actions were initiated at the Disability Office of University of Zurich, starting from problems in the social field, involving the research subjects as equal partners and directly implementing the results in the social field. As there was no assignment for this project and hence no special resources at the OSD, these researches were included in the structure of a PhD thesis (Meier-Popa 2012).

The starting point consisted of the following three key issues:

- The definition of the group "students with disabilities".
  Question: Which **concept of disability** allows/leads to the reduction of disadvantages and to the enhancement of access? It is clearly a relational concept, cantered on the interaction between an individual and their environment, but what else should we consider in terms of access to higher education?
- The highly social and dynamic complexity of the situation in a large institution as the UZH
  Question: How can institutional change happen when there are so many stakeholders and the situation is changing almost constantly? Speaking about situations with disruptive changes, the MIT specialist Scharmer speaks of situations with **emerging complexity** (Scharmer, 2007, 61).
- According to the recommendations of the UN (2007), top-down strategies (mainstreaming) and coordination (a no-gap policy) are required.
  Question: What is the **role of the OSD**, when there is no other official party to advocate for equal opportunities for students with disabilities?

2.4. First act: a Disability Statement

Based on the definition of disability in the FLER (see 2.1), in 2006 the OSD and the Academic Disability Commission of the UZH adopted a Disability Statement which clarifies the interactional understanding of disability and names the most frequent types of causation: "*Disability*, as defined in Swiss law on equal rights for people with disabilities, is a phenomenon reflecting complex interactions between a particular feature of a human being and features of the society he or she lives in. Impairments in physical mobility or a person's ability to see, hear or speak reduce his or her ability to participate in social, professional and educational settings. Chronic illness, a mental disorder or a learning impairment such as dyslexia, Asperger's or attention deficiency syndrome all detracts from an individual's ability to participate fully and effectively" (Disability Statement 2006).

In addition to this specification, the Disability Statement indicates three main action fields in order to implement equality of rights and to enable access for students with disabilities: "Facilitating inclusion in education and professional environments represents a decisive step toward widening participation and creating equal opportunity. At the University of Zurich, the process of removing disadvantages plays a major role in ensuring fair conditions and helping people with disabilities reach their full potential. Measures taken comply with the Federal Law on Equal Rights (in effect since January 1st 2004) and the Constitution of the Canton of Zurich (in effect since January 1st 2006) and include:

- Ensuring general building accessibility,
- Creating digital accessibility, and
- Reasonable adjustments in teaching, studying and working conditions" (Disability Statement 2006).

2.5. Concepts for disability and access requiring a dual approach

In the course of the action research we gathered the following significant features for a Disability Concept in higher education:

- Disability is a characteristic of a **situation** and not of a person.
- As the result of the interaction between a person and the environment, disability is a **relational and action requesting** issue.
- Disability requires **identification and action** in order to be diminished/eliminated. Prevention is the golden rule!
- Instead of taking action against disability situations, it would be better to focus/to act toward **access as the positive result** of the interaction between individual and environment. "Access" and "disability" are the two sides of the coin (Fig. 1).
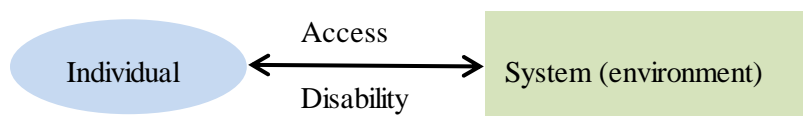
Access

Individual ⟷ System (environment)

Disability

Fig. 1. Representation of the interactional model applied to OSD.

- Strategic and day-to-day interventions must take **three levels** into consideration: individual, environmental and the level of interaction between individual and environment, which means a dual approach for the OSD (see 2.6).

An important result of the action research was the development of a specific Access-Concept (with 7 As) for the higher education, based on the Access-Concept (the first 5 As) of the United Nations:

(1) **A**vailability, i.e. coordinated support systems
(2) **A**ccessibility of the environment (architectural, digital, learning /teaching, administrative)
(3) **A**ccommodation, meaning that individual needs must be met. The assessment for reasonable adjustments is considered the (individual) key to access to HEI; however, it is the main challenge at the OSD because it requires time and capacity in terms of
(4) **A**ffordability of material and human resources, which means that students with disabilities must declare their condition in order to be registered
(5) **A**cceptability of persons with disability as part of the diversity at the university
(6) **A**gency, meaning that persons with disability participate and reflect their actions changing the environment
(7) **A**ccess to self, which refers to how the challenge of living with an impairment is consciously reflected

2.6 Our fields of activity. Number of currently supported students

Given the interactional view of disability and access, the activities of the OSD have to cover two action fields:

Field 1: Interventions in individual situations of disability, aiming to reduce/eliminate the disadvantages and offer students equal opportunities – the goal is to enable the students. Such interventions include:

- Informing about rights, counselling in difficult situations
- Assessment of special needs, which means issuing a Certificate for Individual Reasonable Adjustment (CIRA), which will be submitted, to the faculty or institute. The OSD helps staff to

organize the required adjustments, e.g. by organizing and surveying the exams for the students with special needs (over 50 exams per year in the past five years)
- Assistive services provided by other students with or without disabilities
- Peer counselling
- Acquisition of adapted study materials
- Various services such as reserving seats in the classroom, the disposition of accessible rooms for wheelchair users, assisting by the negotiations with assurances etc.

In 2014, the number of students supported by the OSD reached a record number of 280 (i.e. 1.1% of the students registered at the UZH). In the spring term of 2015, there were more students than last year, which will probably mean a new record at the end of the academic year. As the support of the increasing number of students demands a large part of our resources, the activities in the (following) second field of activities are reduced to a lower scale.

Field 2: Interventions in the environment, which aim to create an accessible architectural, digital, and teaching/learning environment – the goal is to enhance accessibility.
- The OSD initiates the improvement of the accessibility in the domains mentioned above, working together with the persons with authority at the university and with the specific NGO.
- Training sessions for staff are held regularly (currently only once a year due to limited resources) on topics like digital accessibility (together with the Web Office UZH), reasonable adjustments, and inclusive teaching (together with the Department for Teaching in HEI).
- The online guide Uniability UZH offers information about access and infrastructure in over 60 buildings on the three campuses of the university.

Furthermore, the OSD has cooperated with a variety of NGOs and with the OSDs from other HEI.

2.7. Challenges

In 2012, the action research mentioned in 2.2 described the following challenges (7 Cs), with the aim of widening participation of the students with disabilities and creating equal opportunities:
(1) The **Concept of Disability**: the manifoldness of *disability situations*
(2) The emerging **Complexity**, which demands awareness raising and mainstreaming. Concerning this matter, in 2009 the Academic Disability Commission UZH adopted a paragraph on Equal Rights in the University Regulations, followed in 2014 with Strategic Goals for the Implementation of the Rights of People with Disabilities at the UZH. The authorization of these documents will mean that the UZH has a top-down strategy regarding disability and access.
(3) **Criteria** for identification, intervention and monitoring
(4) **Coordination** is required for transference of support, etc.
(5) **Competence** in the field of *Disability/Access* to higher education
(6) **Communication** between people with and without disabilities, NGOs and HEIs (because the stakeholders and interest groups are extremely widespread)
(7) **Cooperation**, a) as *shared responsibility* between all interest groups and b) interdisciplinary

3. Description of the Office for Students with Disabilities of Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania

3.1. Legislative frame supporting the development of structures for students with disabilities in Romanian Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)

In Romania, the development of the structures supporting the students with disabilities (i.e. Disability Offices) is currently in line with the National Strategy for the Inclusion of Persons with Disabilities 2014-2020. Thus, the National Education Law (1/2011) stipulates and guarantees "*…equal rights for the access of all the Romanian citizens to all the levels and forms of education, including the lifelong learning programs, without discrimination*". The idea of *Access for all* (at physical, social and informational levels), as promoted by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (www.un.org/disabilities/), is reflected in the concepts of participation, accessibility, adaptation and equity, which are presented in the National Law Regarding the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Disabled Persons (448/2006), the National Law of Education (1/2011), as well as in the Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities (Order 3666/ 2012). For example, within the Romanian legislation frame cited above, adaptation is defined as the process of transforming the physical and informational environment, of the products and systems, with the purpose of making them available to all the persons, including to those with disabilities. The concept Access for all (which is based on the idea of Universal Design, i.e. the design of all the spaces and products in an a manner accessible to all the users, without the need of special adaptations; Bremer et al., 2002) can be found in the Romanian legislative frame in the articles 61, 62, 64 is 65 of the National Law Regarding the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Disabled Persons (448/2006), which are referring to the specific recommendations regarding the facilitation of physical, informational and communicational access for persons with disabilities.

A look at the current definitions of disability and handicap in the Romanian national legislation reflects the interactional approach to these concept (individual-environment), in the way it is promoted by **the Social Model of Disability** (Oliver, 1996), which states that social barriers such as attitudes and behaviours towards persons with disabilities are significant components of these concepts. In the case of students with disabilities, the study environment is represented by the study conditions (physical space, study materials, technological infrastructure, IT etc.), and by the academic personnel (other students, teaching staff, administrative stuff). The process of individual adaptation should be approached through all the components of the interaction person-environment. The simple fact that a student with disabilities starts asking questions about his/her special needs during the study semester or about the difficulties that might appear during the final tests is already a start in the process of interaction between the student and the educational environment. The National Romanian Law on persons with disabilities (448/2006) indicates that the main mode of responding to the physical and informational dimensions of the environment is through reasonable adaptation, which is defined as the process of transformation of the physical and informational environment, of the products and systems, to make them available to all the persons, including those with disabilities.

Another favourable element for the development of the inclusive structures targeting the students with disabilities is the attention and the recommendations formulated by the National Alliance of the Romanian Student Organizations (ANOSR) regarding the equal rights to education of students with disabilities. Hence, in their annual report (Equity in Education, 2011), based on the data provided by the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection. This report indicates that approximately 3% of the Romanian population is registered with a certain type of disability. Among these persons, 10.22% is represented by the category of age from 18 to 29 years. ANOSR points out the need of active measures (in terms of equity and access to education) in order to adjust the population dynamic of the persons with disabilities to the population of students of the Romanian HEIs, in which the average number of students with disabilities represents 0.5% from the total number of enrolled undergraduate and graduate students. Although this analysis of the proportion of students with disabilities in the Romanian HEIs is a valuable one in terms of reflecting the real-time situation, most of the international Disability Offices recommend rather a qualitative analysis of the situation of the students with disabilities (e.g. type

of disability, identification of special needs, possibilities to offer reasonable accommodation etc.), rather than a quantitative one. Such a qualitative analysis might allow for an optimal level of preparedness of the Romanian HEIs to manage the special needs of their students with disabilities, in terms of their participation to the study programs they are enrolled for and in the direction of prevention of the school dropout.

However, even though the legislative frame for this type of structures is a supportive one at national level, Romania has only one Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD), i.e. OSD of Babes-Bolyai University (UBB), which has a total number of 21 faculties and it is currently ranked as the largest University in Romania in terms of number of enrolled undergraduate and graduate students.

3.2. History and functioning of the Office of Students with Disabilities of Babes-Bolyai University

The Office for Students with Disabilities (OSD) of Babeş-Bolyai University was founded in 2013, with the purpose of ensuring equal opportunities for all the UBB students (Annual Rector's Report for 2014; ubbcluj.ro). OSD of UBB is directly subordinated to the Rector's Office and it functions as a centre for inclusive services for students with disabilities, in accordance to the National Code of Students Rights and Responsibilities and the National Education Law (1/2011, art. 118). As pointed by the Rector of the UBB in his annual Report on the state of the University in the academic year 2014-2015, the mission of OSD is to ensure equal opportunities to education and potential development to all the students currently enrolled in all the study programs of the University (undergraduate and graduate levels). In line with this mission, the activity of OSD in the academic year 2014-2015 was an intensive one, consisting in 18 awareness-type activities (workshops in collaborations with specific NGOs and specialists in the field of accessibility and services toward persons with disabilities, student-for-student types of events, community-oriented activities etc.; centre.ubbcluj.ro/bsd), with a total number of 595 participants (students with and without disabilities, academic personnel, Alumni of Babes-Bolyai University etc.). Also, during the academic year 2014-2015, five students (out of 63 currently registered students with disabilities) were involved in individual psycho-pedagogical counselling addressing their learning difficulties. Specialists from the Special Education Department and Social Assistance Department of Babes-Bolyai University performed the counselling in a collaborative manner. As a result of these awareness-type activities, OSD was nominated in 2014 at the National Gala for Persons with Disabilities, at the Category Open Doors (Institutions promoting accessibility).

We present bellow the types of **inclusive activities** (awareness-type activities) organized by the Office for Students with Disabilities (UBB) in the academic year 2014-2015. Besides the activities aiming to increase the visibility of OSD to the students and the academic personnel of the University, five out of 63 currently enrolled students with declared disabilities have individually approached the Office with specific requests related either to their learning difficulties, planning of the semester exams or to physical accommodation of the classrooms and entrances to specific buildings of the institution.

1. **Providing the students with disabilities with information on the University inclusive policies, and on their rights and responsibilities (i.e. National legislative frame):** Information was offered either on the site of the Office for Students with Disabilities (centre.ubbcluj.ro/bsd), during group-informational sessions organized at the OSD, or on individual meeting bases, upon request. Also, upon request, the students were given information on the degree of accessibility of specific buildings of the University, and, in collaboration with Motivation Foundation Romania, the students and the academic personnel were informed about the needs and solutions for independent living of the persons with motor disabilities, especially wheel-chair users (www.motivation.ro).

2. **Providing students and academic personnel with information about local, national**

and international NGOs and institutions functioning in the area of accessibility (workshops on the missions, values and activities, seminars on the preparedness for independent living, visits at NGOs etc.). The main idea behind this type of activities is to increase awareness toward the institutions and NGOs that are preoccupied to facilitate the participation to society and to education of the persons with disabilities, i.e. **Accessibility = Shared responsibility**. Examples of this type of activities of OSD of UBB in the academic year 2014-2015 are: visit at the High-school for the Visually Impaired Cluj-Napoca, meeting of Motivation Foundation Romania (seminar on elements for preparing for independent living of persons with motor disabilities), workshop on Accessibility in University (invited speaker: coordinator of Disability Office of University Zurich, Switzerland), visit at the Regional Centre for Community Services Cluj-Napoca, workshop on communication with and about persons with disabilities (in collaboration with specific departments of the University, such as Department of Special Education), presentations of professional counselling centres, presentations of mental and physical health programs offered by local NGOs (e.g. Minte Forte, Estuar, Romanian Association of Psychology Students) etc. These activities were addressed not only to the students with disabilities, but also to the academic personnel and to the volunteers of the OSD (students and Alumni of UBB).

3. **Facilitation of the direct interaction with persons with disabilities** (Live Books, social and cultural events with persons with disabilities). During the academic year 2014-2014, OSD of UBB has organized a series of Live Book presentations, i.e. persons with visible and invisible disabilities (mainly Alumni of Babes-Bolyai University, who are currently employed) have presented their own biographies, indicating the barriers they perceived during their professional and social development, as well as solutions for accessibility in education of persons with disabilities. Another activity aiming to increase the level of direct interactions with persons with disabilities is the Program *Be active together*, which brings together students with and without disabilities and it includes elements of sport, such as sitting volleyball (in collaboration with the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport of UBB) and para-agility with therapy dogs (in collaboration with local Dog Training schools, such as Pet Joy Cluj-Napoca). Also, within this Program, the volunteers of OSD of UBB (students with and without disabilities) had the chance to practice and participate together in a disability-awareness flash-mob (on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, i.e. the 3rd of December), together with children diagnosed with Autism and Down syndrome from different local NGOs. The idea behind these activities comes from the literature in the field of Special Education, which acknowledges that the direct contact with persons with disabilities is a crucial variable of the process of developing and shaping inclusive attitudes and behaviour in humans.

4. **Fund-raising activities aiming to facilitate the participation of students with disabilities in the academic community:** In the academic year 2014-2015, OSD of UBB has motivated the participation of academic personnel and students without disabilities in several community-oriented activities with fund-raising character (i.e. activities addressed to the students with disabilities of UBB), such as: Swimathon 2015 (the project Student-4-Student: Swimming for students with disabilities) and a project dedicated to the physical accessibility of the University building, which is currently visible on the crowd-funding platform of the University (http://crowdfunding.alumni.ubbcluj.ro).

5. **Annual statistics regarding the situation of students with (declared) disabilities**

currently enrolled in the study programs of UBB (number of students, types of disabilities): With the collaboration of the Secretarial Offices of each of the 21 Faculties of UBB and based on the official letter emitted by the Rector's Office, OSD was able to summarize the number and the types of disabilities of the students who have declared them at the beginning of the academic year. Upon request, this data can be made available at institutional level. OSD of UBB indicate a percentage of 0.5% of students with disabilities (years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015) from the total number of students enrolled at the undergraduate and graduate study programs of Babes-Bolyai University (Rector's Annual Report on the situation of Babes-Bolyai University for the year 2014-2015). Although this percentage is low compared with other European universities (e.g. City University of London has 5% of students with disabilities reported the total number of students enrolled, while University of Edinburgh has a percentage of 8.09% students with disabilities), a qualitative analysis of the data reflects the fact that disability prevalence reported in foreign universities is given by learning difficulties (invisible disabilities). In Romania, the data offered by OSD indicate that students tend to declare in the moment of their admission at a specific HEI only those disabilities that are medically diagnosed through the standardized system of the Romanian National Minister of Labour, Family and Social Protection (OM 2298/2012), which also involves a registration and assessment through General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Protection and of the Superior Commission of Evaluation of Adults with Disabilities. In other words, the real number of Romanian students with disabilities could be higher than the one indicated by the date collected and summarized by the Office for Students with Disabilities or other structures dedicated to them. Thus, each Romanian HEI should be aware of the fact that most of the students might not decide to declare their disabilities (i.e. due to personal reasons and/or to avoid the potential negative or positive discrimination) or they might not be aware that they have learning difficulties in the moment of admission. Therefore, the Offices for Students with Disabilities (such as OSD of UBB) can continuously update the database on the students with disabilities, by including those who are identifying their educational needs during the study semester and are requesting information and/or specialized help from the Office for Students with Disabilities.

6. **Periodical assessment (i.e. surveys) of the needs of the teaching staff regarding their knowledge and attitudes toward persons with disabilities:** Such an assessment was performed at the beginning of the academic year 2014-2015 through an online survey by the Office for Students with Disabilities of UBB. The survey, which was approved by the Ethical Board of the University, included standard questionnaires measuring the knowledge, attitudes and direct interactions with persons with disabilities, as well as their self-expressed need for being informed on accessibilities and the legislative frame regarding disabilities. Even though the participation rate to the survey was relatively low among the academic personnel of the University (note: the Office for Students with Disabilities was founded only in 2013), the respondents indicated the necessity of educational input (training seminars) on the topic of accessibility in University (Costea-Bărluțiu, Muresan & Rusu, *in press*). Also, although the respondents reported a high level of direct contact with the students with disabilities that are currently enrolled in their classes, only few of them appear to be familiar with the University policies regarding the persons with disabilities, as well as with the National and European legislative frames.

All the respondents expressed a high level of availability toward seminars (i.e. training activities) on accessibility (physical, communicational and informational), communication with and about persons with disabilities and about principles of Universal Design in Learning. We recommend that the Offices should carry out such surveys at the beginning of each academic year for Students with Disabilities. In the case of OSD of Babes-Bolyai University, the survey can provide a valuable starting point for planning the types of activities addressed to the educational needs identified by the teaching staff (e.g. training sessions on communication with and about people with disabilities).

7. **Addressing the special needs of the students with disabilities (upon request) through counselling and/or written institutional recommendations:** Although the awareness-types activities listed above were preponderant during the academic year 2014-2015 at level of OSD of UBB, a number of five students with disabilities have individually contacted the Office (direct or by email) in regards to their special educational needs. Each request was carefully analysed by the team of OSD, in collaboration with the academic personnel (i.e. head of Department, **Deans of the Faculties the students were enrolled at, Rector's Office) and/or with the family of the students.** Based on the analysis of their special needs, the students were either assigned an OSD-volunteer (e.g. for note-taking, guidance through the Campus), were included in an individual psycho-pedagogical counselling plan, or a letter of written recommendations to facilitate the reasonable access to education of the students in the study program he/she is enrolled (the official letter was addressed to the academic personnel of the Faculty). Also, in some of the cases, the students were referred to other centres of the University, such as the Expert Centre for Professional Orientation, or specific NGOs offering programs for physical rehabilitation, social and professional inclusion etc. All the recommendations that can be found in the official letters from OSD are based on the National legislative base, including alternative methods of assessment. Examples of recommendations are: supplementary examination time, offering the study materials in advance and in an accessible form (e.g. enlarged text, Braille text – in such cases, the students are referred to the Centre for Assistive and Technology for Access of UBB), permission for the OSD-volunteers to accompany the students with disabilities during seminars and lectures for note-taking and/or gestural translation, permission for a special space in the classroom, peer-tutoring activities etc.

Discussions and Conclusions:

The analysis concludes that the difference between the prevailing activities of the two OSD can be explained particularly in regard to the specific legal and institutional context. However, the key issues and the challenges are similar. A significant deduction of the paper regards the key role of the OSD in enabling access to higher education for people with disabilities, which means that each Higher Education Institution should create and support such an Office (institutional capacity building).

At international level, the offices for students with disabilities promote, first of all, the **focus on interactional manner (individual-environment interaction) on the individual special needs** of the students already enrolled in the study programs of a Higher Education Institution, regardless on how large or small is their numbers, in terms of properly and reasonable addressing these needs. An University that indicates an optimal level of awareness and it proves that is has the possibility to address the special

needs of each student with disabilities in terms of ensuring physical, informational and communicational access (i.e. through clear institutional policies and structures oriented to the students with disabilities, such as OSDs), will eventually become more visible and more attractive to this category of persons. In other words, once the educational needs of the students with disabilities are reasonable addressed at institutional level, each student has the potential to become an ambassador of the institution's level of preparedness to accommodate and socially include the persons with disabilities, in the direction of reciprocal benefits.

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Incorporating both Language and Culture in the Teaching of Norwegian as a Foreign Language. A Perspective on the BA Norwegian Programme in Cluj-Napoca

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Abstract

The field of foreign language learning has undergone various paradigm shifts in order to accommodate to the constant changes taking place in the social, cultural and educational contexts. This paper intended to justify the role of culture in the context of learning the Norwegian language. The main emphasis was placed on the fact that foreign language learning is both a communicative and an intercultural endeavour.

Keywords: foreign language teaching; (inter)cultural competence; communicative competence; the intercultural turn; the multilingual and multicultural classroom; explicit and implicit culture;

Incorporating both Language and Culture in the Teaching of Norwegian as a Foreign Language. A Perspective on the BA Norwegian Programme in Cluj-Napoca

1.　The BA Norwegian Programme in Cluj-Napoca, Romania

The teaching of Norwegian as a foreign language, at university level, has a tradition at Babeș-Bolyai University of more than 24 years. The Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures of the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca provides the only BA of Norwegian Language and Literature which is accredited at national level (both as a major and a minor Norwegian specialization). As a consequence of its uniqueness and of the growing interest of learning Norwegian, the number of students that register for this BA has grown gradually in the last years. The total of students who attend today the BA Norwegian courses amounts approximately to 240 students.

The Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures has been cooperating over the years with many institutions from Norway (The Norwegian Centre for International Cooperation in Education, Norwegian Fiction and Non-Fiction Literature Abroad etc.) and has signed various EEA-agreements with academic institutions in Norway (University of Oslo, University of Agder, University of Bergen or University of Stavanger). The latest EEA cooperation agreement was signed with Volda University College, in Norway, after two teachers at The Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures in Cluj-Napoca attended in March 2015 the *International Conference for teachers who teach Norwegian at universities abroad* which was held in Volda. This interinstitutional agreement offers exchange mobility programmes to both students and teachers within the field of learning and teaching the Norwegian language.

Nowadays, institutions of higher education need to incorporate an international perspective in order to respond to the requirements of the global education market. Therefore, the main target of the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures is its internalization of Norwegian and Scandinavian studies. Thus, the international conference organized by Volda University College provided the participants good opportunities for professional exchange and professional development, engagement in collaborative arrangements, exchange programmes and visibility to the Norwegian studies in Cluj-Napoca.

Taking into consideration the fact that the characteristics of communication between interlocutors have nowadays undergone various changes due to the process of globalization and the rise of the Digital Age, the academic environment begins to be more concerned with the implications that multilingualism plays on teaching in a multicultural classroom. Various researchers both worldwide (Liddicoat & Scarino, 2013, Modiano, 2009, Gardner, 2012, Banks & Banks McGee, 2010) and in Norway (Selj & Ryen, 2011, Hauge, 2007, Kulbrandstad & Engen, 2004) are preoccupied with the multilayered perspectives of teaching and learning in multicultural classrooms. In Romania the interest for this topic has grown in the past years and many researchers have emphasized the fact that the field of language education has to tackle the place of culture in the foreign language learning context (Petruș, 2011, Petruș & Tomescu-Baciu, 2014, Petruș & Bocoș-Bințințan, 2013, Păun & Troc, 2006, Cozma, Butnaru & Cucoș, 2001, Bârlogeanu, 2007). Babeș-Bolyai University promotes multiculturalism and an intercultural pedagogy through its study programmes that are delivered in three languages: Romanian, German and Hungarian. Thus, the topics concerning cultural exchange, cultural awareness and the understanding of cultural

diversity that were tackled and debated at the conference organized by Volda University College represented salient perspectives for the Department of Scandinavian Languages and Literatures.

2.   Foreign language learning – both an intercultural and a communicative endeavour

According to Paul Gardner (2012, 77-78) language is a marker of social and cultural identity, is imbued with social signification and is part of the social fabric of a society. Language represents a means of expressing who we are. In our everyday social interaction we choose in a conscious manner the words that we want include in our discourse or the way we pronounce some words. Weather they are sociolects or ethnolects, these language registers signal to the interlocutors important details about our social and cultural identity. Moreover, when communicating, in addition to exchanging information that is regulated by lexical, discourse or syntax rules, one activates one's affective filter in relation to a particular language. Therefore, as concerns foreign language learning, motivation, interest and attitude toward the target language and culture represent according to Lambert (1974 in Abrahamsson, 2009, 199) important factors in achieving effective language learning.

The field of foreign language learning has undergone various paradigm shifts in order to accommodate to the constant changes taking place in the social, cultural and educational contexts. The so-called 'cognitive turn' (McLaughlin et al. 1983) perceived language learning as a cognitive activity, while the 'social turn' (Block, 2003) considered language learning to be in essence a social activity, i.e. not an individual act but a learning process developed in interaction with others. Starting with the 1990s the 'cultural turn' (Byram, 1989) began to emphasize the intertwined relationship between language learning and culture learning. Because language is a socio-cultural code, not a mere system of rules, Byram (1989, 42) suggests that in fact "language learning is culture learning and consequently […] language teaching is culture teaching."

Kramsch (2009) emphasized the need of a 'subjective turn' in foreign language teaching, namely an approach that would explore in more detail personal and symbolic aspects of language learning and would focus on learners' emotions and perceptions. The emphasis placed on the learner's identity and his/ her holistic language learning experience led to the development of another language learning theory. In today's interconnected multicultural world where interaction with people from different cultures constitutes the norm it was suggested the need of an 'intercultural turn' (Byram, 2007, Sercu, 2005, Lázár, 2000, Risager, 2007) that would enable learners to acquire the ability to understand otherness as well as to be aware of one's own linguistic and cultural values. In this case, foreign language learning should be perceived as an intercultural endeavour since learners encounter in the target language other cultural representations that they have to decode and make use of. In addition, this emphasis on the intercultural perspective on language learning aims to make learners ''more aware of their own cultural programming and cultural encodings when interacting with individuals belonging to other cultures'' (Pop & Bocoş, 2014, 300).

Another theory that combines several paradigms listed above is the so-called 'multilingual turn' (May, 2014, Conteh & Meier, 2014) according to which ''the processes of learning are both cognitive and social, as well as historical, cultural, emotional, kinaesthetic, interpersonal and moral'' (Conteh & Meier, 2014, 6). In view of the diverse language learning theories presented above, language learning is perceived to be a complex personal achievement incorporating a holistic touch to it and which is definitely influenced by the socio-cultural and emotional context in which it takes place.

In the past 30 years the focus of foreign language learning has shifted from achieving a mere linguistic competence to developing a communicative competence which is more relevant for the learners' communicative needs. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages:

Learning, Teaching, Assessment (2001), which provides guidelines on the teaching of foreign languages and regulates language assessment across Europe, the communicative competence comprises several components: a linguistic, a sociolinguistic and a pragmatic one (2001, 13). Thus, communicative competence (a term coined by linguist Dell Hymes in 1972) constitutes the ability to use appropriately the lexical and phonological system of the target language, regards the adaptation of one's discourse to a particular social context and requires from learners to be knowledgeable about the way in which language use is subjected to the implicit and explicit culture.

Still, communicative competence was initially intended to target the competence of native speakers and disregarded the linguistic challenges encountered by non-native language learners. Nowadays, the communicative competence of a native speaker is no longer the reference point of a foreign language learner, since it is obvious that this goal is not a realistic one and cannot be achieved entirely by a non-native speaker. In order to emphasize the fact that learners act as mediators between their own culture and the target language culture, Byram M. and Zarate G. (1997) coined a new term, i.e. the 'intercultural speaker'. This term implies that the language learner is able to anticipate communicative misunderstandings and can relate to and accommodate his/her language to different social and cultural contexts. What differentiates even more the intercultural speaker from the native speaker is the 'attitude' which adds to the knowledge and skills component. Thus, according to the intercultural perspective in foreign language learning, the learner has to be willing to engage in intercultural exchange, to exhibit respect and tolerance toward otherness or to demonstrate interest and willingness to relativize one's own values. The intercultural approach in language learnings is ''complementary to the communicative competence and does not intend to replace its theoretical basis'' (Petruș, 2014, 138). Moreover, this approach implies that foreign language learning can contribute to the intercultural development of learners.

The traditional foreign language pedagogy puts an emphasis on the development of the four skills in the target language classroom, i.e. speaking, writing, reading and listening. Since language is a ''social practice'' (Kramsch, 2003, 21) and is part of and bears our identity (Skjekkeland, 2012, 69) a cultural perspective to language learning, in view of the arguments presented above, would only add value and make foreign language learning more efficient and meaningful. Claire Kramsch argues that ''culture in language learning is not and expendable fifth skill […]. It is always in the background right from day one, ready to unsettle the good language learners when they expect it least, making evident the limitations of their hard won communicative competence, challenging the ability to make sense of the world around them" (1993, 1). Therefore, in order to be efficient communicators it would be beneficial for foreign language learners to be taught language and culture in an integrated manner.

3. The proper role of culture in the context of learning the Norwegian language

The acquisition of a foreign language is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon (Abrahamsson 2009, 11) since within language it is present both the national and the personal identity (Skjekkeland 2012, 32). Norway has managed to preserve this national and personal identity by having two official written forms of Norwegian: Bokmål (literally 'book language') and Nynorsk (literally 'New Norwegian'). One has to keep in mind the fact that Bokmål and Nynorsk provide the standard just for how to write Norwegian and not how to speak the language. Most Norwegians speak their own dialect in various circumstances as to indicate the region they come from. This interplay between language, culture and identity is of paramount importance since according to Skjekkeland (2012, 98) it makes one be more conscious about choosing one's words and having two ways of expressing oneself might provide a double value to the communication. Thus, culture and language are socially constructed and are always situated in a socio-cultural environment.

When it comes to integrating culture into foreign language learning, one has to consider at least two components: the teaching context and the learners' identity (their mother tongue, their motivation to learn the language, their socio-cultural background, their age etc.). Getting to know one's students represents an important stage in choosing the appropriate teaching resources and accommodating one's teaching to learners' learning needs. Even if sometimes there is the tendency to consider the classroom as an artificial environment for learning a foreign language, in today's multicultural and multilinguistic world the classroom represents a ''micro-cultural context that is comprised of students who have different cultural backgrounds and different mother tongues'' (Petruş & Tomescu Baciu 2014, 161).

The BA Norwegian programme offered by the Faculty of Letters in Cluj-Napoca provides to its students an integrated approach to learning the Norwegian language and become familiarized with the Norwegian culture. According to the syllabus, there are a variety of courses that tackle the development of linguistic and communicative competence, as well as cultural competence, i.e. knowledge about literature, arts, social conventions, norms, awareness of dialect differences etc. Likewise, students are offered a comprehensive view of the way in which the Norwegian language functions in different communicative contexts. The integration of the cultural component in the learning of Norwegian adds to the development of an efficient and appropriate communication.

Many students have registered for this BA Norwegian programme mainly because they have had contact with the Norwegian culture through literature, arts, movies or music. This contact motivated them to learn Norwegian in order to understand the Norwegian culture. The resources used to support the teaching of Norwegian in the BA programme comprise a variety of graded textbooks and of authentic resources (literature books, newspaper articles, video clips etc.). The textbooks (for example Ny i Norge - Manne & Kaurin Nilsen, 2003; Bo i Norge - Manne, 2000; Her på berget - Ellingsen & Mac Donald, 2008) enhance students' linguistic, communicative as well as (inter)cultural competence. The term 'inter' implies that students are acting as mediators between their own culture and the target language culture. In addition, within an intercultural exchange students reflect on the differences and challenges they have to overcome in order to achieve an efficient communication that would be appropriate to a certain communicative context in the target language. These textbooks comprise both explicit (literature, arts, holiday customs, music, food habits etc.) and implicit (values, norms, beliefs, non-verbal language, gender roles, attitudes etc.) cultural representations. Likewise, students are provided with a comprehensive view of Norwegian culture. These cultural representations are relevant for the foreign language learner who aims to enhance his/her pragmatic communication, i.e. master sociolinguistic rules in a communicative context (use the language for different purposes, change the language according to the context or the interlocutor's needs, follow the rules of conversation etc.). More details about the students' profiles and their points of view regarding the appropriateness of teaching Norwegian by focusing on both cultural and linguistic elements can be found in Petruş & Tomescu-Baciu 2014.

The National Curriculum for Knowledge Promotion in Norway (2006, 3) places a great emphasis on developing students' cultural competence in a multicultural society, on students' understanding of different representations of culture, on developing in schools and through learning attitudes of tolerance and respect for people belonging to different cultures. This change from a national to an international perspective in teaching was also adopted at university level. Volda University College, for example, offers a course called Norwegian language and civilization for international students (http://hivolda.studiehandbok.no/eng/content/view/full/32164) that aims to tackle learning outcomes which focus on developing a linguistic and a communicative competence, as well as an intercultural one:

- speak Norwegian reasonably correctly with correct intonation
- Norwegian phonetics, vocabulary and the grammatical structure in Norwegian language

- read and understand contemporary texts, literary texts, non‑fiction, and vocational texts

- adapt to the Norwegian society

- reflect upon aspects of Norwegian mentality and culture

These learning outcomes that are set for students who learn Norwegian as a foreign language reflect the interconnectedness between foreign language learning and (inter)cultural understanding. The *International Conference for teachers who teach Norwegian at universities abroad* has tackled explicitly topics that regard the integration of cultural representations in Norwegian language learning: a) Multilingualism – to learn Norwegian as a foreign language; b) The international students encounter the Norwegian culture and society. The students' struggle to accommodate to Norwegian language and culture at Volda University College has been documented by Reidun Aambø (2008) who provides an insight into how Norwegian culture and patterns of behaviour are perceived by learners who study Norwegian as a foreign language. The book covers topics related to politeness norms, social conventions, dress code and taboos.

The Romanian National Curriculum (http://www.edu.ro/index.php/articles/curriculum/12782) also provides similar perspectives on foreign language learning. The emphasis is again placed on having a closer contact between language and culture:

- willingness to accept differences and tolerance by tackling in a critical manner cultural diversity and stereotypes;

- developing interest towards discovering cultural contexts through tackling a variety of texts;

- developing flexibility while exchanging ideas or when working in groups, in different types of communication (2009, 6).

The Romanian Education Law (http://www.edu.ro/index.php/legaldocs/14847) stipulates that every student has to acquire eight different types of competences among which two of them tackle explicitly the broad concept of culture: a) Competence on cultural awareness and expression; b) social and civic competences (art. 68, p. 11). Therefore, within the field of foreign language learning, the integration of culture with its variables (multilingual and multicultural) is sustained in the Romanian educational context.

The acknowledgement of the fact that all learning is placed in a social context has multiple implications both in the way teaching and learning sequences are planned. Even if culture is closely related to the processes and contents of education to such a degree that sometimes it is difficult to identify weather the educational system influences culture or it is vice-versa, there are some challenges linked to the integration of culture in the field of foreign language learning. Frederick Erickon (Banks & Banks McGee 2010, 38) indicates four main issues concerning culture's relevance for education:

- the notion of culture as invisible and well as visible;

- the politics of cultural difference in school and society;

- the inherent diversity of cultures and subcultures within human social groups;

- the diversity of cultures within the individual - a perspective on the self as multiculturally constructed.

The first challenge refers to the fact that culture represents a fluid, flexible concept that is characterized by change and adaptation. In this respect, culture can be invisible i.e. implicit or visible i.e. explicit. When accommodating students, in a formal teaching environment, to certain cultural characteristics of the target

language the tendency is to focus on the visible elements of culture since these are easier to identify. The invisible elements of culture are more difficult to explain and accept. Besides being knowledgeable about these invisible elements of culture, the learner needs to develop skills (ability to participate successfully in social interactions, ability to adapt to a variety of individuals and groups that have different cultural backgrounds, interpret successfully non-verbal communication etc.) and attitudes (openness, curiosity and willingness to familiarize with people from various cultures).

The second challenge refers to the way in which the school or the society perceives cultural differences and complies with the regulations issued for example by the Ministry of Education.

Thirdly, the great diversity of cultures and subcultures within social groups makes it difficult for the teacher in the foreign language classroom to tackle thoroughly this subject. Moreover, to acquire intercultural competence does not equal to being knowledgeable about all the cultures or just about one particular culture, since no degrees of comparison can be placed between two different cultures. Therefore, intercultural competence intends to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes that would enable the learner to interact with any culture.

The forth challenge implies that every person has a subjective view of the world and in addition to this, everyone is multicultural to some degree since one cannot live in isolation. In this case, the challenge to understand and accept cultural differences represents a personal endeavour.

Still, teaching language and culture in an integrated manner implies yet another salient challenge, namely the assessment of the intercultural communicative competence. On the one hand, the assessment of this competence is imbued with subjectivity (Lázár et. al 2007, 29) due to lack of standardized tests. On the other hand, assessment of intercultural communicative competence is highly contextual and can be influenced by the age of the learners, their social status or their cultural background (Petruş 2014, 141).

4. Conclusions

This paper presented an insight into the role of culture in the context of learning the Norwegian language. The acknowledgement of the fact that all learning is placed in a social context has multiple implications in planning teaching and learning sequences. The paper provided a perspective on the way in which the BA Norwegian programme in Cluj-Napoca focuses on developing students' linguistic, communicative and cultural competences. Reference is also made to the Norwegian educational system and the way in which this one tackles the perspective of multicultural learning in a multicultural classroom.

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Theoretical Coordinates of the Literary-Artistic Education Methodology

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Abstract

The authors define the methodology of forming the reader of literature during the school period in the context of the literary-artistic education at the school discipline of *Romanian Language and Literature*. There are also mentioned the constitutive values of the term *methodology of the LAE*. The practical aspect of the research represents the detailed structuring of the components of the LAE methodology, namely: principles, the system *methods-procedures / techniques-forms-means*, literary-artistic activities, evaluation forms.

Keywords: artistic-aesthetic knowledge; literary-artistic education; reading pupil; principles of LAE; methodology of LAE; literary-reading activities.

Zusammenfasung

Die Autoren definieren die Methodik der Entwicklung des Lesers der Literatur innerhalb des Schulstudiums im Bereich der literarischen und artistischen Bildung im Rahmen des schulischen Fachs für Rumänische Sprache und Literatur. Der Begriff Methodik der LAB wird auch berücksichtigt. Der empirische Aspekt der Forschung bezieht sich auf die gründlichen Strukturierung der methodologischen Elemente der LAB und nämlich: Prinzipien, das System Methoden-Verfahren / Techniken-Formen-Mittel, literarische Leseaktivitäten, Evaluierungsformen.

Schlusselwörter: artistisches ästhetisches Wissen; literarische artistische Bildung; Schüler-Leser; Prinzipien der LAB; Methodik der LAB; literarische Leseaktivitäten.

Theoretical Coordinates of the Literary-Artistic Education Methodology

1. Introduction

The conceptualization of knowledge or human activity represents the establishment of the basic knowledge of the concerned domain/activity. Once established these become the peculiarities of the terms which define them. We set forth, therefore, to establish or, if necessary, to work out the basic knowledge of the Methodology of the literary artistic education (MLAE) – ideas, concepts, principles, theories, patterns, models, definitions, which would reveal the essence of the praxeological domain of LAE. The definitions of the basic knowledge treated in this research represent the terminology of the LAE methodology and once established/determined-structured the terminology of LAE, this can be defined as a distinct domain in education.

1.1. Epistemic and theoretical premises of MLAE conceptualization

Education, including the training, represents a field of human activity and knowledge which form and develop the human being.

Genetically determined the two simultaneously live in two forms of existence – physical, determined materialistically, and metaphysical, developed continuously by the spiritual activity, the human being becomes by means of direct or indirect involvement in a complex and complicated process of education, an entire world. A modern research of any matter of education reveals, therefore, a holistic approach of its phenomena. The outlining of the epistemic aspects of LAE methodology is influenced and fostered by a complex of major factors, like:

- globalization and Europeanization, as processes which unify the world, not only economically, politically and socially, but also educationally; these two processes represent manifestations of the law of universal connection, which means the knowledge about the unity of the world;

- the establishment at the global, European and national level of educational concept focused on the educated person, on information and communication, which takes place by creating, partially or totally, on reality in the Arts;

- the epistemic reconsideration of the school subjects and of the domains and types of education in relation to types of human knowledge;

- the advantage of the principle of freedom in education to the level of educational ideals in modern times;

- the general reform of education and the establishment of training upon the concept of curriculum;

- more personalized approaches in the educational practice concerning the methodological individualization and diversification of the educational process, which depends on the principle of reality created in the field of the Arts;

- the establishment and implementation of the artistic-aesthetic theory, of the literary artistic education, of the musical education theory, of the concepts and principles of the artistic-plastic education, etc.

The theory of the artistic-aesthetic education (The School in Moscow, the Ideas and Concepts of the Romanians G. Vaideanu – 37: 1970, P. Cornea – 3: 1998, C. Parfene – 25: 1997), founded in the 80s

of the 20th century, has influenced the establishment of the literary artistic education. This transforms the reader into the second subject creator of the literary work, and the work - into the object of knowledge recreated in the process of being received by the *reading pupil*.

The LAE (N.A. Kusaev and his colaborators., 17: 1978; Vl. Paslaru, 28: 2013; C. Schiopu, 33: 2009; M. Marin, 21: 2013; L.Tarlapan, 34: 2012 et. al.) has been founded simultaneously with the re-conceptualization of the school subject Romanian Language and Literature: the removal of the non-specific approaches of the subject (communistic de-ideology), the reconstruction of the new identity of the subject, of the pupils and of the teachers by focusing on the principles of art, literature and artistic-aesthetic education.

1.2. Practical premises

The educational practice relies on the epistemology of LAE concerning the way in which the relations between the literary work and the reader. The pupil has the role of the object of the educational practice – instead of that of the second subject of education and of the subject receptor-creator of the literary work, and the literature has the role of learning material. M. Heidegger defined Literature as 'the place where the truth appears'. (7: 1982)

There can be noticed a dangerous tendency of massive usage of nonspecific methods-procedures/techniques for the artistic knowledge and LAE, which erodes the school subject from its inner side, the professional vision and the developing quality of the reader. The results of PISA 2009 Plus, for example, states that the ability of reading of the Moldavian pupils at the age of 15 is the lowest in the region. (32: 2013)

It must be considered that a possible *methodology of LAE* must appear from the specific artistic-aesthetic knowledge, that must be seen by the teacher as a theoretically applying complex, whose epistemic, teleological components and contents must be in harmony within a system of actions of educational influence specific to literature, to the reception and the development of the reading pupil.

2. The Terms of the ALE Methodology

2.1. The general epistemic context

Goethe has defined the *method* as a path towards the truth. However, the majority of the teachers consider the method only as a way of teaching-learning-evaluating, which is not wrong, but insufficient. It must be mentioned that, on a large scale, the method as the path towards the truth is not only a way of teaching-learning, but a way of human knowledge, given by the relation subject-object of knowledge.

Literature or the literary work, as an object of knowledge, both at the level of creation and of reception, presents an act of subjective creation, therefore, the truth in the artistic literary knowledge is created-recreated in a subjective-objective way by both the subjects of the creation, the writer and the receptor. In the scientific comprehension the object of knowledge exists in an objective way, the action of knowledge being an objective-subjective one.

Hereafter, the methodology of teaching-reception/learning of literature in school must be based on epistemical, theoretical and praxeological points of view on principles of artistic-aesthetic knowledge, but in a balanced interaction with the principles of scientific and empirical knowledge, in which the principles of the artistic knowledge will prevail.

The principles of the artistic comprehension show some specific methods-procedures/techniques-forms-means that will also interact in a balanced way with methods-procedures

applicable within other specific and general disciplines, courses.

2.2. *The coordinates of the LAE methodology*

Methodology is a process of teaching-learning-evaluating, structured in its components by the first subject of education for the purpose of carrying out the activity within a learning unit with its own unity, established spatiotemporarily, teleologically and contently – the lesson/an extra-class/school activity, with the purpose of achieving concrete educational goals – the values formed to the second subject of education. The hierarchal components of a methodology are structured in the formula:

Methods > procedures/ techniques > forms > means

Associated to the general definition of the methodology, the ALE methodology presents a specific process of teaching-reception/learning-evaluation, consisted of methods-procedures/techniques-forms-means related to the artistic comprehension of the teacher of literature for the carrying out of the literary-reading activity of the pupils at the lessons/extra-class activities with the purpose of forming the personality of the reader.

The LAE methodology is based on the following coordinates:
- *epistemic* – ideas, concepts, principles, theories, paradigm (aesthetic, literary, psychological and pedagogical) concerning the theory and the *ALE methodology*;
- *theoretical*: the organization of the *ALE methodology* of the discipline *Romanian Language and Literature* as a definite component, together with teleology and contents, which is textually represented at the projective phase by the *Curriculum of the RLL*.
- *praxeological*: teaching literature/ ALE teachers, the experiences of literary-reading activities of the pupils, the praxiological discourse recommended by the scientific researches.

In its turn, the systematization and structuring of the epistemic, theoretical and praxeological processes of the ALE is represented:
a) on the *epistemic* coordinate:
given by Aristotel's poetics (mimesis and catharsis) (1: 1965); Platon's aesthetic concept (the unity of the beauty and the usefulness, focused on the human and social ideal) (29: 1986, 1993, 1999); Kant's philosophical system (art is the double existence of the human being, the metaphysical, over-sensible) (13); the theory of the possible worlds of Leibniz (19: 1994); the philosophical concept of psyche of the literary work – reception of art by St. Lupascu (20: 1982); the philosophical concept about the origin (meaning) of the literary work M. Heidegger (7: 1982); F. Schiller's definition of the artistic and aesthetic education as domains of human comprehension (31: 2009);
b) on the *theoretical* coordinate:
by the structuralistic theory: Tz. Todorov (35:1972), the formal Russian school (B. Tomasevski – 36: 1973, R. Jakobson – 10: 1983, V. Jirmunski – 12:1983); the idea of the schematical construction of the literary work (R. Ingarden – 8:1978); the theory of the aesthetic goal of literature (G. Lanson – 18: 1974, J. Mukarovsky -23: 1974); the theory of the literary work understanding (W. Iser – 9: 2006, H.R. Jauss - 11: 1983, U. Eco – 6:1996, C.Radu – 30: 1989 , T. Vianu – 38: 1968); the literary work as text (U. Eco – 6: 1996, Iu. Kristeva -14: 1980, R. Barthes – 2: 1994); the semiotics of reading (U. Eco -6: 1996, Iu. Kristeva -14: 1980); the principles of literary communication (M. Corti – 4: 1981); the theory of reading (W. Iser -9: 2006, P. Cornea – 3: 1998, R.Barthes -2: 1994); the literary hermeneutics (A. Martino – 22: 1987); the theory of the literary artistic education (N. A. Kusaev and the collaborators. -17: 1978, Vl. Paslaru - 28: 2001, 2013);

c) on the *praxeological* coordinate, by

the levels of literary developments of the pupils (Vl. Paslaru - 28: 2001, 2013); the concept of structure of the literary-reading activity of the pupils (G.N. Kudina -15: 1978, A. A. Melik-Pasaev, Z.N. Novleanskaia – 16:1988; the structuring of the ALE methodologies in accordance with the type of comprehension and didactic-educative activity (Vl. Paslaru - 28: 2001, 2013); the concept of literary reading activity of the pupils as a component of the ALE methodology (Vl. Paslaru - 28: 2001, 2013); the principles of the literary-reading activity of the primary school pupils (M. Marin – 21: 2013, L. Tarlapan – 34: 2012); the concepts of forming the literary-reading competence of the pupils (C. Parfene -25: 1997, A. Panfil -24: 2004, M. Paslaru -28: 2013).

2.3. The scope and objectives of the MALE

The conceptualization of the ALE methodology is based, as the theory of the ALE, which is it's component, on the level of teleology, contents and technology, supported epistemologically.

In relation with teleology, MALE is conditioned by a) the system ideal-goal-objective of the ALE and b) by the ALE outcomes.

The A System (*ideal-goal-objectives of LAE*) imposes to the MALE a particular concept, structure and progress.

The B System (*the ALE outcomes: literary reading competences – peculiarities of the reader – literary reading behaviour – abilities, aptitudes and literary reading opinions*) – from didactic aspect of view, it represents a product of literary teaching-learning process – i.e, of applying the MALE.

Due to the fact that A- system is the activity of forming and developing of a reader, identified as *cognition*, the B system consists, first of all, in relation with the principles and peculiarities of the literary perception (the sphere of techniques) and then with those of the ALE contents, established through the cooperation of the artistic, aesthetic, theoretic, psychological, pedagogical coordinates, these representing a pedagogical unity (28: 2013).

The system of objectives of MALE must represent the structuring of such an activity of teaching-cognition/learning-evaluation within a particular didactic unity (lesson), which would provoke the adequacy of the structure of the reading activity performed by the pupils on the plot of the literary work (defining principle of ALE, formulated by N. A. Kusaev – 17: 1978). These will identify the reader:

- continuous learning of *expressive reading* of the literary works, their commenting-interpreting,
- *mastering* the literary, aesthetic and reading *tools*,
- learning and elaborating *specific types of literary texts* on literary works
- and manifesting *attitude* towards the literary works, thus manifesting himself/ herself also as the second subject creator of the literary work.

At the strategic level, the goal of MALE will develop the relations: author-literary work, pupil-literary work, the author of the literary work – pupil; the objects of cognition: literature, literary science, the goals of reading; the axiology of the recepient; the tools of knowledge: theoretical-artistic, communicative-linguistic, the methodology of teaching-percepting/ learning-evaluating within ALE.

2.4. Principles of MALE

Epistemologically, MALE is founded on systems of principles of the related domains:
a)*principles of education*, recommended by UNESCO and the Council of Europe:
- cooperation and establishment of the trust within the group;
- self-respect and respect towards others;

- tolerance towards different opinions of others;
- taking decisions in a democratic way – accepting responsibilities, finding solutions to interpersonal problems, avoiding the conflicts;
- promoting the cultural pluralism within a diverse society and an interdependent society;
  b) *principles of the literary artistic education*:
- focusing of the ALE on the domain of the artistic beauty;
- structuring of the ALE objectives on the principles of art, education, artistic and cultural education;
- orientation of the ALE towards the self-defining and self-education of the personality on the principles of art;
- interrelation of the semiotic and hermeneutic aspects of ALE;
- training of the fundamental values of the human being within ALE;
- establishing ALE on the basis of laws, receiving phenomena and interpretation of the literary tests, on the formation of the literary-reading competences;
- literary education through values and for values;
- priority of the hermeneutic approach of the studied subjects;
- correlation of the instrumental, communicative, literary and reading systems;
- differentiation of the systems of the students' activity in accordance with: the approached and elaborated text, the communicative situation, the desired competence, the age (30: 1989);

c)*principles of general didactics*: the adequacy of the didactic methodologies to the peculiarities of the educated subject (psychological peculiarities, age peculiarities, the level of development of perception, imagination, artistic thinking); the conscientious and active participation of the students to the activity of perceptive-learning; systematizing and continuing of the activity of receiving-learning; the seriousness and stability of the learning results; the interdependency of the didactic principles (5: 2002).

d) *principles of selection and combination of the components of the ALE methodology* for each educative form and action: correlation of the experiences – with communicative, literary and reading values previously acquired by the pupils; the adequacy to the ALE standards; correlation with the specific aspect of the teaching-learning (scientific, artistic, technological) materials; involvement of the competences, contents and type of evaluation; participation in accordance with the psychological age and the individuality of the pupils; adequacy to the sociolinguistic and cultural-aesthetic environments of the educational unit and of the pupils; correlation with types of communication (utilitarian, cognitive, artistic literary) and with types of speech (common, poetic, scientific); degrees of the educational and literary-communicative/reading processes; the personal-interactive character of the technical process (27: 1997; 28: 2013;

e)*principles of selection/structuring of the ALE contents*: adequacy to the teleology and methodology of ALE; the certified artistic values: the national/universal value of the writer's literary work/creation; the convergence/coherence in promoting the fundamental values of the *humanitas,* of the national values in creating the values of a pupil; the exploitation of the folkloric and national mythological sources by the literary work; the adequacy to the reading interests of the pupils and insurance of the proximate zone of literary development; poetic diversity (thematic, genre, stylistic etc.); rigorous instrumentation of the reading activity of the students; the fulfilment of values: coherence of the *fundamental values* (Truth. Good. Beauty. Justice. Freedom.), of the *specific values* of the artistic work (aesthetic, moral, religious, theoretical), coherence of the *contextual values*; fulfilment and coherence of the system of elements of the poetic speech: form, structure, stylistic figures of speech, versification;

convergence/coherence with the structure of the system of reading activities of the pupils; accessibility or adequacy of the structure of the contents to the linguistic and artistic aesthetic education contents (musical, artistic-plastic education etc.); coherence and continuity in relation with the structure of the national system of education; inter- / transdisciplinarity determined by the universal character of art and by the multicultural education (28: 2013);

f) *principles concerning the privileged, prioritized character of the recepient*: valorisation of the receiving subject; unity-diversity-complementarily subject-object: the image is subject and object simultaneously; intention of the receiving subject, of the influencing factors; fusion of the knowledgeable subject with the object of knowledge; affection as given to the human being (Kant, 13: 1981; St. Lupascu, 20: 1982; M. Heidegger, 7: 1982; J. Mukarovsky, 23: 1974).

g) *principles of literary reception and literary reading competence development* of the students:

• stimulating the hereditary wish to live in the over-sensibility created by the literary work (advancing from immanence into transcendence), realized and maintained through the reading state (28: 2013, p.28), explained by the concept of open literary work (U. Eco – 6: 1996);

• interaction of literature/literary phenomena and of the literary work-reception (Vl. Pâslaru, 26: 1985), converging to the law of universal connection and philosophical concepts of monad and (scholastic) entity: the literary work is like a sufficient universe in itself; which follows to be received-understood-interpreted accordingly (Leibniz, 19: 1994; C. Radu, 30: 1989);

• correlated development to the artistic spheres (of the artistic imaginary) and intellectual (rational) of the reader, of the (logical) artistic thinking and the (logical) rational thinking, the art and science being forms of complementary comprehension, artistic and scientific symbols etc.);

• stimulating the artistic and epistemic curiosity;

• actualization and involvement of the aesthetic and life experiences of the pupils;

• stimulating creative thinking;

• complex operational zing: challenging the reader towards the realization of multiple operations of artistic, scientific and empirical thinking (imagination-association-comparison, analysis-synthesis etc.), which would lead to the elaboration of a unitary artistic picture and of an elevated intimate universe;

• testing the knowledge through life experience and aesthetics: learning literature as self-discovery;

• re-evaluation – establishment of new literary-reading relations between the literary artistic acquisitions.

2.5. *Specific methodology of ALE*

The third domain of MALE, the *technical* one, embodies methods and procedures of teaching-learning-evaluating, learning activities and forms of organization of the pupils' activity. The methods and procedures/techniques of ALE cannot be structured in full coherence with the objectives, on the one hand, and with the learning activities on the other hand because the multi-valence of the objectives claims, most of the times, not only a method, but a combination of methods-procedures/techniques-forms-means, and the learning activities are very many in number (28: 2013).

The system methods-procedures/techniques-forms-means of ALE of the pupils includes:

- hermeneutic methods: expressive/ interpreted/ creative reading; literary interpretation; structural interpretation; thematic interpretation; biographical interpretation; mythological archetypical interpretation;

- active-participative methods: brainstorming; brainstorming with the map of pictures, case

study, simulation of meetings with the characters from the literary work; rights and responsibilities; role play; *What will you do? How will you act?*;

    - methods and procedures of developing creative abilities of the pupils: the verbal picture; the calqued text; the migrating idea, screening of the literary work; the interview; the reportage; the exercise of reconstituting/re-establishment of some text elements;

    - methods and procedures of developing critical thinking: problematized question with multiple variants of answers; the situation of moral option; the imaginative experiment; literary debate; heuristic conversation;

    - games: the migrating idea; the game of the figures of speech; the game of the phrases; combinations; Academy Hall; *Enlarge, reduce!* The Auction of Ideas;

    - algorithmic methods and procedures/techniques: algorithmization, exercise (identification, of comparison);

    - procedures/techniques of evaluation: written evaluations (literary interpretation, essay); the test for marks; observing and appreciating; questioning (Vl. Paslaru, 28: 2013, p. 135-138; C. Schiopu, 33: 2009).

2.5. *Literary reading Activities*

    The methodological component which marks the focus of the modern education on the person of the one educated, and in ALE – the quality of the pupil as the second subject creator of the literary work, is the literary-reading activity of the reader. As for comparison, it is reminded that in the traditional education (informative-reproductive) methodology was considered an exclusive field of the teacher's activity.

    The literary reading activities, as part of the ALE methodology, are structured in four related domains of ALE: *listening, speaking, reading, writing understanding*, called integrative habits in case they have become educational goals – characteristics of pupil's personality (27) and in accordance with the theories, principles, systems of objectives of ALE and MALE, with the standards of the literary receptive reading. Within the category of literary reading activities specific to the field *understanding upon listening and speaking*, MLAE includes the following *types of exercises*:

-identifying upon listening to the literary texts; -identifying upon listening to the structural elements of the artistic text; -identifying the system of images in an artistic text, of the versification elements; of determining the literary genre and types; -analyzing the information in a narrative/dramatic text, -reproduction of some situations, happenings.

    The filed *Reading* includes the following *activities*:

-text reading; -memorizing and recitation of the text; -expressive reading of the text; -roles reading of the narrative/dramatic text; -activities of interrogative and analytical reading; -interpretation of expressive potential of different unities of artistic speech; -activities of decoding the meanings of the images/image of the literary work; -activities of application of the algorithms of characterization; - activities of interpretation of literary works of different genres, -types and aesthetic value; -activities of creative development of the literary works.

    The field *Writing* consists of such activities as:

-writing narrative, descriptive, reflexive texts; -exercises of structuring the text on the basis of particular algorithms, exercises of styling and editing the produced text; -exercises of self-assessment and evaluation of the produced texts.

2.5. *Criteria of evaluation*

The three levels of receptivity serve as general criteria of assessment of the school success:

- the affective-reproductive reception;
- the intellectual-appreciative or the analytical-intellectual level;
- the synthetic-aesthetic or creative level (38: 1968).

The MALE model includes the specific criteria of evaluation of the literary artistic education of the pupils, structured on:

- the field of competence evaluated: the pre-reading stage, while-reading stage, the post-reading stage;
- activities of evaluation and forms of evaluating: qualifier, mark, assessment.

3. Conclusion

The ALE methodology consists of theories and principles, according to which a reader is recognized as the second subject creator of the literary work, and the literary work – as a value in itself. The methodologies of ALE are structured on literary hermeneutics, on psychological processes (perception, imagination, creative/critical thinking), on activities of reception-learning, on forms of organization

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Curriculum design for a training program in multigrade instruction

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Abstract

Multigrade schooling is a social reality in developing countries, and also an educational policy to enhance equal opportunities for children. According to various studies, multigrade teaching is an efficient alternative for conventional class organization, with multiple benefits for students. Generally, teacher training is limited in the degree to which it can prepare teachers for multigrade instruction. Starting from a recent initiative regarding teacher training in Romania, this paper sustains a realistic expectation for new curriculum writing, as a preliminary component of training program. This investigation, based on Need Analysis, reveals some teachers' objectives and expectations, as well as motivational factors in order to participate at the training program. Other aspects, such as interest for a specific theme or instructional strategies were included in curriculum offer.

Keywords: multigrade instruction; curriculum design; instructional strategies; classroom management.

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Zusammenfasung

Mehrbereichslehr Schule ist eine gesellschaftliche Realität in den Entwicklungsländern, sowie auch eine Bildungspolitik, um gleiche Chancen der Kinder zu versichern. Gemaess verschiedenen Fachstudien ist Mehrbereichslehr eine effiziente Alternative zur herkömmlichen Klassenorganisation, mit mehrfachen Nutzen für die Studierenden. Die Lehrerausbildung wird in dem Maße beschränkt, auf die sie können Lehrer für Mehrbereichs - Anweisung vorzubereiten. Ausgehend von einer aktuellen Initiative für Lehrerausbildung in Rumänien, die vorstehende These uenterstuezt eine realistische Erwartung für einen neuen Lehrplan, als vorläufige Bestandteil der Ausbildung. Diese Untersuchung, gegruendet auf Need Analysis, stellt vor die Ziele einigen Lehrern, sowie die Erwartungen und die Motivationsfaktoren, um beim ein Ausbildung Programm beteiligen zu koennen. Andere Aspekte, wie beispielsweise die Interessen für ein bestimmtes Thema oder Unterrichtsstrategie wurden im Curriculum Angebot enthalten.

Schlüsselworte: Mehrbereichslehr; Lehrplänen; Unterrichtsstrategien; Klassen - Management

Curriculum design for a training program in multigrade instruction

1. Introduction

Multigrade schools occupy a distinctive place in the history of education. Usually, multigrade instruction is offered to a limited group size in primary school, a teacher for each grade being impractical and inefficient. Suitable pedagogical training and resources are both critical for successful multigrade teaching. One teacher needs to manage two or more classes all together and be in charge with their instruction (Birch & Lally, 1995; Hargreaves, 2001). Although it is a global phenomenon, the social context is different from country to country. It is generally known that multigrade instruction is present in developing countries.

In our country, this type of instruction is encountered in small schools, in rarely populated areas, especially in rural areas, with a hard access because of geographical/economical limits. In Romania, teacher training is certainly limited in the degree to which it can prepare teachers for multigrade teaching experience. Besides, an unsecure context opens new challenges that influence teachers` opinion to perceive a reduced value of multigrade instruction due the inadequate official support. Many multigrade schools are poorly resourced; and the attitudes and behaviors of teachers, parents and pupils towards multigrade teaching are frequently unconstructive.

It is commonly confirmed in educational studies that multigrade teaching is more complex than single grade teaching, but no disadvantageous. Despite of this, there is a reserved attention provided to this issue in curriculum design policies; there is no official administrative support for multigrade teachers. As a result of need analysis (NA), a proposal for a future training program was planned and provided in order to fulfill various teachers` interests for multigrade instruction (related to curriculum, strategies and classroom management).

The present research has the aim to identify the most important characteristics of an efficient training in teachers` opinions. In order to generate the most optimal training practices/provide useful instructional resources to aid beginners and experienced teachers, curriculum experts creates a new curriculum proposal for multigrade instruction. The course was accredited by the National Council for Teacher Education (CNFP) and was proposed to the teachers as a program called *Instruction Management in Multigrade Instruction.*

2. Literature review

2.1 Studies on multigrade instruction. Brief selection

In an article written by S. Veenman, "Cognitive and non-cognitive effects of multigrade and multiage classes", 56 relevant studies from Canada, USA and Europe have been analyzed, based on evidence provided by experimental data. Summary of findings provides different opinions: 1. There are no differences between multigrade and single classes with regard to the performance of pupils; Multigrade classes are superior in terms of socialization inside/between classes, if we consider the multi-age

composition; and MI has negative effects on students, an issue caused by different issues of students (low investment in education, poor families origins) and teachers (unqualified teachers, poorly trained, beginners). See the examples below:

- Miller (1990) and Hargreaves (2001) show that students, because of time limits, develop metacognitive and self-assessment skills;

- Teachers in Finland, where there is a tradition of collaborative practices, older students usually help others (Petrila, 1978);

- In the US, there is a little difference between classes' competences and performances.

- Moreover, students has a positive attitude towards school, compared to their peers from single classes (Miller, 1989);

- The most extensive research has been conducted on Escuela Nueva program in Columbia (Rojas Castillo, 1998); an early assessment of this program revealed some positive effects of multigrade instruction on self-esteem and civic behavior of pupils (Colbert, Chiappe, and Arboleda 1993);

- Gender studies (Berry, 2001; Kutnick, 1997) reveals that multigrade instruction provides a successful experience especially for boys with low performances;

- Other studies reinforce the strengths of heterogeneous age composition, in terms of changing experience and motivation;

- Peer-learning is a valuable instructional approach in multigrade instruction (Veenman, 1995);

- According to Miller (1991) multigrade classes develops a familial unique climate, based on mutual support.

2.2. Studies on teacher training

Veenman, Lem, and Roelofs (1989) describe a research-based development program for Dutch teachers which contain *instructional time, effective methods of instruction, classroom management and organization, autonomous learning strategies, and school climate and leadership.* The interest for *instructional time* reveals the importance of time schedule and techniques use.

Findings of other research, which described various aspects of two-grade teaching in USA (OERI, 1990), mentioned 102 strategies that teachers established being effective in multigrade instruction. These strategies were split into the following categories, listed in order of occurrence in teacher's answers: *classroom management, time management, grouping, parent interaction, and socialization*.

In an older revision, Phillips et al. (1995) formulate 125 teachers` needs, after hundred interviews and observations in multigrade classes. A final conclusion showed that, teachers' needs or requests were not different from single-grade teaching.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Description of the investigated population

The research group is formed by 150 respondents, primary school teachers, from a professional database of Ministry of Education. 71% of respondents are shown to be positioned in rural areas. Other available supporting data are related to the experience of teachers – the majority, over 10 years (95%) and gender - predominantly female (99, 5%).

3.2. Need analysis objectives

A purpose of this study is to highlight the following salient aspects:

1. Identify learning objectives in a multigrade teaching centered program;
2. Reveal the most important teachers needs;
3. Find effective practices in the specific context of training;
4. Discover challenges/opportunities encountered by teachers when teaching in multigrade classes.

3.3. NA methodology

Training Needs Analysis (TNA) is a method of identifying psycho-pedagogical characteristics of a structured learning group, used to generate further methodological training options.
The present analysis has, however, certain limitations related to the applicability or qualitative interpretation of the provided data. These errors are common to any analytical approach based on survey, be it scientific research, evaluative research, impact study or, in this case*, a diagnosis of training needs*. This research report may provide effective information that can be integrated into educational practices for several categories of beneficiaries or stakeholders: teachers, curriculum experts, trainers, TOT.

3.4. Interpretation of collected data

The relevance of traditional teacher education (fig.1) for multigrade schooling is extremely low – 1%. Teachers consider that it takes a substantial effort to apply learning principles in the context of multigrade instruction. We therefore conclude that the training content should have a significant potential for further adaptability.
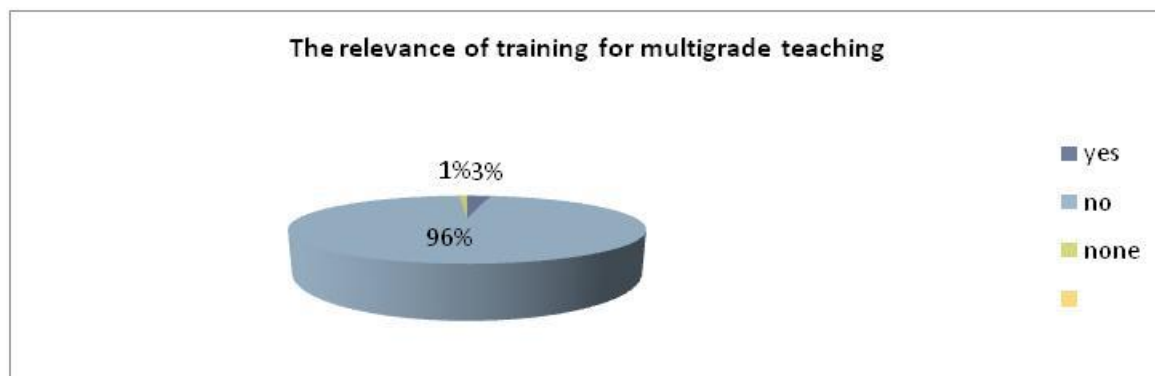
Fig. 1. The relevance of traditional training for multigrade teaching

Most respondents are agreeing with those statements supporting the most important values of a training course: *practicality of pedagogical content, and the adaptability to teacher's profile.* They are, in fact, current requirements of competence-based curriculum design, marking a clear distinction of focus on content or objectives based pedagogy. This kind of perspectives has produced major errors in educational practices. Present research suggests an approximation of existing skills in the profile of the trainees*: well prepared, with practical experience and motivated for innovative teaching and management strategies.* Referring to a new training program proposal, 58% of respondents agreed that the provided information should have a *pragmatic purpose in* relation with their teaching needs.
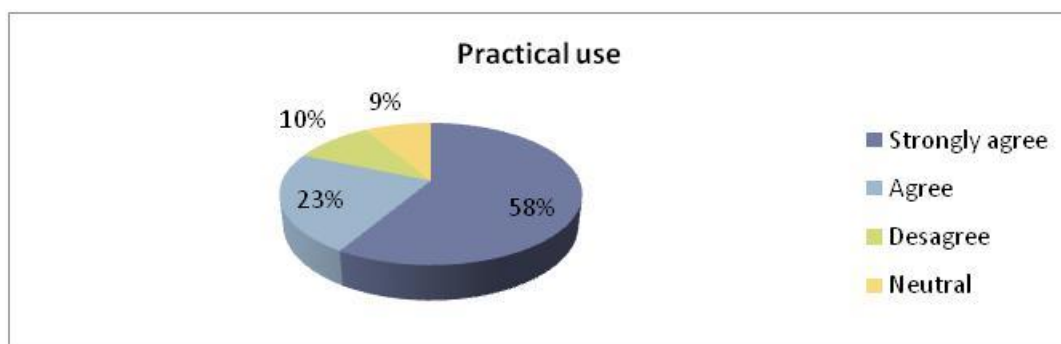
Figure 2. Characteristics of training curriculum

With regard to *the desired degree of novelty of* information, 41% and 34% of respondents considered this aspect being an important curriculum attributes (Figure 2). During the present research, teachers mentioned that preparation for multigrade classrooms was significantly important. The most frequently mentioned need was related to the *classroom organization* issues. This was followed by developing skills in curriculum development (*unit planning*), *individualizing instruction* and *resources and materials.*

In curriculum development, an essential aspect is the reflexivity of teachers regarding professional goals. Next expectations, with a similar quantification (about 25 %) have a cumulative effect on professional aim: development of social and management competence; optimizing instructional design skills; stimulating creativity and problem solving capacity; developing skills transfer and application of knowledge in practice; applying interactive teaching methods.

From these statistics, it appears the necessity affirmed by teachers *to optimize teaching practices through interactive applications.* A small percentage (6%), considers cognitive competence (scientific knowledge) being dominant. A high percentage (81%) considers that an evident expectation is associated with the *management classroom.* The central conclusion reinforces the idea that teacher competence is inefficient without specific management skills.

Training needs analysis indicates a profile of existing skills in the manifest behavior of teachers. In this manner, we can estimate some integrative ways of developing existing skills (psycho-pedagogical, scientific and digital skills). All teachers are interested in *active learning methodologies*, especially in the multigrade setting. Usually, organizing students in small groups dominates. Figure 3 shows the percentage of respondents whose opinion is according to the importance of *grouping strategies.*

Ability grouping, cooperative learning, cross-grade and peer tutoring were identified as essential strategies in multigrade classes.
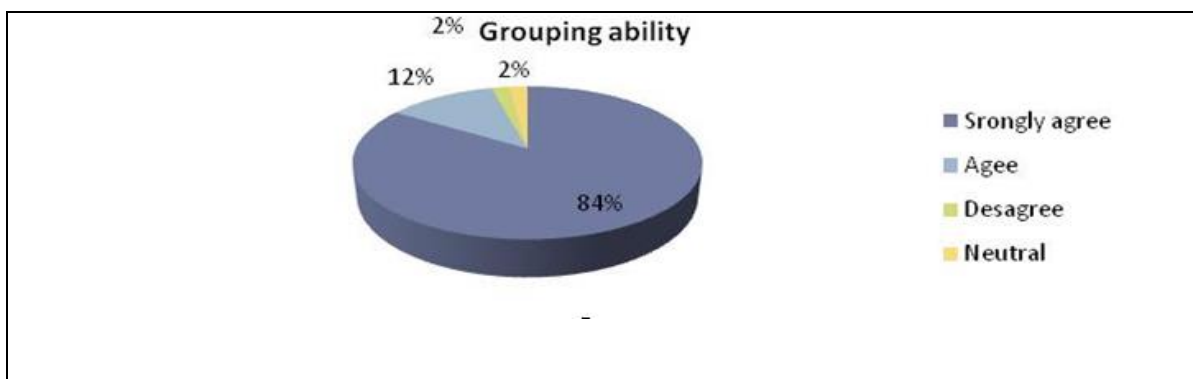
Fig. 3. Grouping abilities as a learning need

Respondents classified on a given scale, from 1 (strongly agree on training need) to 5 (disagreement regarding their training need), the following needs, hierarchically: *developing teaching design skills (lesson plans); creating an open attitude towards multigrade instruction; optimizing evaluative abilities and assessment tools; interpreting official curriculum as a personalized approach.*

A specific number of factors, mentioned in acknowledged research literature, can positively influence teachers' intrinsic motivation for programs dedicated to multigrade teaching. Among motivational sources identified by participants, 89 % from teachers mentioned that a reason is about *a real support for student's success* and an obvious *need for self development* (Figure 4). Another motivational factor is represented by teachers' wish to participate in the aims and goals of the entire school, as an organizing space for professional life, an aspect generally sustained by the principle of collaborative culture in schools. Here is how graphically presented respondents option for one of the training needs/objectives:

Fig. 4. Motivational factors

Teacher training activities are time-consuming; in conclusion, there is a lack of time for preparing especially for multigrade instruction situations. The lack of available funding for participation in such activities is prohibitive.

A frequently mentioned negative factor is the l*ack of educational resources (82 %)*, in order to support innovative teaching process. Internet access difficulty also generates vulnerabilities in managing activities, especially those developed with ICT support. This is an issue cited by 66% (strongly agree) of

the surveyed teachers.

In our N.A. research, teachers consulted a proposal for a future course centered on multigrade education, in order to use this needs in curriculum writing.
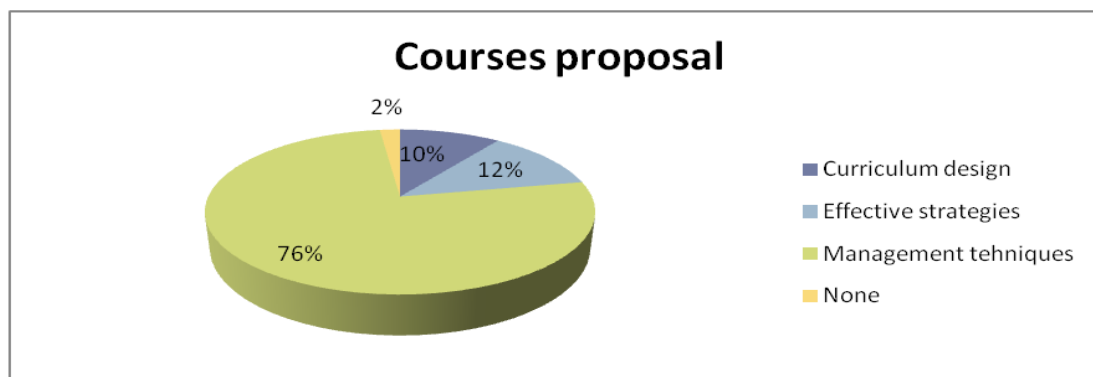

Fig.5. Curriculum selection

In a multigrade classroom, curriculum becomes a formal reference in applying differentiated scenarios of learning activities. Educational experts have designed a curriculum plan for teachers that will be offered in training program, as we see in the attached table:

Table 1. Curriculum proposal for a training program

Curricular approaches	Effective strategies	Management techniques
I. Difficulties and/ or opportunities of M.I. 1. Other educational experiences 2. The impact of M.I. Illustrative studies 3. Implications on teacher training II.1. Curricular adaptations 2. Instructional design of lessons 3. Differentiated instruction. 4. Teaching scenarios	III. Effective training practices 1. Age level characteristics 2. Active learning strategies a. Learning Project b. Learning problem c. Cooperative Learning. 3. Instructional strategies. Support for autonomy in learning experiences IV. Assessment Strategies: peer assessment, auto-evaluation, formative testing.	V. Management techniques in multigrade classes 1. Creating an efficient learning environment 2. Motivation. Principles and motivation techniques VI. Educational style and intervention strategies 1. Deviance in classroom 2. Efficient management strategies in multigrade classroom

Conclusion

Romanian teachers have a considerable experience generated by participation in many alternative training programs. Conventional format of continuous teacher training is considered conservative and unrealistic. Curriculum, in teachers' opinion, is unchanged for several years. In designing and implementing teacher education programs, we should consider new ways for preparing teachers to

manage a vast students' diversity characteristic in dramatic contexts, including outsized and undersized classes, especially in rural areas or in disadvantaged social groups.

A good education quality is able to guarantee the enormous, cognitive and social potential of multigrade instruction. Teacher is the main reference of learning quality in classroom. If such a high degree of accountability is to be given to teachers, it is important to be trained in a professional manner.

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Particularities of computer and internet use in educational process at university students: implications for social development

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Abstract

Along with the identification of the positive effects, associated with the introduction of interactive media in the vast majority of human activities, the role of computer started to vary. Using the computer (interactive media) within the educational process, has had a positive effect. The purpose of this study is to show how the computer/the internet change, optimize or inhibit the educational process and analyze some aspects of those implications for social development of students. Utilising the online interview method, used on a sample of 53 students, - college participants, aged 18-26, followed by a qualitative research, - derived from the emergent theory - the present essay aims to analyse, through a methodological approach, with a qualitative intercession, the implications of internet and computer use on the main aspects of the social development of the young people.

Key words: students, social development, educational process, communication, online environment, computer, young people, school preparation

Zusammenfasung

Zusammen mit der Identifikation der positiven Effekte verbunden mit der Einführung interaktiver Medien in der überwiegenden Mehrheit der menschlichen Aktivitäten, die Rolle der Computer begann zu variieren. Mit der Anwendung von Computer (interaktive Medien) in den Bildungsprozess, es ist bekannt, einen positiven Effekt im Laufe der Zeit zu bringen.

Das Ziel dieser Studie es ist, zu zeigen, wie der Computer / das Internet Wechsel den Bildungsprozess optimiert oder hemmt, und analysiert einige Aspekte dieser Auswirkungen auf die soziale Entwicklung der Schüler. Unter Verwendung der Online-Interview-Methode auf einer Stichprobe von 53 Studenten, Hochschule-Teilnehmer im Alter von 18 bis 26 nach einer qualitativen Forschung, in Zusammenhang mit der emergent Theorie - Die vorliegende Untersuchung beschreibt, durch eine methodische Ansatz mit einer qualitativen Vermittlung zielt darauf ab, die Auswertung der Internet und Computer Nutzung über die wichtigsten Aspekte der sozialen Entwicklung der Jugendlichen zu analysieren.

Schlüsselworte: Studenten, gesellschaftliche Entwicklung, Bildungsprozess, Kommunikation, Online-Umfeld, Computer, Jugendliche, Schulvorbereitung.

Particularities of computer and internet use in educational process at university students: implications for social development

1. Introductory features & statistics

School preparation is an inherent part of social development of the young students, it represents a prerequisite for a desirable development and a foundation for the future professional development. Along with the identification of the positive effects, associated with the introduction of interactive media, in the vast majority of human activities, the role of computer started to vary. Using the computer (interactive media) within the educational process, has had a positive effect. The way the young people perceive the computer and internet in the school preparation process, indicates largely the coordinates of the readjustment of school learning requirements, brought by the new technology.

Both national statistics and international ones agree that teenagers and young people are the target population using computers and internet on increasingly high scale (Shield & Kane, 2011, Regan & Steeves, 2010, IRES, 2011, File & Ryan, 2014, ONS 2013). According to the statistical data we can see an increasing bias within the flow of time. As the related statistic shows, the age group, ranging from 16 to 24, is the one that is increasingly accessing the internet.
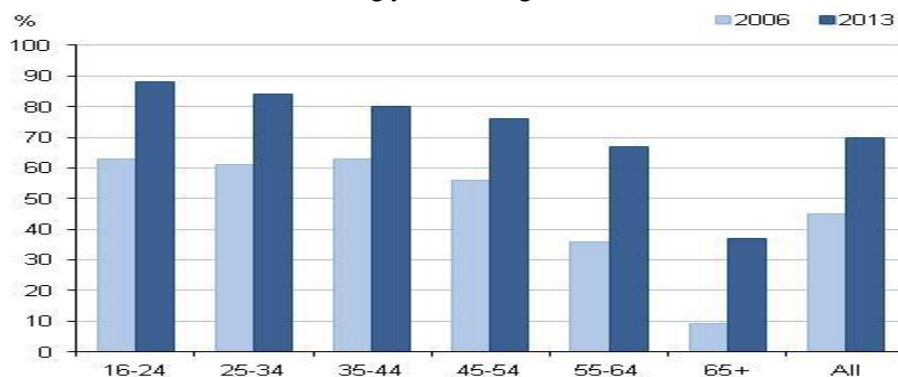

Figure 1. Computer/Internet use on age group in 2006 and 2013 (ONS 2013, p. 3)

National statistics indicate similar data regarding the increased frequency of internet use, year by year. The age group that inclines to use the computer on increasingly higher scale is between 21- 30 years. Based on these statistical evidence, we will analyze the role of the computer/internet and the way it pointes towards a different environment, and how it brings changes in the social development of the youth. Is it clear that the impact of using the new technologies reflects upon the whole process of

development of the youth.

    As a segment of social development the academic preparation is an important step in the development of the young adult. The computer/internet use throughout the educational process is a necessity and a real support for both students and teachers. (Coakes & Willis, 2002; Jones et al., 2008; Allen & Seman, 2005; Lenhart et al., 2010).

        The main functions of using the internet /computer in the educational process are found both in the skills that students acquire and the level of teaching (Balakrishnan, 2010; Charp, 2000; George et al. 2006).The findings of the current study are consistent with other researches in the field. Studies have shown the main functions of the computer/internet use, in preparing for school (for teenagers and students). Internet is an inexhaustible information source, internet means also communication without barriers, and it can provide interactive online learning, not only that but online research done by electronic means, newsfeed, enhancing interest in education, it promotes a holistic education, it provides various teaching and learning methods (Lenhart et al., 2010; Khanchali & Zidat, 2011).

        Altogether with the benefits associated with using the internet/computer in the educational process we have identified a number of negative factors that can create real barriers in training school students. The use of new technologies in the academic writing process creates ambiguity between the formation and the development of different writing styles (formal and informal) so that students are unsure whether, using formal or informal writing (we can recall difficulties in writing official or scientific works) (Purcell, Buchanan & Friedrich, 2013). Another problem faced by students, due to the use of digital resources, in writing scientific works is plagiarism or avoiding the rules of writing standard works but also problems with spelling and/or grammar (ibidem). Like these aspects confirmed by international research, the current study identified that the disposal of traditional teaching (books, handwriting, etc.) can have negative effects both in the quality of school education (superficial knowledge) and psychological social level (low self-confidence and little social interactions). Implementing the academic requirements with computer, reorganized the learning process of students and sometimes leads to the use of computer for other purposes, for a long period.

2. Methodology elements, sampling and research design

        As main methods of empirical research we used semi-structured/structured online interview and online observation (Williams, 2007). For the analysis and the interpretation of data we chose the theoretical foundation together with emerging theory linked with the qualitative computer software analysis Atlas.ti 7 (Glasser & Strauss, 1967 and Smith, 2002). Atlas.ti7 is a software specialized in the analysis of qualitative data, used by researchers in the Social Sciences field. In this research, the use of a qualitative analysis software (Atlas.ti) helped me in the process of interpreting and processing data (by simplifying the process of coding responses, a better data management/ordering, more easily identifying the content categories, rendering a conceptual diagram which concisely outlines the research results, see Figure 2). I used selective coding, which made possible the analysis through the demo version of the program, available at the website http://atlasti.com/.

        Utilising the online interview method, used on a sample of 53 students, - college participants, aged 18-26, followed by a qualitative research - derived from the emergent theory - the present essay aims to analyse, through a methodological approach, with a qualitative intercession, the implications of internet and computer use on the main aspects of the social development of the young people
        The data was interpreted and processed by computer-aided qualitative package - Atlas.ti7. Using qualitative research methods enhanced by the computer / internet has started to become the concern of

contemporary researchers, facilitating their knowledge faster and more efficiently. In this study we choose to use only the e-mail to enable participants to argue, justify or clarify answers, already formulated and submitted online, through the website of research (http://www.proiectcercetare.co nf / cercetare.php). The online page was created specifically for the purpose of this research. The cumulated data allowed the creation of a database which automatically recorded the participants' answers to the interview questions (which has significantly streamlined the process of data gathering).

Sampling Method: The research sample consisted of 53 participants with ages between 18-26 years, B.A. or M.A. students of UBB. Sampling was one of convenience, depending on the acceptance and willingness of the students to respond to the questions. The process of data gathering was based on the set up of a research web page to facilitate the interaction between researcher and subject (http://www.proiectcercetare.co.nf/index.php). The website research was shared on Yahoo or Facebook`s groups of students of Babeş-Bolyai University. The students were encouraged to provide elaborated answers which were rewarded with personal development books.

In this context, the actual purpose of the research was to analyze how the use of computer / internet influence academic preparation and social development at college students. The main objectives were considered: emphasizing the benefits of computer/Internet use in academic preparation by college students; exploring the negative effects of using computer/internet in educational process at college students; identifying the implications arising from the social development of students occurred against the background of internet usage in the educational process.

The research questions from which we began the study were:

- What are the benefits computer / Internet use in the educational process, by college students?
- What are the negative effects computer / Internet use in the educational process at college students?
- What are the implications of computer / internet use in the educational process of students' social development?

3. Interpretation and analysis of data

One of the main purposes of computer use at students, is the fact that it is a educational instrument. The young adults associate the computer with their academic life, they perceive it as cognitive instrument, a real support in school tasks, a means of information about the assignments, or important news from their aria and also a way to keep in touch with classmates / teachers, and means to get real support throughout the educational process:,,... computer / laptop has an important place in my life because it includes the main documents that I need in college and some programs that facilitate my work etc'' (188.1). The students recall a series of benefits they enjoyed due to the fact that the new technology facilitate their work. The participants look on the computer/internet as an environment in which they can grow and develop, they often found in it a resource that minimizes costs in terms of time, communication and information. In this direction the computer is seen as an enriching resource of information: "computer ...helps me…to be always informed; I can find any information in real time and fast'' (167).

The role of the computer in school preparation is perceived differently by the participants according to their educational level, displaying an important increase as the level of education is higher: "The computer is a *sine qua non* object as the Latin says - without you can not be – in nowadays, especially if you are a student. You must be always in touch with your colleagues, you must be informed or you must find useful information about your exams" (255,1).

The positive effects of introducing computerised means into the learning sphere, as they are perceived by the students, can be found in: the particularities of class management (professor-student interaction and restructuring the educational process), teaching means and strategies (academic resources/ online resources), the improvement in learning process - by increasing the access to documentation and information regarding scientific content, facilitating information - regarding the organization of educational approach and the school results dispersal.

At the level of class management, students recall the importance of computer and internet use in interaction with educational actors (professor- student, student- professor) and the media resources which supports the entire educational process. The online communication between professors and students, or simply among the students is perceived by participants like a growing mechanism providing information regarding educational activities and thus, as a resource of improvement in the quality of teaching: "The internet and the computer are helping me a lot. I can watch quite a few studies on projects that I am working on, I can contact professors or my smart colleagues, I can surf for pages, I can order books...."(154,4). If the college students prefer face to face communication with their closest friends, online communications is preferred in the case of faculty colleagues when trying to find information about the educational tasks: "I mainly talk online with my faculty colleagues strictly regarding seminars or courses/ I prefer to speak face to face with my closest friends"(241,2). The improvement in technology of education in the teaching strategies is seen from the perspective of educational actors as a key to efficient learning (the access to scholar documents in electronic format reduces the material and time costs: the internet facilitates access to various information in no time) : "...the internet is much more practical nowadays in schools. We - the students, are fascinated by the computer because it helps us in finding much more quicker the information we need" (222,4). The use of computerised programs (Office suite or other educational/scholar expert software) are seen by the students as a support resource in their academic preparation. Often computerised work is seen as an compulsory academic requirement: "The majority of projects we work on require Microsoft Office. Lately I used Microsoft Word and Power Point in doing homework, presentations, so I was saying, the computer is almost compulsory" (107,4). Facilitating the information regarding the organization of teaching staff and the school results is carried out with both virtual interactions between the main educational actors (professors- student, student-professor) and also through new computer software (academic platforms, web pages) which allow students the access to information: finding out the time schedule, information regarding school results, scientific conferences or any other relevant issues regarding students life: "In preparing for school I use the computer for documentation, for reading specialized articles, for reading books, to find out the schedule or other relevant information regarding courses"(141,4).

Although most participants mentioned especially positive effects of computer use on school education, the content analysis of all empirical data captured is raising some concerns by involving technological resources in teaching (felted more strongly in the learning part). The circulation of electronic information in the educational endeavour, often leads young students to choose online teaching materials. The quality of information from different websites which students are accessing is frequently not scientifically valid, which leads to inefficient learning and, as such, it is building up inefficient structures of information. Participants that have a rather holistic approach to computer and internet use in their academic life remind the fact that they are getting rid of the traditional educational methods (books,

handwriting, etc.) these could have negative effects both in the quality of school education (shallow knowledge), as well as the psycho-social level (diminishing confidence in its own strength and poor social interactions): "I believe that for some, the computer had a positive impact... but unfortunately, the computer was a negative influence on some students, because spending large amounts of time in front of it, playing or just doing stuff, they did not do anything other then just wasting time, or taking a step back in their learning process, because the internet provided them with finite information and they only had to copy and then paste without knowing what was written in those documents, papers"(200,4).

4. **Conclusions:**

School preparation alongside professional, social integration, maintaining and developing relationships with various actor sets the bases for social development of young people. The interference, which academic life brings to youth development, influences the whole course of the development of a future adult. The improvement in technology of education and the increased implication of media resources in this process, can determine the young people to substitute the exacerbated importance of computer to other aspects of day-by-day life (See Figure 2:). On this line, promoting a technological culture in schools, or educational institutions, in which the teenager or young person operates, can induce an increased importance of technological means in other aspects of life trajectory of the young adult (communication, relations development, etc). In this direction, it is very important that the educational actors responsible for the policies and the educational curriculum, are being made aware of the effects of using the internet/ computer in designing the educational process. The role of teachers is to support the student into maximizing the positive effects of computer use, and to mitigate the disturbances associated with the use of computers in the teaching process.
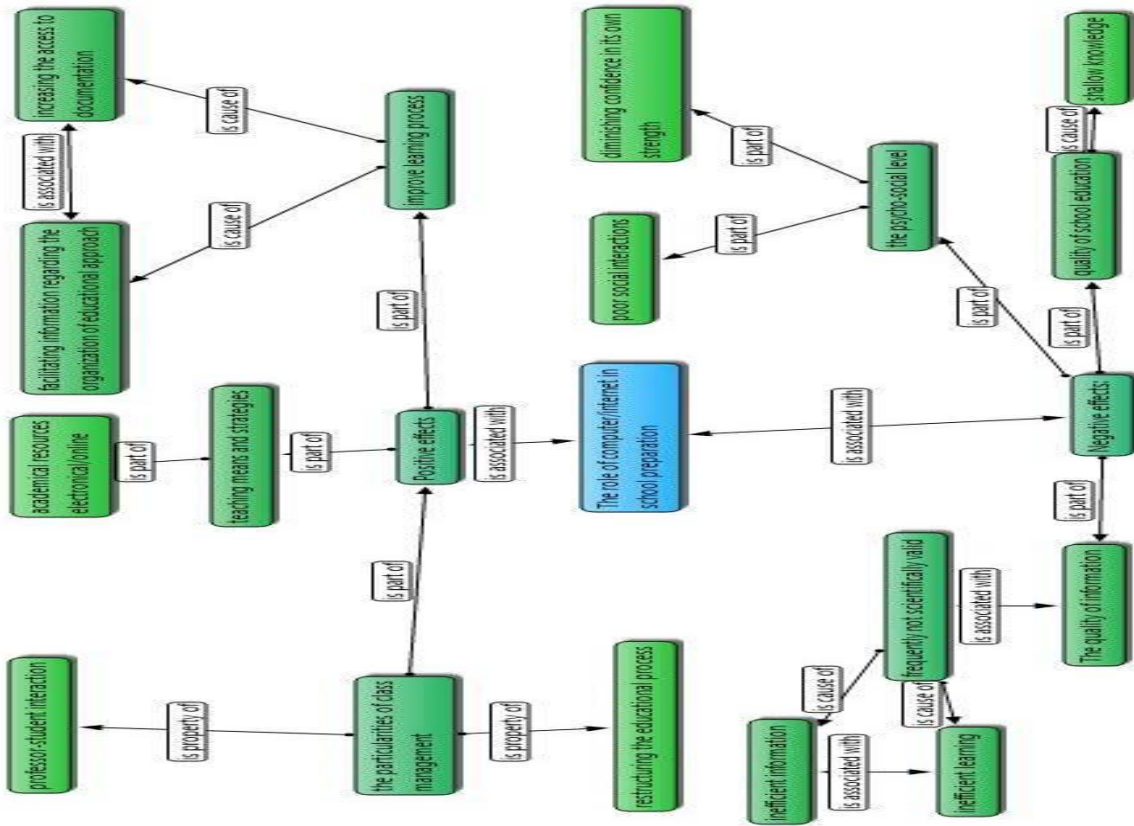
Figure 2: Concepts Diagram in Atlas.ti7

The conceptual diagram (Figure 2) highlights the role of computer and internet use in the school education process of young students. In order to capture the importance given to these technological resources in the school development of young students, the main concepts resulted by computer analysis for this content category were interrelated with several types of connections (is part of, is caused by, is associated with…)

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Verbal creativity as a doctor's competence and its formation in medical students

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Abstract

The article deals with the methods of teaching English for medical students aimed on the development of their professional ethic qualities and verbal creativity as an important component of their communicative competence. A doctor's verbal creativity is viewed as the ability to choose the proper communicative strategy in the process of communication with a patient. The authors describe business games used in the process of teaching medical students English. The stage of reflection follows these games for the development of the students' skills of self-evaluation. Creative methods of teaching are proved to be the most effective means for achieving this aim.

Keywords: doctor's professional communication; professional ethics; verbal creativity; reflective and creative approach.

Zusammenfasung

In diesem dem Artikel geht es um die Unterrichtsmethoden der englischen Sprache für die Medizinstudenten. Diese Methoden sind auf die Entwicklung der Fähigkeiten ihrer beruflichen Ethik und der verbalen Kreativität als der wichtige Komponent ihrer kommunikativen Kompetenz gezielt. Verbale Kreativität des Arztes wird als die Fähigkeit betrachtet, eine gehörige kommunikative Strategie im Prozess der Kommunikation mit dem Patienten zu wählen. Der Autoren beschreiben die in der Ausbildung der Medizinstudenten in der englischen Sprache benutzen Lernspiele. Diese Spiele haben eine Phase der Reflexion für die Entwicklung der Fähigkeiten der Selbsteinschätzung bei den Studierenden. Es ist bewiesen, dass kreative Unterrichtsmethoden die effektivsten für die Erreichung des gestellten Ziels sind.

Schlüsselworte: professionelle Kommunikation des Arztes, Ethik, verbale Kreativität, reflektierend und kreativ Ansatz

Verbal creativity as a doctor's competence and its formation in medical students

One of the most important problems of teaching Russian medical students is working out the methods of modeling the certain aspects of the future professional activity. It is known that except intellectual potential a specialist in medicine should possess high moral qualities, which are displayed in attentive, careful and polite communication with a patient. The more a future doctor's communicative competence is developed, the more successful his professional activity will be.

Along with clinical and humanitarian academic subjects, foreign language can be one of the means of development the students' preparedness to creative self-realization in their future professional activity. Teaching English (in Russia this subject is compulsory) at a medical university is characterized by its context way, it means that in the process of studying English the students get to know the peculiar features of a doctor's activity. Complex interdisciplinary knowledge, skills and abilities are in the basis of forming the competence of solving professional and communicative tasks in conditions of communication in a foreign language.

Reflective and creative approach worked out by us is aimed on such competences as professional, social and cultural, research and creative ones. Professional competence includes the ability to use medical (professionally oriented) vocabulary in a conversation, to read the texts in medicine in English and to compose them. Social and cultural competence presupposes not only the knowledge of the culture of English speaking countries and other countries of the world, but also the culture and ethics of a doctor's communication with the patients and their relatives, nurses, colleagues, etc. Research competence is developed during the students' activity in the Students' Scientific Society at the Department of Foreign Languages. The students carry out the research work the issues of which are about the verbal and ethic aspects of a doctor's profession. Creative competence is formed during taking part in the innovative academic activity at the classes in English as well as during extracurricular activity (e.g. didactic dramas).

At the initial stage of studying English when professional medical vocabulary is introduced to the students reproductive methods are used. In order to start moral and ethic education at this stage a textbook 'English for Medical Students: Getting to Know Your Profession' is used at the classes. In this textbook medical students read not only the texts of scientific articles but also the extracts from the books describing a doctor's professional activity (including professional communication), for example, *Doctor in the House* by Richard Gordon, *Hotel* by Arthur Hailey, *Woman Surgeon* by Else La Roe (Razdorskaya, 2008). In order to develop the skills of auditing the first year medical students watch the movies about the doctors such as *Doctor T.& the Women, House M.D.* After watching them the teacher motivates the students to start the discussing the behavior and the manner of speech of the doctors shown in the movies.

We have worked out various imitation and business games aimed not only at the development of language skills but also ethic qualities including polite communication with a patient. A future doctor should take into account the fact that each patient suffering from a certain disease or the one who came for a prophylactic examination is not simply a 'case', moreover not a 'sick organ'; thus the doctor should be able to establish mutual understanding with each patient. Verbal creativity is also formed in the process of

taking part in these games. Being an important component of a communicative competence, verbal creativity presupposes not only the knowledge of professional vocabulary, but also the ability to use the proper words in a certain situation; in our case it means the right choice of words while a doctor's communication with different people (patients, colleagues, etc.).

For example, taking part in the game 'Problem Patient' a student performing the role of a physician communicates with a patient who is not sure in the doctor's competence, his methods of treatment and the choice of the medicines. According to the script, a patient speaks with the physician in a rude manner and a loud voice. The task of the student performing the role of the doctor is to avoid the conflict, to eliminate the patient's stress, to turn the conversation with the patient into a polite and friendly one.

A doctor's professional communication includes a doctor's dealing with his colleagues and the authorities of a hospital. That is why we have worked out the business game 'Conversation with the Un-expected Visitors'. The students taking part in this game choose the following roles:

• the chief doctor of a certain hospital;

• the doctor who would like to leave his working place because of a certain reason (such as an illness of his relative);

• the journalist from a medical journal;

• the doctor from abroad who has come to Russia as a tourist and would like to know about the activity of a hospital in Russia, healthcare system, etc.;

• a student who has come to have practice at this hospital;

• the Dean of the medical faculty who would like to invite the chief doctor to the medical university to tell the students of his work as it may serve as a good motivation for the students;

• the patient who is displeased with the manners of the doctor who has treated him and wants to complain of this doctor's unethical behavior.

According to the script, the chief doctor will have an important meeting in 30 minutes, the visitors above mentioned come to him unexpectedly. The task of the chief doctor is to listen to each visitor and to make managerial decision being time limited and taking into account ethic and deontological norms. The students performing the roles of the visitors get the short descriptions of their roles with the short vocabularies. They can display their verbal creativity while inventing certain manners of speech and behavior of the characters performed by them

The game is followed by the stage of reflection helping the students to evaluate themselves as the future specialists, to analyze the possible behavior in the situations connected with the future professional activity and to master the skills of a doctor's professional ethics. Medical students not only improve their foreign language and communicative competence, but also form the motivation to the adequate behavior in the real situations. The main advantage of the games and the other innovative forms of teaching English is their influence on the formation and development of the need in creative self-reflection and self-realization as it stimulates the ability to personal and professional reflection.

Finally, we would like to quote the interview of Alexander Martyntsov, a surgeon from Moscow: 'When a patient comes to the doctor for help and hopes to get it, he waits not only for good attitude and

moral consolation, but also for active, highly qualified and professional treatment. That is why a real doctor should heal both a body and a soul together. In my opinion, professionalism includes all the aspects of a doctor's art: the ability to deal with the patients, to find mutual understanding with them, to calm them down and to cheer them up...' (Vinogradova, 2007). Thus, in conclusion we would like to stress the important role of all the academic subjects under study, including English for the many-sided formation of an ethic doctor's personality.

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Impact of the Level of Learning Motivation on Primary School Students' Academic Achievements. Parents' Perspective Analysis

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Abstract

Motivation for learning must be a priority for every educational system, because we constantly need to implement new strategies of improving the quality of the educational process. In this conditions, the aim of this article is to identify the motivational factors involved in learning activities related with parents' perception, in order to build up strategies to increase students' learning performance.

In order to provide a comprehensive image on learning motivation as perceived by parents involved in the research, we established several strands of action that will provide a basis for the investigation of the phenomenon that is specific to the educational environment. In this respect, a series of aspects have been designated, as follows:

- the identification of factual reasons triggering students' learning motivation, from parents' perspective;
- the highlighting of basic characteristics of the educational environment built within the family;
- strategies identified by parents relating to the increasing of learning motivation in students;
- the level of homework done for the next school day, as perceived by parents;
- the importance given by students' parents to motivated learning.

Keywords: motivation; motivational strategies; learning environment; school performance; motivated involvement

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Zusammenfasung

Motivation zum Lernen muss eine Priorität für jedes Bildungssystem, denn wir müssen ständig neue Strategien umsetzen in der Verbesserung der Qualität des Bildungssystems. In dieser Bedingungen, das Ziel dieses Artikels ist es, zu identifizieren, die motivationale Faktoren beim Lernen Aktivitäten im Zusammenhang mit den Eltern die Wahrnehmung, um Strategien zur Erhöhung der Studenten lernen Leistung. Um ein umfassendes Bild über das Lernen Motivation als wahrgenommen durch die Eltern, die in der Forschung, haben wir mehrere Aktionsbereiche, dienen als Grundlage für die Untersuchung des Phänomens, die sich spezifisch auf die pädagogischen Umfeld. Eine Reihe von Aspekten benannt wurden, wie folgt: Hervorhebung der grundlegenden Eigenschaften des pädagogischen Umfeld integriert in der Familie; strategien identifiziert durch die Eltern in bezug auf die Steigerung der Lernmotivation bei Schülerinnen, das Niveau der Hausaufgaben fertig für den nächsten Schultag, als durch die Eltern; die Bedeutung von Studierenden Eltern motiviert zu lernen.

Schlüsselworte: Motivation; Motivationsstrategien; Lernumgebung; Schulleistungen; motiviertes Engagement.

Impact of the Level of Learning Motivation on Primary School Students' Academic Achievements. Parents' Perspective Analysis

Introduction

Our research was mainly aimed at identifying the perception of parents of primary school students on the relationship between the level of motivation in their children and their educational achievement. We consider that by addressing the education phenomenon not only from teachers and students' perspectives, as entities involved directly and on a daily basis in the process of teaching and learning, but also from parents' points of view, since they are secondarily involved in coordinating and supporting their children's extracurricular learning activities, we will have a more coherent portrait of the student as a whole. We think this is a more useful approach than the usual routine that only grasps a partial prospect of the student, being exclusively based on observing the student in the school environment.

Major resource coordinates

The parents' focus group comprised 200 parents of primary school students. Meetings were held each semester during joint teacher-parents activities, conducted as lectures delivered to parents for each class separately. In order to provide a comprehensive image on learning motivation as perceived by parents involved in the research, we established several strands of action that will provide a basis for the investigation of the phenomenon that is specific to the educational environment. In this respect, a series of aspects have been designated, as follows:

- the impact of learning motivation on students' school achievements, according to their parents' perception as well;
- the identification of factual reasons triggering students' learning motivation, from parents' perspective;
- the highlighting of basic characteristics of the educational environment built within the family;
- strategies identified by parents relating to the increasing of learning motivation in students;
- the level of homework done for the next school day, as perceived by parents;
- the importance given by students' parents to motivated learning.

The questionnaire designed to be filled in by parents was developed in relation to the preliminary discussions held with parents during the first meetings we attended. The questionnaire contains four subsections: the way a parent relates to the learning activity their child is involved in, information regarding the time spent by the parent(s) in supporting their children with preparing homework and other school activities, identifying the ways and means children spend their leisure-time (outside school environment), or the level of motivation shown by students in relation to school-oriented learning activity.

Presentation and interpretation of the results

Knowing the fact that the educational process cannot exist outside the influence of motivation (Pintrich, Schrauben, 1992; Pintrich, 2003), or of teacher-student-parent inseparable triad, we aim at identifying the parents' attitudes and manners of relating to the school achievements of their children, but most of all, to the motivational component involved in this process. The results and potential strands of action to be taken are presented further bellow.

Parents were asked about their perception of the relationship between academic success and thorough learning. Thus, it appears that parents are aware of the major implications constant academic effort has when it comes to the learning effort their children put in throughout the entire schooling period. Constant positive attitude towards learning provides consistency to the defining elements of the teaching and learning process, while parents' support is vital in such situations, and is moreover emphasized when students of young age need support and stimulation in making intellectual acquisitions and many other achievements.

Regarding the meaning of the term *thorough learning*, parents believe that their children's sustained effort in view of their personal development through participation in educational activities provide a strong basis for academic success. They noted that given the specific structure and peculiarities of the educational environment, a constant positive attitude and willingness to learn are required in order to be able to correctly relate to school and the learning process as a whole.

Item 2 directly connects two other terms that are commonly used in the teaching and learning environment: a high level of knowledge is strongly related to a high level of professional achievement. Thus we discover that most parents are aware of the role school and education have as the main way of ensuring success in a future profession.

Table 1. Parents' attitude with regard to the relationship between the high level of knowledge and professional success

Response scale	Percentage
strongly agree	80 %
partially agree	9 %
neither agree, nor disagree	4 %
partially disagree	3 %
strongly disagree	4 %

A favourable attitude in general and the awareness of the impact students' momentary actions can have on their future professional evolution and development is a big step forward in shaping constant positive attitudes towards learning (Pintrich, DeGroot, 1990). Since parents play the role of adults as a position of authority over the children, the teaching staff should always maintain contact with the former, in order to establish priorities and strands of action according to of children's age and level of development. By introducing the third item in the questionnaire, we intended to acquire some information on the parents' perception with regard to students' basic activities. We could easily notice that *total agreement* is a variant chosen by most of the parents in the focus group investigated in this regard. This aspect implies multiple benefits from a teaching and pedagogical perspective, since on the one hand, it provides the student the support they need in carrying out their work, and on the other hand, points out to the need for a constant effort, when we are referring to patterns of behaviour in every student's life.

Through the introducing of item 4, we found that most parents are partially satisfied with the academic performance of their children. This attitude may be rooted in parents' constant willingness and inclination to instil a sense of challenging their children's own limits, in the underestimating of their real capacities, but also in parents' erroneous perception and misinterpretation of performances put in by school-age children. As a result, the scheduling of pertinent discussions is required within the lectures delivered to parents, with regard to the existence of clear criteria to evaluate school performance in primary school students.

Item 5 is designed as a filter question aiming at differentiating between two groups of parents: those who engage in complementary educational activities with their children and those who do not engage in such activities. This differentiation is important precisely because it helps us identify the need of additional support, but also the manner in which parents understand to provide it. Thus, we discovered that 62% of parents answered they engage in such activities with their children, while the rest do not consider these activities important, they do not have enough time to put them into practice or they simply cannot find an appropriate way to do so. By identifying the so-called deficient areas in the strategies used by parents, we intend to investigate further aspects concerning the time spent by students, along with parents, in learning activities. We will be able, therefore, to make valuable judgments and appropriate assessments on the quality of time spent by parents with their children and also, we will be able to propose a series of strands of action in this respect.

When allocating learning time into hourly time slots, we noticed that most parents spend up to 5 hours every week engaging in school-type activities along with their children, being followed by those spending 6 to 10 hours per week involved in this type of activities. With the increasing number of hours allocated to school-activities, the number of parents who meet the criteria decreases, leading down to minimal percentages. We can thus conclude that within our lectures to parents, a comprehensive approach on appropriate techniques to effectively manage time, as well as on the proper functioning of the parent-child relationship within learning activities would be welcome.

Table 2. Number of hours per week spent by parents in learning activities with their children

Number of hours/week	Percentage
< 1 hour	5 %
1-2 hours	25 %
3-4 hours	18 %
5-6 hours	20 %
7-8 hours	7 %
9-10 hours	11
>10 hours	14 %

The data we gathered allowed us to observe that most of the time spent by children outside of school is devoted to studying and doing homework, but also to leisure activities. Other activities are ranked in descending order, according to their importance and frequency. Among these activities we can mention herein computer work/play, household chores, watching TV, sports activities, engaging in activities with friends, resting, etc.

Table 3. Activities students commonly engage in the afternoon, ranked according to importance
and frequency

Activities students commonly engage in	Rank
doing homework	I
leisure	II
computer (games)	III
sports	IV
watching TV	V
reading	VI
household chores	VII
resting	VIII
artistic and cultural activities	IX

Among these activities, we must specify that studying, doing homework and preparing for the next school day, overall, but also playing, recreational and sports activities are the most appropriate for the age group primary school students participating in the survey fall within. Nonetheless, these activities should alternate so that students be able to use their spare time for both preparatory activities and recreation.

The next item in the questionnaire is intended to identify the source of satisfaction concerning motivated activity and the pleasure children find in doing certain tasks. This item asks parents to identify their children's favourite activities. Thus, from the analysis of answers provided by students who participated in the survey, we discovered that the overwhelming majority of parents are aware of at least one favourite activity of their children which is consistent with their perspective on options of spending leisure time. This item emphasizes a context of great interest to us, as an occasion of tapping into these activities to reward students' positive behaviour and to use children's favourite activities to convey new or more difficult information.

The activities undertaken on children's own initiative have the highest rate of success since there is intrinsic and stable motivation that drives them. In this regard, item 7 is designed to investigate parents' perception of the level of students' involvement in studying, homework and other school-related tasks.

*Table 4. Parents' perception of the degree of their children's involvement in school tasks,
on their own initiative*

Doing homework/school tasks on their own initiative	Percentage
never	22,6%
sometimes	49,2%
all the time	28,2%

The results recorded show that from parents' perspective, more than half of the students involved in the survey have a positive approach to studying, homework and other school-related tasks, most engaging in such activities on their own initiative. The other category of respondents who opted for *never* as an answer to this question is, fortunately, underrepresented, since few parents stated that their children do schoolwork on their own initiative. Item 8 of the questionnaire falls within the same context of

studying and doing schoolwork. Parents are asked to provide an open response as to the reasons determining their children to engage in learning activities. Parents' answers can be included in a large range of reasons, as follows:

- the need to prepare for future careers;
- the desire to get higher marks;
- awareness of the need to acquire knowledge and to learn, as essential activities;
- the need to maintain their position in their class hierarchy;
- fear of repercussions;
- preference for certain subject matters.

With this particular item we can observe a strong presence of extrinsic motivational elements, to the detriment of intrinsic reasons, aspect that we believe needs further clarification. The hierarchy of motives based on these triggering factors helped us identify the fact that the extrinsic motivational elements outweigh the intrinsic, prompting teachers to try to ensure a higher consistency of intrinsic motivation in the educational process, in order for them to gradually replace extrinsic reasons, according to age peculiarities and developmental potential of primary school students.

Knowing the reasons that contribute to the lack of motivation in students from their parents' perspective is equally interesting to us as knowing which situations or circumstances generate and strengthen motivation in the context of students' performing school tasks. Table 5 illustrates a few of the most important sources of demotivation for primary school children.

Table 5. Inventory of demotivating situations from parents' perspective

Inventory of demotivating situations in learning	Rank
high volume of tasks	I
fatigue	II
lack of an appropriate study area	III
computer games	IV
watching TV	V
playing with friends	VI
previous failure at school	VII
lack of parental authority	VIII
incomprehensible contents	IX

Such an inventory is absolutely necessary because it identifies the disturbing aspects to an effective learning and teaching process. Knowing the starting point in developing an ameliorative approach can be viewed as the measure of the process of implementation of a program of motivational enhancement in primary school students. We mentioned above that one of the methods of identifying learning motivation in primary school students is the manner and degree of involvement in doing homework on their own initiative. 36% of parents stated that on numerous occasions, their children refused to do their homework, while the remaining percentage stated they never experienced their children's refusal before. Table 6 illustrates in detail the determining reasons for the emergence of student's refusal to do school tasks.

Table 6. Inventory of reasons triggering students' refusal to do their homework

Reasons triggering students' refusal to do their homework	Percentage
playing temptation	13%
high volume of tasks	11%
physical discomfort	13%
fatigue	14%
incomprehensible tasks	16%
I do not know	33%

Conclusions

Among the reasons parents identified as having a major role in triggering a desirable or undesirable attitude in their children in relation to their homework and other school tasks, we can observe a series of motivational elements stemming from the student's personality structure, preferences and life experiences, while there are also categories of reasons stemming from the potential influence of teachers over students (Renninger, 2000). The increased volume of schoolwork, as well as the presence of difficult or incomprehensible tasks, can be thwarted by constant attention devoted by teachers to the explaining of learning tasks in a more individualised manner. Consequently, we advocate effective and open discussions that can take place both with students and with their teachers in view of ensuring the best approach to develop a positive attitude towards performing homework and other school tasks(Muste, 2012).

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