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CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY. TEACHERS FOR KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

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(Editors)

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

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CONTENTS

FOREWORD	9
CHAPTER 1 - EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SARS-COV-2 PANDEMIC	11
Concept mapping and emic participatory community-based research with youth in the times of the COVID-19 pandemic	11
Mugur D. Ciumăgeanu, Diana-Luisa Avram, Mihaela Mitescu-Manea, Ioana Alexandra Negru, Leyla Safta-Zecheria, Francisca Hortensia Virag	
Pandemic fake news – overview and possible explanations	17
Elena Claudia Mihai	
Global Acculturation and Covid-19 Effect in Communicaton	25
Victorița Trif	
The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of high school students	31
Monica Turturean	
Researching equity and wellbeing in schools in the time of COVID-19 through youth-led participatory action research. Some methodological observations on useful tools for the emotional development of school-age children	41
Leyla Safta-Zecheria, Diana-Luisa Avram, Mugur D. Ciumăgeanu, Mihaela Mitescu-Manea, Ioana Alexandra Negru, Sebastian Ștefăniță, Francisca Hortensia Virag	
CHAPTER 2 - ICT- BASED SOLUTIONS FOR EDUCATION	47
Early education teachers’ perception about the effectiveness of ICT digital competences	47
Maria Magdalena Stan	
Co-design in teaching - A possible solution for operatinalizing students’ competences	57
Loredana Sofia Tudor, Claudiu Langa, Adriana Nicoleta Lazăr	
Digital addiction on teenagers: implications for their future development	67
Monica Turturean	
CHAPTER 3 - FUNDAMENTAL VALUES TRANSMITTED BY CULTURE, LITERATURE IN LINGUISTICS	75
Gamification: Assessing Students’ Speaking Competences in an Offline Environment	75
Ionuț Căpăneață	

Let's Tell a Story: Engagement and Environment are Keys to (Inter)Cultural Projects	81
Anca Dobrinescu, Ligia Sarivan	
On Ideals: written in stone or calligraphed? – a shot history of calligraphy versus educational ideals	89
Carmen Nistor	
The Zany Sense of Humor of Queen Elizabeth II. A Particular Brand of Royal Visual Humour as Manifest in the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony	99
Marina-Cristiana Rotaru	
Teenagers' religious behavior and the counselling activity, in a transdisciplinary approach	107
Angela Stan, Gabriela – Ligia Popescu	
CHAPTER 4 -EDUCATION AND THE PROBLEMS OF THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD	119
Beyond the Rankings: Solutions to Improve Learning by Analysing PISA Data	119
Florence Mihaela Singer, Ligia Sarivan, Cornelia Novak	
A Study on the Effects of Migration on Middle-School Pupils in Suceava County	129
Elena Bujorean	
Psychosocial predictors of academic maladjustment in Romanian students	135
Ana-Maria Cazan, Maria Magdalena Stan	
Facilitating collaboration between teachers who carry out activities with the student with special educational needs (SEN)	143
Adelina-Cristina Ene (Cheșcă)	
Resilience in the educational field	153
Georgiana Fenic	
Measuring curiosity in the education sciences	159
Dragoș Grigorescu	
Motivational Dynamics and Managerial Communication in School Organizations	171
Corina Iurea	
Resetting Private Kindergarten in Romania	181
Alina Mărgărițoiu, Simona Eftimie	
Psychological Predictors of Shame	193
Andrei-Lucian Marian	
Who is the Romanian educational system failing in mathematics – the low or the high performers?	201
Gabriela Nausica Noveanu, Catalina Lomos, Norman D. Verhelst	

Some methodological observations on useful tools for the emotional development of school-age children. 209

Mihaela Suditu

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Transactional Analysis in Counseling 219

Cristian Vasile

Teacher-centeredness versus student-centeredness. A case study on the effectiveness of the instructional process at academic level 227

Mihaela Badea, Diana Presadă

Ethical implications of youth participation in educational action research in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic 237

Mihaela Mitescu-Manea, Diana-Luisa Avram, Mugur D. Ciumăgeanu, Ioana Alexandra Negru, Leyla Safta-Zecheria, Sebastian Ștefăniță, Francisca Hortensia Virag

Foreword

In the current context in which the educational crisis means both the crisis of school and of the instructional process, it is necessary to create interaction opportunities for people with transdisciplinary interests: psychologists, teachers, practitioners in the field of education, experts in educational policies. In this way, they can share experiences, find solutions and build valuable strategies and directions of action.

We propose below a nuanced analysis of the current issues of the educational environment by means of the papers presented at the International Conference EDUCATION AND PSYCHOLOGY CHALLENGES - TEACHERS FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY - 6TH EDITION (EPC-TKS 2021), held under the coordination of the Department of Educational Sciences , Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiești.

The volume is structured in four sections, each of them dealing with a distinct issue:

- Educational Implications of the SARSCOV-2 Pandemic
- ICT-Based Solutions for Education
- Education for Values in Cultural Studies, Literature and Linguistics
- Education and the Problems of the Contemporary World

We believe that the proposed studies – research, applications, educational projects, theoretical papers – are a starting point for future approaches, shared experiences and educational practices that will be of real help for all the people interested in the educational field.

*Ploiești,
Noiembrie, 2021*

Chapter I

Educational Implications of the SARS-COV-2 Pandemic

Concept mapping and emic participatory community-based research with youth in the times of the Covid-19 pandemic¹

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Abstract: *Youth facing the adversity of the COVID-19 pandemic develop emic narratives regarding well-being and equity in their own community. Our research involves young participants from an economically disadvantaged area in Western Romania, both as research subjects and actants, in order to explore the intersections and tensions between well-being and the experience of equity, that could provide insights and incentives for intervention in the local community. Concept-mapping methodology, combined with participatory research and reflexive journaling, are presented here as possible means to empower young people in addressing the problems of their own community.*

Keywords: *Concept-mapping; Community-based research; Youth participatory research; Emic/etic research; COVID-19 pandemic; Well-being; Equity.*

¹ This paper was elaborated as part of the PESSCA project (Promoting equity and wellbeing in schools in disadvantaged communities through action-research), funded by an action-research grant awarded by the Faculty of Sociology and Psychology of the West University of Timișoara.

Introduction

In Romania, a significant number of schools have remained closed for much of the 2020/21 school year (UNESCO, 2021), increasing the chances of exacerbating structural and systemic educational inequities and of aggravating already problematic dynamics such as early school dropout, affecting mostly students from vulnerable backgrounds. It has also been documented that school closure and other lockdown measures associated with preventing the spread of the SARS-COV 2 virus have potentially been negatively impacting the mental health of children and young people (Thomas & Rogers, 2020). This complex web of challenges, triggering significant negative effects on both individual and collective educational trajectories and dynamics, require careful consideration, sensitive to local circumstances and meanings.

Community-based research (CBR) and *community-based interventions* (CBI) on health and well-being rest on a social change perspective, providing a means to understand and approach complex societal phenomena. In adverse periods (such as the Covid-19 pandemic), they appear more suitable and effective in addressing timely approaches to both understanding and acting towards change, than the more traditionalistic, person-centered health and clinical approaches, do. CBR and CBI focus rather on prevention, competency building, participation, and ecological understanding of the person within its epistemic and social context (Jason & Glenwick, 2016). A social change perspective is essential in a time where the Covid-19 pandemic afflicts the wellbeing of youth, and educational inequity turns out to be a salient topic both on the research and policy agenda (Thomas & Rogers, 2020).

CBR is always at the edge of the emic/etic divide, the researcher being considered an “edge-walker” that enables a new story to be told (Beals, Kidman & Funaki, 2019). When the divide between the researcher and the subject of research is blurred, a new edge is to be drafted, and a new conceptual and actional map is to be drawn. Therefore, tackling the well-being and equity theme in an emic and participatory logic is an acceptable and necessary solution for local communities confronted with adversity of any kind.

Our research gives voice to a group of young people from an economically disadvantaged community in Western Romania to outline in an emic and participatory CBR endeavor the boundaries of both wellbeing and equity constructs during the pandemic period. This investigative journey is part of a larger (action) research project, which involves a series of youth-led participatory action research methods (Ozer, 2017) to identify and analyze challenges relevant to the lives of the participants.

The proposed project will engage seven education and psychology specialists from the West University in Timisoara constituting an action-research team with participant young people from that community. The

activities in the proposed action-research project will be organized in three work packages, between July and December of 2021. The first work package, entitled Active Learning, will capacitate young people for conducting various research activities and community-based actions, promoting wellbeing and educational equity during the second work package, entitled Youth-led action research. In this work package young people will conduct research and community-based actions with support and mentorship from the researchers at the university. Understanding the process of action-research and its impact on the young people conducting it constitutes a research objective carried through the first two work packages and materialized explicitly in a third and final work package. Data analysis, research reports editing and dissemination of findings in the extended academic, educational research, professional and learning communities are specific actions in this final work package, involving both the young and the more experienced researchers from the university.

Research questions & methods

The main questions of our research are about the “purity” of emic constructs and their usability in the community: (RQ 1) Are “well-being” and “equity” different concepts from an insider’s perspective? (RQ 2) What are the significant conceptual spaces where aspiration of equity and well-being overlap in emic conceptualization? (RQ 3) Is youth-empowerment for and through CBR and CBI possible by the means of participatory action?

A preliminary exploration of CBR methodologies led to the identification and adaptation of *conceptmapping* (CM) as a valid participatory solution for tackling the first two research questions and partially also the third. CM is a mixed methods approach that brings together qualitative and quantitative datacollection to produce data-driven visual and conceptual representation of thoughts and ideas of a group (Vaughn & McLinden, 2016). CM is a methodological blend of word-based and code-based approaches to text analysis and is suited for emic research and CBR (Jackson & Trochim, 2002; Vaughn & McLinden, 2016). CM implies sound statistical methods – as multidimensional scaling, cluster analysis and visual graph representations – with qualitative methods as sorting and collaborative naming techniques. CM is especially suited for participative research, being open to transform research participants into research performers.

In a concrete manner, 10 to 12 participants from the local community (named hereafter *community researchers*), will produce, during an open brainstorming session, a series of sentences prompted by simple-phrased prompts (max 3-4 prompts, at least 1 prompt for equity/inequity experiences and at least 1 prompt for well-being issues) as “what does well-being mean for you *and* the community you belong to?”. As a second phase of the CM process, the community researchers will be supported in sorting the sentences (transcribed on

cardboards) by the criteria of similarity and to produce multidimensional scaling matrices. The conceptual data resulted from the brainstorming phase (both on equity experiences and well-being) will be analyzed as a single semantic body, in order to explore the intersections and tensions between the two fields (see RQ2).

The unified research team (university and community researchers) will introduce the data in a statistical software and will jointly analyze the resulting clusters and produce labels that are relevant from a local (emic) perspective for each cluster. After the naming process, the research team will further work on rankings and visual representations of the resulting clusters, and will further refine their understanding by getting feedback from members of the community (peers, teachers, parents etc.) about their relevance and their usefulness for local initiatives.

CM in an emic context (RQ 1) – Are well-being and equity different concepts from an insider’s perspective?

There is a wealth of literature that outlines the concept of well-being, mainly inspired by the bio-psychosocial framework of analysis at the individual level, which focuses on etic features of the construct (for example, see Topp et al, 2014). From the person’s point of view, well-being is seen as a hedonic state (focusing on happiness, pleasure attainment and pain avoidance) or as an eudaimonic state (centered on meaning and self-realization) – Ryan & Deci, 2001. There is little reference, though, in the mainstream literature (heavily psychologized), to a meta-personal perspective of well-being. Such reviews or studies either focus on community and civic engagement of the person to promote or maintain wellbeing (Morrow, 1999), or on the community sense of coherence as catalyst of it (Elfassi et al, 2015). Our research, involving young people as knowledge producers and analysts of their own “local moral world” (in the terms of Arthur Kleinman, 1999), bridges the eudaimonic individual well-being (on one hand) with the community ethos towards equity (on the other hand), interrogating the possibility of a unified concept that can be coined as “well-equity”. We anticipate that such a concept could be drawn through text analyzing and sorting techniques provided by the CM framework.

CM kindling community interventions (RQ 2) - What are the significant conceptual spaces where aspiration of equity and well-being overlap in emic conceptualization?

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a catalyst, and the outcome was a crisp picture of social and educational inequality for the young generation (Soudien, 2020). Participatory CBR and CBI with young people helps us explore how in the time of crises, well-being that cannot be attained through

individual and individualistic means alone, can be experienced through the increased collective awareness of the need for cohesive and meaningful community actions that reduce inequalities and promote social solidarity. Participatory research, using CM techniques, has proven itself useful for bringing up novel perspectives on issues as cultural competences in developing health services, involvement in physical activities, youth development programs, suicide prevention, school and domestic violence etc. (for a review, see Vaughn & McLinden. 2016).

Empowering youth through participative CBR (RQ3) - Is youth-empowerment for and through CBR and CBI possible through participatory action?

As a youth-led participatory action research project, the present project is built on the principle of power sharing, reducing the status-gap between university researchers and adolescents, by promoting both the quality of the latter as experts by experience and as researchers. CM and reflective techniques on the research process, combined with other youth-participatory action research methods, are documenting the journey of “edge-walking” (see Beals, Kidman & Funaki, 2019) not only between the emic/etic divide, but also between the professional/community researcher divide, enriching the reflective experience of all the participants and bringing upon meaningful insights in developing personal and community sense of coherence and a salutogenic model of well-being (for an overview of the process, see Eriksson, 2017).

Concluding remarks

Our project aims to involve young people from a disadvantaged area in Western Romania in breeding knowledge about their own experiences of well-being and equity and in generating ideas about community salutogenesis. Participative CBR (mainly based on CM) can be useful as a tool of “edge-walking” between the emic/etic divide and a collaborative learning instrument for all the parts involved.

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Pandemic fake news – overview and possible explanations

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Abstract: *During the COVID-19 pandemic, the spread of fake news increased so much that one can talk about another simultaneous pandemic – the “information disorder”, called “infodemic” or “infodemia”. As the medical disease affected over 241,886,635 people in one year and a half, the “informational disease” also affected the same amount of people from many cultures.*

In the European Union, Romania is one of countries where the fake news touched the most. Thus, despite the Government’s efforts to provide vaccine for the population, the people refused to vaccinate, using as arguments many of the fake ideas that the disinformation campaigns provided. So, many Romanians died by COVID-19 and, in October 2021, the medical system is affected by a major crisis.

Keywords: *COVID-19 pandemic; fake news; disinformation; misinformation; mal-information; Romania; infodemia.*

Introduction

4,919,755 persons died by COVID-19 until 21st October 2021, as the World Health Organization showed.

After the vaccine was created, many people who had access at it refused the vaccination, due to various false information that they’ve heard or read. Many of them became victims not only of the pandemic, but also of the infodemia.

We can identify two main sources of false information: mass media and social media.

The fake news represented a challenge for everyone around the world in the late years, even before 2020, but its impact became enormous during the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, the amount of this type of information grew exponentially.

Is one of the reasons why the UNESCO created a handbook for journalism education and training, in 2018. This resource can be also used by practicing journalists and others who are interested in the quality of information in circulation. It examines the deployment of “fake news” as a term to discredit journalism, and sets out an alternative framework covering disinformation and misinformation. It refers also at malinformation and emotive propaganda.

Disinformation, misinformation and mal-information

The UNESCO specialists sustained that much of the discourse on “fake news” regards two notions: misinformation and disinformation.

“Disinformation is information that is false, and the person who is disseminating it knows it is false. It is a deliberate, intentional lie, and points to people being actively disinformationed by malicious actors. A third category could be termed mal-information; information, that is based on reality, but used to inflict harm on a person, organization or country” (UNESCO, 2018, p. 44).

Misinformation in the COVID-19 period has centered, at the beginning, around four key themes: food and beverages as “cures”, hygiene practices, medicines, and government responses. “For example, one message from “Japanese doctors” suggested drinking hot water every 15 minutes as the heat would “kill the virus and pass the virus into the stomach”. Garlic, vitamin C, and zinc lozenges have been claimed as cures for Covid-19 due to antimicrobial activity, despite there being no evidence that they have protected people from the new coronavirus” (O’Connor, Murphy, 2020).

The false messages that we have seen claim to have inside information from, for example, a young researcher from Wuhan, a Taiwanese expert, or Dr. Tim in Cork, but no reference is provided to support the alleged source. The tone is often alarmist, implying that if the suggested action is ignored, serious consequences will occur. “Please do this before it’s too late.” The message is intended to trigger panic and fear in the reader. This increases the likelihood that the message will be shared with family and friends (O’Connor, Murphy, 2020).

“At the beginning of the pandemic, the medical community also played a role in making the situation even more confusing by giving, in some cases, inaccurate and sometimes contradictory indications on COVID-19. There have been numerous media debates about who advocated distinct conflicting positions. Two opposite positions could be recognized from the numerous interviews between members of the medical community: on the one hand those who were inclined to spread alarming news and on the other who had optimistic ideas that supported a non-hazardous nature of COVID-19” (Tagliabue, Galassi, Mariani, 2020, p. 1287).

This “flood of information” and the numerous contradictions confused people. As the news appeared so quickly, the public did not have time to understand it correctly.

Tagliabue et al. considered that the massive presence in the mass media of doctors who expressed their opinions, sometimes not supported by scientific

evidence, could be interpreted as a desire to appear rather than the need to provide the correct indications. Also, the alarming tone of some experts has caused in some cases a rush to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) and alcoholic detergents; this fact partially contributed to the lack of PPE in the clinical sector and to a disproportionate increase in the prices of these products (Tagliabue, Galassi, Mariani, 2020).

Some authors underlined the advantages and the disadvantages of social media use in the pandemic period. González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco (2020) mentioned some advances of social media use, like the rapid dissemination of protocols at regional, national, and international levels. Social media platforms have also become helpful for the lay public to maintain communication with friends and family to reduce isolation and boredom which have been associated with anxiety and long-term distress, therefore becoming an important recommendation for isolation at home to help to reduce the psychological impact.

Among the disadvantages of social media use they mentioned the possibility that information transmitted is not current, has not been subjected to peer review, is invalid, incorrect, not applicable to our environment, or even false (González-Padilla, Tortolero-Blanco, 2020).

“In psychologically fragile subjects, an exacerbation of psychiatric pathologies and determined headline stress disorder has been manifested. Initial, and overly optimistic medical statements that judged the epidemic as a simple flu lowered social attention on the COVID-19 pandemic and instilled in some people conspiracy or denial ideas supported by statements by some doctors and non-medical professionals who said: it’s just a flu” (Tagliabue, Galassi, Mariani, 2020, p. 1287).

“Probably the worst face of social media is the potential to disseminate erroneous, alarmist, and exaggerated information that can cause fear, stress, depression, and anxiety in people with or without underlying psychiatric illnesses” (González-Padilla, Tortolero-Blanco, 2020, p. 122).

The incomplete or incorrect news reported by the mass media and then reworked on social networks have also focused attention on possible errors of some hospital structures. In some cases, this will mean that patients will be reluctant to go to hospitals or medical centres in the fear of becoming victims of medical errors or to be at a greater risk of contagion. Healthcare workers, subject to PTSD risk, may have an additional psychological burden as they may suffer lawsuits brought by relatives of victims of COVID19 who will accuse them of not having undertaken for their loved one’s therapies that the mass media described as effective, but which were actually experimental” (Tagliabue, Galassi, Mariani, 2020, p. 1288).

Pandemic fake news in Romania and possible explanations

The fourth wave of the Covid 19 pandemic hit Romania hard, due mainly to the abundance of false information. Recent data show that until 20th of October 2021:

- 43,039 people died in Romania due to this disease.
- There were 1,503,422 confirmed cases.
- 5,714,109 people were immunized - i.e. 29.43% of the population.
- Romanian population is on the second last place in Europe with regards to vaccination rate and in the first place regarding the daily number of deaths.
- The cumulative incidence of cases at country level is over 3 per 1000 inhabitants in the whole country, in most counties being over 6 per thousand.
- In Bucharest, the incidence reached 16.51 per thousand, and in the neighboring county – Ilfov – it exceeded 20 per thousand inhabitants in October 2021.
- The average age of people who got infected is 48 years.
- The age of infected and dying people has greatly decreased. The highest frequency of new cases, by age categories, is: 40-49 (19%), 30-39 (17%), 50-59 years old (17%) (<https://datelazi.ro>; <https://stirioficiala.ro/informatii>)

The number of deaths from COVID 19 in Romania was compared to that of deaths of Romanian people in the First and Second World Wars, exceeding it about 10 times each.

How can this general behavior be explained? Why do Romanians not trust doctors and authorities?

We've identified many fake ideas in the Romanian mass-media products and also in the social media. The amount of truth in these information spreads on a continuum, from the very credible ones, up to the strongly unbelievable ones. In the last category we can include some "information" very similar to a delirium, like: "they put an electronic chip in the vaccine", "Bill Gates wants to kill us", "the body of the vaccinated will transform/ will get animal characteristics, such as scales, horns, ecc".

As the information about the virus cannot be well understood by many people, them not being specialists, many of them were looking for a human or material enemy, such as public figures: Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, George Soros, or even the political or medical authorities: Raed Arafat, a doctor and political figure, head and founder of Mobile Emergency, Resuscitation and Release Service, Klaus Iohannis, the Romanian president, or some unspecified groups, such as occult organizations, evil corporates, or even aliens. The fake news looked like fairy tales, sometimes, but they connected with some personal values, so they became strong beliefs for people who took those for granted.

The most shared fake news in Romania were:

The virus was made to kill all of us;
The virus is a result of a conspiracy;
The lock-down was decided so the people can't see what the government is doing;
The vaccine was made to kill the ones who receive it;
The vaccination is against God's will;
God can save us from the virus, not the vaccine/ or science;
The vaccine causes death or sterility;
The vaccine is expired;
The vaccine contains harmful substances;
The vaccine was created for the Big-Pharma interests.
The results of the Standard Eurobarometer 94 (2021) placed Romania between the most sceptic nations regarding the vaccination.

Starting with some general statements about vaccination, seven in ten Europeans (70%) agree that "a vaccine is the only way to end the pandemic", and this includes 35% who "totally agree". One out of four (25%) disagree with the statement. More than half of respondents (56%) agree that they "do not understand why people are reluctant to get vaccinated", while 41% disagree.

Two statements focus on the safety of Covid-19 vaccines. Just over half of Europeans (52%) agree that "Covid-19 vaccines are being developed, tested and authorised too quickly to be safe", while 42% disagree. Two in three respondents (67%) agree that "Covid-19 vaccines could have long term side-effects that we do not know yet", while 24% disagree.

In every Member State, a majority of respondents agree that "a vaccine is the only way to end the pandemic". Respondents are most likely to agree with this statement in Denmark (89%), Finland (88%), Sweden (86%), Italy (83%) and Ireland (81%).

Respondents are most likely to disagree that a vaccine is the only way to end the pandemic in Cyprus (45%), France (39%), Latvia (38%), Lithuania (35%), and Austria and Slovenia (34% in both).

Analysis of the socio-demographic data shows that older respondents are more likely to agree that "a vaccine is the only way to end the pandemic". Agreement ranges from 76% among respondents aged 55 or over to 62% among those aged 15-24. There are also strong levels of agreement among managers (77%), retired respondents (76%) and those who say they belong to the upper class (75%) or upper middle class (80%) of society.

By contrast, the following groups are least likely to agree with the statement: those who are unemployed (57%), people who have difficulties paying bills most of the time (56%), and those who say they belong to the working class of society (61%).

In Romania, only 65% of responders agreed that a vaccine is the only way to end the pandemic, this country being on the 22th position regarding the level of trust in the vaccine, followed by other 6 states included in the study.

The majority of respondents in every Member State agree that “Covid-19 vaccines could have long term side-effects that we do not know yet”. This view is held most strongly by respondents in Cyprus (84%), Hungary (80%), France, Greece and Latvia (76% in all three countries) and Portugal (75%). Romania is on the 9th place in regard of agreeing with this statement.

Levels of agreement are lowest among respondents aged 55 or over (63%), managers (62%), students (63%), retired respondents (63%) and those who consider themselves as part of the upper class (53%) or upper middle class (56%) of society. Disagreement is highest among respondents in Czechia (48%), Ireland (46%), Belgium (39%), and Denmark and Luxembourg (38% in both).

Some explanations about the Romanian’s behavior can be find in the psychologic “portrait” that the Romanian psychologist, Daniel David, made – called “Psychology of the Romanian people” (2015). In another study of the value profile belonging to various countries, based on World Values Survey, Inglehart and Welzel (2010, in David, 2015), used two axes: traditional values (such as: religion, marriage, national pride, obedience) versus secular (reason, humanism, tolerance, etc.) and survival values (physical and economic safety) versus values of self-expression (emancipatory values related to equal opportunities, autonomy, freedom, etc.). According to this study, Romania appears as a country in the survival phase and in a phase intermediate between traditional and secular values, with an emphasis on traditional ones (e.g. religion, family). Survival values strongly focus on the need for security economic and physical, with an ethnocentrism characterized by a lack of trust. Under the aspect of self-expression, Romania is also at a low level (on the last 12 positions). The Romanian’s profile is that of a generally selfish person, given that 45 of the countries analysed have higher scores at the tendency towards collective action, 40 to generalized trust and 30 to altruism.

Romania has the lowest scores for all indicators of trust: trust in close people (family, neighbours), trust in distant people (strangers), non-specific trust (for example, general trust in people).

Considering these results, the author of the study appreciates that: “Romanians have a collectivist culture, without being an extreme/ strong collectivism. Values like tradition and conformity, which also characterizes a collectivist culture, is formed in Romanian’s mindset due to a (historical) need for security” (David, 2015, pp. 165).

Discussions

The worst effects of fake information spread by mass-media becomes obvious in the pandemic period. A lot of people died because they refused to vaccinate, leading the cognitive biases provoked by fake information.

Romania is one of the most affected countries in the EU, not only by the fourth wave of the pandemic – in the autumn of the 2021 – but also by the confusion created by false information. In this period, the daily number of deaths caused by COVID-19 was 400-500. The intensive care sections of the hospitals are full and a medical crisis is at peak. So, in this period, it became vital to discern between correct and incorrect information.

UNESCO's specialists (2018) considered that it is important to distinguish messages that are true from those that are false, but also those that are true (and those messages with some truth) but which are created, produced or distributed by "agents" who intend to harm rather than serve the public interest. Such mal-information – like true information that violates a person's privacy without public interest justification – goes against the standards and ethics of journalism.

"Notwithstanding the distinctions above, the consequences on the information environment and society may be similar (e.g. corrupting the integrity of democratic process, reducing vaccination rates). In addition, particular cases may exhibit combinations of these three conceptualizations, and there is evidence that individual examples of one are often accompanied by the others (e.g. on different platforms or in sequence) as part of a broader information strategy by particular actors. Nevertheless, it is helpful to keep the distinctions in mind because the causes, techniques and remedies can vary accordingly" (UNESCO, 2018, p. 44).

The recommendations for journalists and newsrooms are to pay more attention to promoting quality by improving:

Accountable, ethical journalism practices and evidence-based reporting;
Fact checking and the calling out of disinformation and misinformation;
Verification of data, sources, digital images;

Engagement with the communities that journalists engage and ensuring the news agenda is in tune with societies" needs (UNESCO, 2018).

Other recommendations regarded criteria for the responsible use of the information disseminated on social media:

- "1 - Prefer dissemination through established professional platforms, or communication groups.
- 2 - Provide source when sharing information. Abstain from sharing information without a clear and trusted source.
- 3 - Abstain from sharing information that may only induce panic or anxiety.
- 4 - Quality should be preferred over quantity when sharing information, In vitro studies and low-quality evidence are of little or no use in daily practice and may give unfounded hope.
- 5 - Declare conflicts of interest, when appropriate.

- 6 - Avoid providing medical advice in social media and abstain from giving recommendations not backed by evidence as this may confuse lay public.
- 7 - Use transparent methods for peer review and feedback, like platforms for post-publication peer review processes or pre-print (unpublished manuscripts) like medRxiv.org, providing author/institutional contact, and pursue a traditional peer review process as soon as feasible” (González-Padilla, Tortolero-Blanco, 2020, p. 122).

Disinformation travels at the same speed as information does. That’s why some authors have suggested creating working groups aimed at fighting myths and disinformation in social media platforms. World Health Organization (WHO) developed an exclusive section on its website designed for coronavirus myth-busting.

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Global acculturation and Covid-19 effect in communication

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Abstract: *This article contributes to identifying the features of education in times of Covid-19 crisis. Quarantine rules, shut downs, restrictions and communication barriers have influenced the global behavior. As a consequence of this new social context, it is possible to discriminate new facets of resocialization; the restrictions can be assimilated to prison conditions and the behavioral transformation can be analyzed with complex process of forced resocialization. The meta-analysis based 50 studies published from March 2020 to September 2021 aims to examine how the global process of acculturation took place. The problematic issue can be considered a combination of subjective and uncontrollable results according to health communication. The Covid-19 chronic crisis is a crisis of emotions, feelings, attitudes, knowledge, behaviors and beliefs. From this perspective, the data collected indicate that the entire social context has paradoxically become a land of non-communication. This storm of challenges is correlated with trauma, new constructions of self, anxiety, depression and biases. To conclude, educational therapeutic processes are very important for the future policy taking into account the global acculturation process and the effect Covid-19 in communication.*

Keywords: *resocialization; global acculturation; Covid-19 effect in communication; comparative education; adaptation.*

Introduction

Due to the spread of Covid-19, everyday life reflects a turbulent communication. The negative climate from worldwide organizations, the ambiguities of labor market, teleworking, economic ambiguity, business pressure, etc. generate the need to readapt behaviors and attitudes, to reinvent paradigmatology and to reconsider the best practices. The polarized lifestyle of this quasi-contemporary period takes place on the variational continuum delimited, on the one hand, by the imperative „stay at home!” and, on the other hand, by the awakening of the moral conscience that warns us that human right cannot be quarantined. In a such disaster, a new meaning of global supercomplexity has developed that is correlated with a new mindset.

Methodology

Objective

This article aims to explain how the chronic Covid-19 crisis has forced people to adapt to a new culture according to the constraints of the new daily life. From the perspective of research methodology this investigation is convergent with qualitative research paradigm (Trif, 2020).

General Considerations about Research

The architectural structure of research design combines the relevant classical knowledge with the new biases, disparities and barriers reported in the literature published during the Covid-19 crisis. The investigation is sophisticated because the semantic network of crisis (crisis management, general crisis, communication crisis, etc.) contrasts with theoretical mechanisms (e.g. the unpredictable behavior generated by quarantine rules in chronic conditions escape – partially – from the rigors of the theories cited with respect in academia).

Procedure

The literature review was based on the electronic search of relevant databases according to three key terms: communication barriers, resocialization and acculturation. The overall methodology of research indicates that the approach is substantively relevant for the perspective of R. Gomm (2008) and of Xu, Oancea and Rose (2021). The qualitative research is delimited according to the following phases: records identified through database searching (1010 studies), records screened by reading titles and abstracts (510 studies), eligibility (89 full text studies), studies included in meta-analysis (50). This paper aims to map the knowledge according to the literature published between March 2020 and September 2021. The inclusion criteria for studies selected were the following: studies published in English, relevant databases (ERIC, PsychINFO, PubMed, Scopus), changes generated by Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Data analysis

In this unconventional war, the data collected indicates that social dissonances from emergency times are related to un-socialized behavior. The arguments are consistent with adverse effects observed in communication during Covid-19 crisis. The findings evidence a mixture of classic (semantic, social, individual and managerial barriers) and new barriers of communication. The meta-analysis of narratives identifies a plethora of new communication barriers examined from multiple perspectives (psychological, sociological, technical, medical, pharmaceutical, etc.) that are analyzed from different scientific communities. A possible summary of the new examples of new communication barriers is inserted below:

- 1) Medical communication barriers – the negative attitude towards vaccines, food problem, etc.
- 2) ICT communication barriers – poor connectivity, inability to pay for devices and for internet services, lack of technology, inadequate training support to use technology, poor technical expertise, etc.
- 3) Social communication barriers – poor intervention in risky context, unplanned events, social inequalities, etc.
- 4) Educational communication barriers – adverse effect of closing schools, vocational barriers, inadequate curriculum, Covid-19 prevention attitudes, meeting costs, remote laboratory, remote teaching, remote learning, remote assessment, etc.
- 5) Psychological communication barriers – traumas, distress, anxiety, socio-emotional problems, depression, irritability, etc.
- 6) General new communication barriers – social distancing, facemasks, multiple social rules, mental about (online) education quality, remote communication, controlling intimacy, new lifestyle or lifestyle alteration, insomnia, disturbance of natural relationships, distorted principles of life and distorted family rituals, etc.

These parameters indicate that the experience of isolation has led to a multidimensional renormalization of life. For this new normal some of the established theories do not have explanatory power while other theories have not been developed given the turbulence that has been perpetuated for more than a year and a half. Qualitative research identifies a third situation, a third possibility in which explanatory mechanisms of emergency are based on conspiracy theories. In fact, in examining the narratives collected it is identified a supercomplex process of creating meanings. Beyond the classic thematic analysis of conventional literacy, this article contributes to a summary of various alarms descriptors as they appear in the relevant publications examined. The comparative analysis between alarms descriptors and reassurance descriptors from the following table is relevant in this regard:

Table 1. A comparative perspective between alarms descriptors and reassurance descriptors

Alarms Descriptors	Reassurance Descriptors
Fear	Comforting
Confusion	Offers
Indore	Calming
Panicking	Adapting
Coronavirus induced	Clean
Fallout	Protections

Alarms Descriptors	Reassurance Descriptors
Upset	Solidarity
Signals	Stood
Suffering	Deflation
Bodies	Corrected
Exhausted	Medicine
Accusations	espirators
Conspiracies	entists
Diagnosed	
Disaster	

The two linguistic codes – the code of negative human agency and the code of hope – suggest that it is place for possible transactions between the distorted behaviors as a result of resocialization under high pressure and the authentic attitudes. The linguistic and semiotics of possible exchanges involved are relevant for the communication mechanisms used currently for investigating human agency through communication map. Worldwide quarantine, self-isolation, separation and the new types of communication generate a psychological reactions appearing global transformation of people according to the new social algorithm.

The antagonistic differences between face-to-face communication and telephone communication, between authentic proxemics and the new habit of being isolated, between behavioral traditions and abolished culture of greetings and between common space as unifying people and common space as part of self-separation explain the social phenomenon of changes. These factors indicate the enormous discrepancy between freedom or normal life and captivity or Covid-19 crisis. For this forced nature of treatment adopted during Covid-19 crisis the concept called resocialization has chosen. The arguments are multiple: resocialization concept expresses the impact of new social rules persons, it is linked to a major social problem (chronic crisis), it is related to the issues of deviant behavior, includes addictions or new bad habits and the situation has expanded rapidly as a particular direction of socialization. The following table presents in a comparative manner the opposition involved in the dyad normal life and life lived under special measures adopted during Covid-19 crisis.

Table 2. Resocialization during Covid-19 crisis

Normal Life	Covid-19 crisis
Normal behavior	In prison or deviant behavior
Authentic identity (identities)	Deconstruction and rebuilding of identity
Appropriate attitudes	Distorted attitudes

Normal Life	Covid-19 crisis
Real values	Resocialization
Re-adapted and re engineered values	
Socialization between walls or a	particular direction of socialization
Living in a natural environment	Living under extreme conditions
Evaluation of self in Psychotic conditions	ordinary physical and for social rejection
psychological	of self

This table is relevant for the potential forced resocialization in global schools: relocation (online classrooms), new ideology of infectious diseases, deconstruction of values, environmental deprivation and deviant behaviors support the idea of cultural assimilation curriculum in times of emergency. Derealization and depersonalization (Aleksandrov and Okhrimenko, 2020) can be considered a corollary of this exegesis. Mental disconnectedness resulting from this perpetuated situation determine negative impacts on spirituality, emotions, moral and social cognition. The school population without self-defense as the entire global population has acquired cultural mechanisms comparable to those of immigrants. The radical changes examined in this metaanalysis that appeared in response to the restriction imposed by Covid-19 pandemic highlight the existence of a process that was introduced here and which has been called global acculturation.

Conclusions

The complex meta-analysis of the literature based communication barriers, resocialization and acculturation indicate new pattern of cultural integration due to the pandemic. Traumatic environment, biases and social dissonance allow to put in circulation of the concept of global acculturation. At the same time, due to the global transformations perpetuated during chronic crisis, this article concludes that it is an adverse effect of communication manifested globally called the "Covid-19 effect in communication". This effect is associate with the new habits implemented during pandemic.

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The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of high school students

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Abstract: *The COVID-19 pandemic and the measures taken to limit its spread have negatively impacted the entire world, humanity has been subjected to severe pressure and failed to manage it, which has led to major problems on all levels: educational, relational, economic, but also physical and emotional health problems that will hardly lead to a solution.*

The most affected by this pandemic were the students from pre-university education who, for a long time, were deprived of a good quality education, because, on the one hand, the teachers were not prepared to teach online, they did not have the necessary software, they didn't know how to teach online, on the other hand, students did not have the electronic devices or the necessary technology to participate in online activities and, in the absence of a digital infrastructure, there could be no unitary regulations related to teaching and interaction with students. A big problem was that teachers did not have digital skills; according to Horga, Irina (coord.). 2020, only 4% of the total training courses organized by the Houses of the Teaching Staff in the period 2013-2018 aimed to develop digital skills / the use of ICT in the teachinglearning-evaluation process.

Really affected by this pandemic were students from rural areas who, due to the precarious economic situation of their parents, could not afford to buy electronic tools to connect online to class.

One year after the first day when schools in Romania closed and education was transferred online, almost one million children enrolled in pre-university education in rural areas are still in critical situations. mentioned World Vision Romania, which underlined those important measures must be taken to overcome these accumulated learning losses during the time when the classes took place online. 40% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds, most of them enrolled in rural schools, did not go to school online, for various reasons. (<https://worldvision.ro/implica-te/persoane-fizice/fondul-de-urgenta/>).

In this context, we conducted a comparative study to find out to what extent students in rural areas were disadvantaged by this pandemic, compared to students in urban areas.

Keywords: *pandemic, online education, electronical devices, rural and urban area.*

Pandemic COVID 19 and online education

Forced online education, in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, without teachers specially trained to teach online and without the necessary electronic equipment was the only solution to not freeze the school year and allow students to continue their studies.

Transition to online learning / teaching was made over the night, this is the main reason why it seems so difficult for everyone involved. Many pupils suffered in this time period, especially in the developing countries, where access to education was already limited, many children were out of school before pandemic period. So, progress has been irrelevant and negative consequences have already begun to emerge. Studies on this issue have been conducted worldwide, the conclusions being almost the same: pandemic COVID 19 had a negative role for children, for education, for their mental and emotional health. "One year into the COVID-19 pandemic, progress has gone backward across virtually every key measure of childhood," said Henrietta Fore, UNICEF Executive Director. "The number of children who are hungry, isolated, abused, anxious, living in poverty and forced into marriage has increased. At the same time, their access to education, socialization and essential services including health, nutrition and protection has decreased. The signs that children will bear the scars of the pandemic for years to come are unmistakable." (<https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/across-virtually-every-key-measure-childhood-progress-has-gonebackward-unicef-says->)

An immediate consequence of this pandemic was discrimination and inequity in the education system that did not allow all children, from all backgrounds, to have access to education.

The numbers are frightening (says the same UNICEF report):

- At least 1 in 3 schoolchildren has been unable to access remote learning while their schools were closed.
- Schools for more than 168 million schoolchildren globally have been closed for almost a year. Two-thirds of countries with full or partial closures are in Latin America and the Caribbean.
- At least 1 in 7 children and young people has lived under stay-at-home policies for most of the last year, leading to feelings of anxiety, depression and isolation. (<https://www.unicef.org/pressreleases/across-virtually-every-key-measure-childhood-progress-has-gonebackward-unicef-says->)

The question remains the same: what can we do for them, how can we help them, give them a chance for a better future?

Comparative study regarding high school students regarding Pandemic COVID-19

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study is to identify the perception / opinion of high school students from urban and rural area regarding the effects of pandemic COVID 19 for their education and future.

The objectives of the study:

- to identify the high school student's opinion regarding pandemic COVID 19 and its effects
- to see if there are differences between students from urban area and students from rural area related to forced online education
- to discover if teachers helped them in this time period
- to find out if this pandemic has affected them or not

Hypothesis:

1. The high school children from rural area were more affected by the pandemic COVID-19 than high students from urban area.
2. The effects of this deprivation can be noticed even by these students which will see the differences before and during pandemic COVID 19.

Participants

The sampling survey was applied to a non-probability sampling group. The students were selected randomly from a group present to a conference:

- high school students from urban area: 250
- high school students from rural area: 250

Instrument

We used a sampling survey with predefined answers that allowed participants to complete it more easily and not feel pressured because they do not know how to answer various questions.

Procedure

The statistical method used is identifying the perception / opinion of high school students from urban and rural area regarding the effects of pandemic COVID 19 for their education and future.

The study is based on the data yielded following a sampling survey which investigates the opinion of high school students from urban and rural area about the pandemic COVID-19 and its effects.

The investigative technique used was the auto-questionnaire survey consisting in 8 questions administered in group.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science Program (SPSS) was used to summarize and run correlation on data obtained from the survey. Frequency distribution used to mention demographics of the children and parents. Correlation technique was utilized to discuss relationship between children, parents and their need of using electronically devices.

The favored surveying technique was the individual filling in of the questionnaire in a group. (Rotariu T., Iluț P, 1997, p. 54). This surveying technique was chosen because it is the easiest and the less expensive.

Results

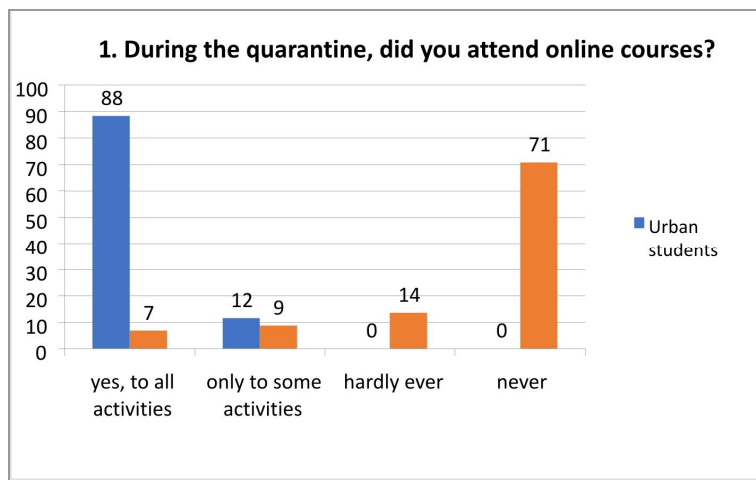


Figure 1 the structure of answers at question Q1

It is worrying to see that 71% of rural high school students from rural area have never attended online courses during the quarantine period, especially in the lockdown period. Instead, we can see that 88% of the high school students from urban area have attended online courses and this was good for them, for their education. So, there are significant differences between high school students from rural and urban area, from this point of view.

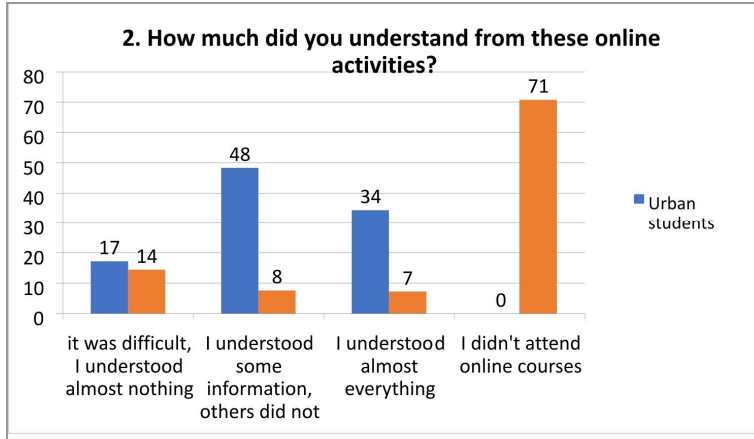


Figure 2. The structure of answers at question Q2

If we look closely to this figure, we can see that 14% of the high school students from rural area didn't understand anything and 8% from the same group understood some information, but, most of them (71%) didn't attend online courses, so, they were extremely affected from this point of view. But, 34% from the high school students from urban area understood almost everything and 48% from the same group understood many information.

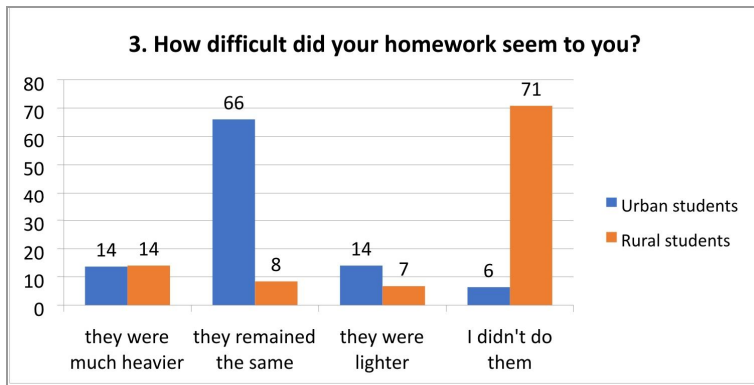


Figure 3. The structure of answers at question Q3

As we can see in figure 3, 66% from high students from urban area consider that the homework remained the same and 14% from high school students from rural area consider that the homework was much heavier. We have the same percent (71%) of high school students from rural areas who didn't made their homework.

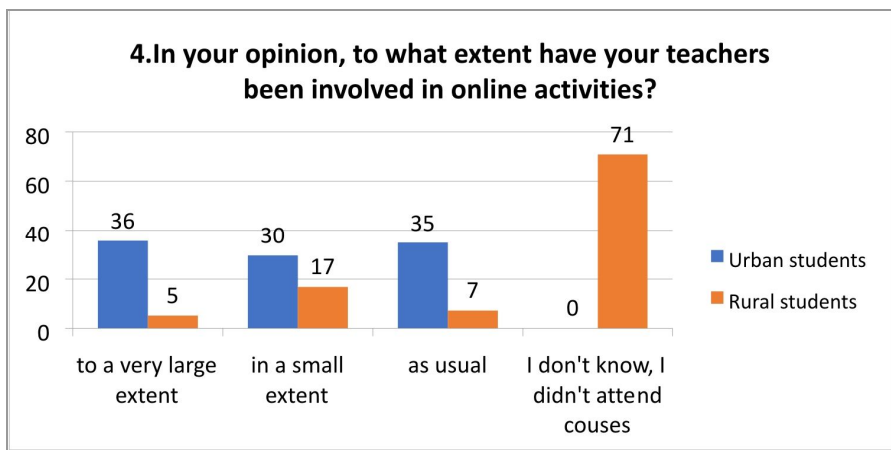


Figure 4. The structure of answers at question Q4

It is interesting to see that 30% of high school students from urban area and 17% of high school students from rural area consider that their teachers have become less involved in online activities, instead, 36% of high school students from urban areas consider that teacher have became very involved in online activities, which was very good for them.

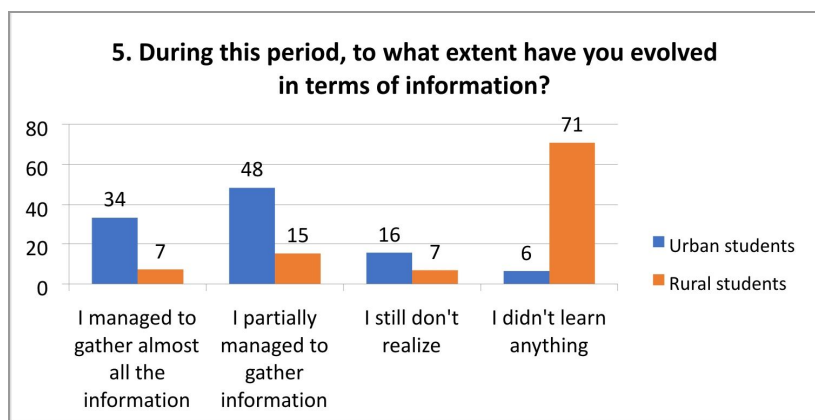


Figure 5. The structure of answers at question Q5

In the figure 5, we can see that 48% of high students from urban area and only 15% of high school students from rural area managed to gather some information, but 71% of the last one didn't learn anything.

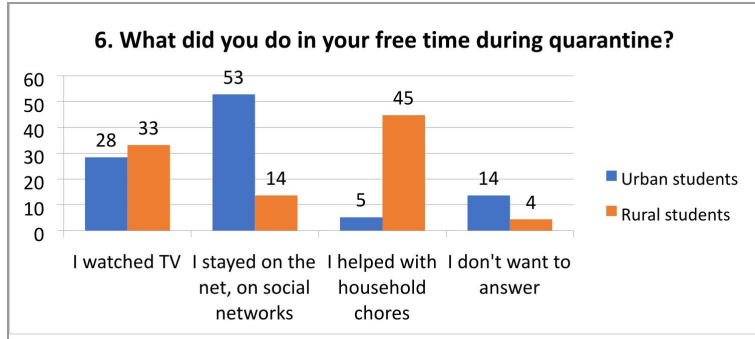


Figure 6. The structure of answers at question Q6

It is quite interesting to see that 53% of high school students from urban area, in the free time, they stayed on the net, on social networks, but 45% of high school students from rural area helped with household activities.

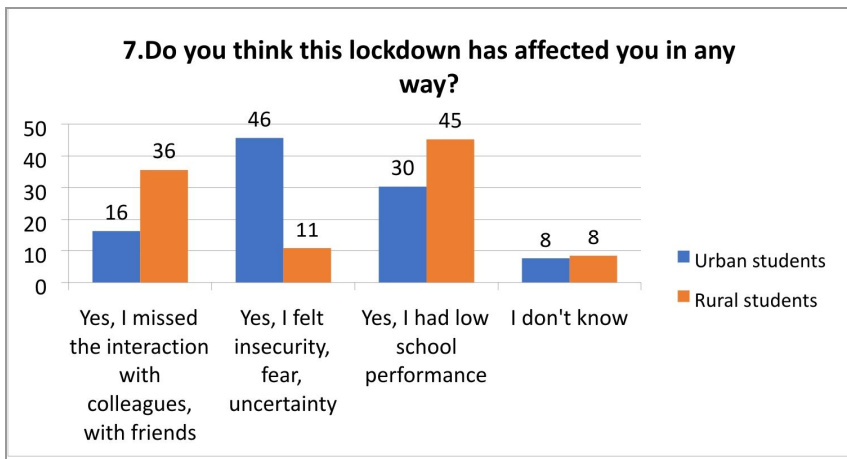


Figure 7. The structure of answers at question Q5

Looking on the numbers, many high school students declared that they were affected by the lockdown and quarantine period; so, 46% of the high school students from urban area consider that they felt insecurity, fear and uncertainty; instead, 45% of the high school students from rural area felt that they had low school performance and 36% from the same group missed the interaction with colleagues, with their friends.

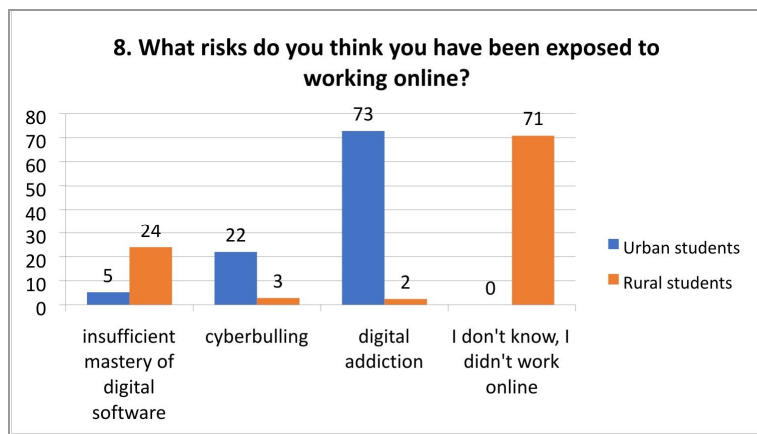


Figure 8. The structure of answers at question Q6

Regarding the Question 8 “What risks do you think you have been exposed to working online”, 73% of the high school students from urban area declared that the major risks was digital addiction, instead, 24% of high school students from rural area declared that the risk was related too insufficient mastery of digital software.

Validation of the hypothesis

The first hypothesis „The high school children from rural area were more affected by the pandemic COVID-19 than high students from urban area” was validated by the answers offered by the high school children from rural area to the item 1 (more than 71 % of the high school children from rural area never attended the online classes).

The second hypothesis “The effects of this deprivation can be noticed even by these students which will see the differences before and during pandemic COVID 19.” was validated by the answers offered by the high school children from rural to the item 5 (more than 71 % of the high school children from rural declared that they didn’t learn anything).

The main limit of the study

Sample consists only of high school students from urban and rural area of Iasi County, so these results cannot be extended to the entire population of Romanian population. There will be no pre-testing the subjects, which means that we cannot obtain the accuracy of the results; There is no control group.

Discussions

We are going through a difficult period, worldwide, due to the economic, medical and educational problems caused by the SARS-COV-2 pandemic. Unfortunately, the most affected are the students, the young generation that is going through sudden changes, for which it was not prepared.

This pandemic contributes to the aggravation of social inequities between students, leading to serious relationship problems between students, to a precarious education, especially among students from rural areas.

In this context, one of the solutions would be to create resilient education systems, able to adapt to these sudden changes, able to adapt on the fly. Another solution would be to opt for an inclusive education that addresses students from disadvantaged social backgrounds and, especially, those from rural areas, which involves different teaching strategies, depending on the target group we address.

It will not be easy to overcome this period of stagnation or regression, without opting for an inclusive education, able to respond positively to the training needs of all students, regardless of their environment.

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Researching equity and wellbeing in schools in the time of COVID-19 through youth-led participatory action research¹Some methodological observations on useful tools for the emotional development of school-age children

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Abstract: *In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated public health measures, educational equity and student wellbeing have been identified as major challenges in school settings everywhere in the world. Yet, it is still unclear how young people in schools in disadvantaged communities have experienced educational inequity and declining well-being, as well as which remedial solutions and interventions they see as effective and desirable. In this paper, we propose a research design for studying well-being and equity in school settings through a youth-led participatory action research project based in an economically disadvantaged community in Romania. Building on photovoice, forum theatre, and other participatory research methods, we propose a research design that seeks to be both directed towards overcoming common challenges, as well as sensitive to local particularities.*

Keywords: *Youth-led participatory action research (YPAR); Well-being; Equity; COVID-19.*

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Introduction: Wellbeing and equity as key issues in the present-day school contexts

In the effort to contain the spread of the SARS-Cov-2 virus, shifting all educational activities online has been one of the main policy strategies worldwide. This shift has placed an unequal burden on historically underserved populations in education. Evidence from around the world points to the fact that this has further increased educational inequalities (Belay, 2020, Mitescu Manea et al, 2021) as well as seriously impacted students' general well-being and possibly, their mental health (Harris & Jones, 2020; James 2020). Initiatives in support of remedial and recovery actions directed specifically at those who were most affected by these second-order negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are being called for globally (UNICEF, 2020).

There is growing attention in the educational research literature to the negative impact of the safety measures directed at containing the COVID-19 pandemic, on children and young people's wellbeing and on educational equity (Human Rights Watch, 2021, Thomas & Rogers, 2020, Donoso & Retzmann, 2020). Nevertheless, this literature tends to homogenize learning subjects, ignoring their particularities and those of their contexts – understanding differences only in terms of deficits that need to be overcome (Soudien, 2020). Addressing this particular challenge, while still seeking to overcome the negative impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on education, calls for an immersive and participatory inquiry into how wellbeing and equity have been experienced and understood 'on the ground' during this time, as well as how it could be overcome. This is the research direction to which our project seeks to contribute.

On a more general level, UNICEF (2020) proposed a guide to strengthen the educational systems worldwide in facing the challenges of COVID-19. The guide addresses explicitly the necessity of promoting equitable access to education and wellbeing as focal points of any strategic action in the current pandemic context, placing schools at the highest point of interventionist relevance and potential for significant action (UNICEF, 2020).

The intersection between common challenges identified by the UNESCO and the particularities of the local setting in an economically disadvantaged community in West Romania form the particular context of our inquiry. We argue that in order for actions directed at overcoming challenges to equity and well-being in the (post-)pandemic school setting to prove effective, these actions need to start from a thorough and grounded understanding of the ways in which inequity and declining well-being played out in everyday life during this time. Participatory action research projects are particularly suitable for this, since they allow for bridging the gap between theory and practice in education (Rowell, 2019). In developing solutions to the present crisis, models of decision making and action based on distributed leadership within the school

community have been presented as an avenue worth exploring (Harris & Jones, 2020). Youth-led participatory action research with adolescents has been known to positively impact on the participants' health, well-being, as well as civic engagement (Prati et al, 2020). For such interventions to be effective, young people in school settings should be empowered to share responsibility and contribute to the transformation of educational practices in their surroundings.

In the following, we reflect on how the project's research design addresses the challenges of understanding and tackling equity and wellbeing in school settings in the present context.

Using youth-led participatory action research to address wellbeing and equity in (post)pandemic school settings

In recent months, action research in education has been mainly used to document the adaptation processes of teachers and learning contexts to online teaching (Avgerinou & Moros, 2020, Feldman, 2020; Safta-Zecheria et al, 2020; Wiratomo & Mulyatna, 2020). Despite the relevance of action research to day-to-day problems in education, to our best knowledge participatory research designs have not yet been used for piloting interventions directed at reducing educational inequities and increasing students' wellbeing in the present context. This is where we seek to contribute.

Youth-led Participatory-Action Research (hereafter YPAR) has been defined as a form of community based participatory research in which young people are capacitated to identify and analyze problems that are relevant for their lives (Ozer, 2017, pg. 174). This type of research does not remain at the level of problematizing an aspect of life. It is simultaneously eliciting specific and contextualized actions which young people take part in, in the course of conducting research (Ozer & Douglas, 2015). This is why youth-led action research has a significant impact on strengthening agency and self-responsibility, and even on young people's health (Ozer, 2017). In designing our inquiry, we found YPAR particularly relevant since it starts from the core assumption of *power-sharing* between adult trained researchers and young research participants (Ozer et. al, 2013) enabling a two-sided transfer of knowledge between university and adolescent community based researchers. Power-sharing is particularly significant, since it allows us to engage with participants' perspectives on an equal footing, providing space for them to voice their day-to-day concerns in their own words.

In order to maximize the potential for giving voice we have adapted a set of participatory research methods. In the following, we will touch upon three key elements of this research design: (1) using photovoice to research equity and wellbeing, (2) using forum theatre to develop collective perspectives on day-to-day issues and (3) offering research methods training to facilitate community-based inquiries.

Photovoice

Photovoice was designed as a research methodology that can empower participants to reflect upon, discuss and present their communities (Wang & Burris, 1997). This was done by moving away from conventional interviews and ‘handing over’ the camera to members of the community in order for them to document both positive and negative aspects of their everyday life, formulating their aspirations for change in a way which enables change or can reach decision-makers. Recently, this technique has made possible giving voice to marginalized perspectives in physically distanced research (Liegghio & Caragat, 2021). In practical terms, in a photovoice workshop participants are invited to reflect on an issue of common concern in their communities and take pictures that illustrate this issue, captioning each picture with a short description. In our study, we propose inviting young people to document visually what the triggers and barriers to equity and well-being are. The individual and collective significance of photos will be discussed in a photo-elicitation session (Harper, 2002; Clark-Ibáñez, 2004).

Forum theatre

Forum theatre (Boal, 2008) proposes the participatory creation and enactment of plays reflecting problematic instances from the everyday lives of participants. Fundamental to the design of forum theatre is abolishing the differences between actors and spectators (Boal, 2008) – thus the initial storyline of any forum theatre play is continuously transformed by participants irrespective whether they start out initially as actors or as spectators. As a method for social research, forum theatre creates a socio-aesthetic space (Wrentschur, 2008, pg. 106) in which participants can experiment action pathways to overcoming their everyday struggles while rendering visible the structural social experiences that they are part of. As part of our research design, forum theatre will contribute to facilitating collective discussion among participants of relevant everyday situations where the issues of equity and wellbeing have gained significance and how these situations could be transformed in order to promote equity and wellbeing. Moreover, both photovoice and forum theatre will serve as spaces where young people gain awareness of larger structural issues and how these play out in everyday life.

Research methods training

Finally, once collective discussions surrounding the questions of well-being and equity in their everyday life settings will have been established, the young people will be trained in qualitative research methods. This training will involve (depending on their interests): concept- and photomapping, interviewing techniques and survey design. Participants will be encouraged to document the

issues of wellbeing and equity in their school settings and then come together again to discuss the research results and methods of dissemination.

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Chapter II

ICT- Based Solutions for Education

Early education teachers' perception about the effectiveness of ICT digital competences

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Abstract: *The rapid and dynamic changes generated by the progress of new technologies in the knowledge society, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, cloud computing and blockchain technologies determine deep restructuring at the level of all social life systems. A successful adaptation implies the development of digital competences with which we can communicate, collaborate, acquire and generate knowledge. In this context, the present study aims at investigating teachers' perception about the effectiveness of ICT digital competences in early education. The questionnaire based – survey completed on a sample of 82 teachers reveals aspects concerning the way of structuring ICT digital competences of early education teachers, the resources and tools used as well as concerning the effectiveness in using ICT digital competences in early education as related to the model DigiComp Edu. The practical implications of the study determine the design of training programs adapted to the development of ICT digital competences for the early education teachers.*

Keywords: *ICT digital competences, teachers, early education, DigiCompEdu, knowledge society.*

Introduction

The implication of technology in all the spheres of social life – industry, economy, health, culture, education conditioned opportunities and challenges but also difficulties in adaptation and usage. The modality through which we adapt to the new knowledge society refers not only to acquire the necessary abilities to use the information technologies but also to become users and creators of knowledge. The contributions to the development of a culturally and

ecologically tenable knowledge society can be achieved through the use of telematic network, mainly internet, thus ensuring an unprecedented dissemination of information (Drăgănescu, 2002), while through e-learning methods and procedures we ensure the enhancement and thoroughness of scientific knowledge. In order to improve an efficient generation and application of information in the knowledge society through research-developmentinnovation, we need to develop the competences which would allow the exploration of digital technologies and of their potential. The unlimited and continuous flow of information generated by the society in which we live, the flexibility of time and spatial barriers offered by the virtual environment bring challenges for the education community, challenges which appear along with new teaching and learning environments and new instruction modalities set by the virtual environment (Marti, 2006). The use of ICT in education favours interaction and collaboration, generating new ways of communication and interaction, in real and asynchronous time, developing new materials and authentic resources which can be exploited as such (Marti, 2006).

Problem statement A. Digitalization of the early education system in România

Through the national education strategies, Romania admits the necessity of a continuous adaptation to the educational system in an open context determined by prospective changes, among which ICT-communication and information technology holds a central position. The challenges induced by the knowledge society determined the awareness of adapting the training and education system to the digital era, by including in the national projects– The National Pact for Education (2008) and Educated Romania (2018) directions of actions and measures which lead to supporting ICT in the educational field in Romania through: mandatory certification of the digital competence (ICT use) at the end of the XII-th grade, equipment of all schools with internet access computers, digitalization of curricular contents and the creation of the Virtual School Library, the building of teachers' ICT competences with a view to apply the new curriculum at the level of ECDL- Complet, the introduction of ICT subject (elective in I-IV-th grades and mandatory in V-XII-th grades) etc. According to "The strategy concerning the digitalization of education in Romania during 2021-2027" (Nabăr, 2021) the main targets are digital literacy, the creation of infrastructure and technological resources for all the educational units and the insertion on the labour market for the emergent professions. To that effect, the strategy proposes a flexible digitalized educational system, adaptable and qualitative, able to meet the challenges and to generate change, able to train active and integrated individuals for the labour market from the perspective of using digital technologies, able to create opportunities of digital improvement in

the professional training and educational field for a digital society, as well as the consolidation of resiliency and predictability of the educational system in the digital era. (Nabăr, 2021). As concerns early education, an assumed objective through the strategy concerning the digitalization of education in Romania (Nabăr, 2021) refers to

”Developing programs of early digital literacy for preschoolers, in order to get children acquainted with ICT”, considering that through an early intervention the opportunities of digital competences development and use increase considerably. The strategic actions will prove efficient only if teachers integrate change at the level of the teaching paradigm and also on the attitudinal level, through introducing digital technologies in the instruction management.

A. Modalities of integrating ICT in early education

ICT – the technology of communication and information entered early education in point of content, methodology, learning environment and pupils’ commitment. One can mention even education through ICT which represents a new modality to consider the learning process, the change being operated only in the means of acquiring information, as well as the liberty of the learner to learn at a desired moment and place (Botgros & Nastas, 2019). The specialty literature as well as the current practice mention that ICT usage in the early education institution represents a means of increasing the efficiency of the educational process quality through the improvement of the information culture and the active use of information technology. Thereby, ICT use enables activation and commitment in learning, educational activities are attractive through the activation of the children’s cognitive interest, contributes to the development of information culture for children and activates the educator’s pedagogic digital competence (Clichici et. al., 2018). ICT integration in early education can be analyzed at the level of teacher’s and child’s role, at the level of the learning activity management and at the level of educational and technical resources. ICT integration in early education does not produce consequential changes in the organization paradigm. At this age, learning should be developed in direct interaction; consequently ICT can be used at the level of the roles exercised by the teacher: facilitator of the child developmental process and integrator of the new ICT, researcher and designer of adequate scenarios of learning (Marti, 2006), resource facilitator, designer of new technology-rich learning environments, adapter of different materials, producer of new didactic materials in ICT-based settings, evaluator of the different processes in which these environments and resources are involved (Marti, 2006). The attitude of teachers towards technology represents a vulnerable and relevant subject for the ICT integration in early education. ICT usage in the educational process is conditioned by the following factors: the existence of

technological infrastructure, the teacher's training to use ICT technology TIC (Marti, 2006), age, the kind of social interaction which takes place in educational contexts, the effects of the use of technology in teaching and learning processes, the perception of expectative and finally the personal position of teachers.

ICT integration in early education is determined by the child's specific age characteristics. The use of ICT in early education targets children's digital literacy, students have to be offered didactic and technical strategies so that they can become competent users of new telematic tools and resources (Marti, 2006). Children are expected to become ICT consumers, must use ICT tools and resources and become ICT creators (Marti, 2006). Through the agency of new learning environments, children become autonomous and participants in the learning process. ICT integration in the educational process also produces modifications in the educational management, as regards the organization of space and time, as compared to the traditional one. The use of ICT in early education implies modifications at the level of the didactic strategy and in the construction of the specific learning activities for each age level too. As regards the technical means, these have to be adapted to children's age level, so that the didactic principles of accesibility and interactivity should be respected. Multimedia elements realized for children can be educative, amusing and interactive. The use of ICT in didactic activities offers a rapid feedback, adjusting the process along the way and grasps critical points in learning. We can conclude that ICT integration in early education is determined by the amenity and informational richness brought through it in the child's learning environment. Computer-assisted learning represents an efficient instruction approach. Cognitive and language experiences which introduce the child in the world offered by multimedia programs must be accordant with their educational environment. These activities offer equal chances in education to children, regardless the environment they are brought up and evolve.

B. The structure of teachers' ICT digital competence. The model DigiCompEdu

The preoccupations of European specialists for the development of the necessary competences for a creative and critical use of digital technologies, with a view to improve teaching and learning and to prepare children to live and work in a digital society had been externalized in the model DigiCompEdu. The model presents the structure of teachers' digital competence and had been created with a view to offer the entire teaching staff the possibility to evaluate the pedagogic digital competence exhaustively (Redecker & Punie, 2017). The model DigiCompEdu proposes six areas and 22 indicators through which pedagogic digital competence is expressed as it follows: *Professional*

engagement refers to the use of digital technologies by teachers in their professional interactions with peers, students, parents and other interested parts for their professional individual development and for the collective welfare of the organization. It is focused on specific behaviours of the working environment: organizational communication, professional collaboration, reflexive practices and continuous professional digital development; *Digital resources* refers to the selection of digital resources, the creation and modification of digital resources and to their administration, protection and dissemination. Depending on the learning objectives and to the competence level of the group of students, teachers should possess the capacity to select the educational resources in accordance with the didactic strategy and with pupils' learning style; *Teaching and learning* are reflected in the planning and implementation behaviours of digital resources in the learning process, the efficient administration and organization of the use of digital techniques during the different stages and circumstances of the learning process. The competence implies not only teaching and guiding but also contributes to learning through cooperation and self-regulated learning; *Assessment* targets the integration of digital technologies in creating or facilitating innovative assessment approaches. By the agency of digital technologies, the teacher must manifest the capacity to analyze and interpret data about the pupil's learning behavior in order to be used in taking decisions. Digital technologies can contribute directly to the monitoring of the learners, to progress, can facilitate feedback and can permit educators to evaluate and adapt their teaching strategies; *Empowering learners* refers to ensuring the access to resources and learning activities for all learners, including those with special needs, to differentiation and personalization in order to satisfy different needs of learners, allowing them to make progress at different levels and with a different rhythm and to follow individual learning ways and objectives. It also refers to an active implication of learners, to the understanding of connections and to the finding of creative solutions; *Facilitating learners' digital competence* refers to the capacity to facilitate the learners' acquisition of digital competence through information and media literacy actions, through the integration of the learning activities in digital environments; moreover, the area targets digital communication and collaboration, the creation of digital content, as well as solving problems of technical knowledge transfer in a creative manner in new situations (Redecker & Punie, 2017).

The model of the teacher's digital competence is adapted to his pedagogic competence and to his professional roles. In relation to the theoretical model, there have been attempts to identify the modalities through which teachers' digital competences can be acquired and developed. The specialty literature confirms the fact that these competences can be also acquired in informal and non-formal activities but certification can only be obtained by participating to training programs accredited by governmental institutional

entities. The training curricula has been elaborated on the strength of scientifically-based needs and the implementation implies the use of didactic strategies adapted to the specific competences which are to be created.

The development of successful training programs for early education teachers requires answers to the following questions: What is the structure of digital competence for the early education teachers? What are the necessary instruments and resources to ensure the training of digital competence for the early education teachers? What are the elements which condition ICT integration in early education?

Purpose of the study

The present study aims at identifying teachers' perception as regards the effectiveness of ICT digital competences for early education. In order to meet the framed objective, we propose to identify the natural factors of ICT digital competences, ICT instruments and resources used in early education as well as the factors which determine the effectiveness of ICT integration in the didactic process in early education.

Methods

The study is based on a descriptive design through which we can determine the weight of the factors which contribute to the structure of early education teacher's digital competences and ensure their effectiveness. The method used for data accumulation is the questionnaire-based survey.

Participants

The sample is made up of 82 early education teachers from Romania, regional area South Muntenia. The structure of the sample according to the implied variables is the following: age – 18.3% between 20-30 years, 35.4% between 31-40 years, 32.9% between 41 and 50 years and 13.4% over 50 years; didactic experience: 67,1% teacher certification-level 1, 19.5% teacher certification-level 2, 13.4% permanent teacher certification; background of activity: 80.5% urban environment, 19.5% rural environment; participation in continuous formation courses to develop ICT digital competences: 12.2% did not attend formation programs, 87.8% participated in formation programs.

Measures

- a. The DigCompEdu (Redecker & Punie, 2017). The following scales had been used: Professional engagement– 4 items; Digital resources– 3 items; Teaching -Learning- Assessment - 7 items. The instrument reveals the strong and weak points of the use of digital technologies in education.
- b. The questionnaire concerning teachers' perception about digital competence in early education (adapted, Marti, 2006). The questionnaire targets five

dimensions of using ICT competence in education: a. connectivity and access to technological resources; b. usability of ICT digital resources in early education; c. performance of using ICT digital competence in early education; d. ICT in early education and e. training needs for ICT in early education. The score is calculated by the summation of all answers for each item per dimension.

The questionnaires had been administered online, the participation being voluntary and unpaid.

Results

At the dimension level we have determined that dimension Professional engagement is explained by the use of different communication channels - e-mails, blogs, school site, applications, ($r=.770$, $p=.00$) and by the use of digital technologies to communicate with the professional community ($r=.782$, $p=.00$); dimension Digital resources is explained by the capacity to create own resources and the modification of the existing ones in order to adapt to one's own professional needs ($r=.880$, $p=.00$); dimension Teaching Learning Assessment is explained by the added value brought by digital technology in the didactic activity ($r=.832$, $p=.00$), as well as by the use of digital technologies in order to offer feedback , in the assessment activity ($r=.807$, $p=.00$).

Table 1. Pearson coefficient correlations of the study variables.

	1	2	3	4
Professional engagement	1			
Digital resources	.654*	1		
Teaching Learning Assessment	.330	.379	1	
ICT Effectiveness	.853*	.822*	.713*	1

Note: *** $p < .001$

ICT digital competence at early education teachers is best explained by the performance of using ICT competence in education ($r=.884$, $p=.00$), by the usability of ICT competence ($r=.427$, $p=.00$), by the need of formation and development of ICT competences ($r=.574$, $p=.00$). As regards the need of formation this is explained by the necessity of developing and applying ICT competences in online teaching procedures ($r=.568$, $p=.00$) by the search of digital educational resources ($r=.665$, $p=.00$) and by the creation of digital educational contents ($r=.807$, $p=.00$). Teachers' performance of digital competence is explained by the facility to work with the computer and other technical equipment ($r=.573$) and by the wide use of the internet ($r=.479$). Usability of ICT digital competence in early education is explained by

documenting and by the search for information resources ($r=.479$, $p=.00$)., as well as by its use in communication and collaboration with co-workers and parents ($r=.540$, $p=.00$).

Table 2. Pearson coefficient correlations of the study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6
Connectivity	1					
Usability of ICT digital competence	.159	1				
Performance of ICT digital competence	.140	.832*	1			
Use of ICT in early education	-.161	.328	.188	1		
The need of forming ICT competence	.626*	.420	.421	.062	1	
ICT digital competence	.252	.726*	.844*	.427*	.574*	1

Note: *** $p < .001$

Teachers declare that the deterrent factors in using ICT digital competence in early education are represented by the lack of technical skills (77,3%), the lack of correlation of pedagogic competences with the educational soft/ educational digital applications ad resources (81,8%) and by insufficient equipment of preschool school units with necessary instruments (tablets, interactive board, etc) – 45,5%, unreliable internet connection – 13,6%, lack of time – 54,5%.

Discussion

- a. The structure of teachers' digital competence in early education include aspects related to external factors – connectivity and access to resources, ICT use in the didactic activity and performance of digital competence. These aspects are declared to be useful insofar as they are used in professional communication (with co-workers, with parents, in community), in order to search useful information in the professional sphere and to use them adequately in the teaching-learning-evaluation process. The use of ICT in the didactic process in early education is actually limited, taking into consideration the characteristics of children's psycho-social development stage. The use of digital resources could be useful when a concrete, intuitive material cannot be used. For early ages, it is very important to take into consideration the real developmental level of the child, the specific of activity, also starting from the assumption that most of them have native digital competences.

- b. The internet represents the main source from where teachers find information and educational materials and take educational applications for their didactic activity. One can notice that teachers are open to know and identify digital educational resources and to adapt them according to the concrete necessities of educational activity.
- c. In order to be really efficient in the early education system, the teacher must manifest engagement, must possess the digital resources to be used adequately at the level of the whole education process. Concurrently, effectiveness is associated with the formation need of digital competence.

Conclusions

The results of the study reveal the following aspects as related to the investigated group. We mention that the size of the sample do not allow the generalization of the conclusions formulated by us. We identified the aspects related to the structure of the teachers' digital competence as well as its effectiveness in early education. The study also underlined the deterrent factors which obstruct the effectiveness of using ICT in early education. Among these, the most relevant are the factors related to the formation of teachers' digital competence for early education. On this account, it is necessary to continuously develop teachers' competences, not only at the level of using ICT digital competences in the didactic activity but also teachers' speciality and methodological competences in order to develop digital contents and integrate them in the didactic methodology (teaching and evaluation).

The study opens new research opportunities which can prove useful in implementing assumed educational policies.

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Co-Design in Teaching - A Possible Solution for Operationalizing Students' Competences

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Abstract: *The world of education, in a context of curricular reforms, is marked by the shift from goal-oriented pedagogy to competence-based pedagogy, which results from other shifts of paradigm: the shift from content-centred teaching to participatory approaches, searching for the meaning of the learning activity more than that of teaching, as well as identifying the decontextualized /integrated contents.*

The curricular reform of developing students' competences remains a permanent source of reflections, confrontations of ideas, debates and contradictions, as well as a relevant source for building beneficial and constructive experiences, which will create the premises for further curriculum reform. Especially in the last two decades, there has been a lot of reflection on the need to develop new approaches in teaching, to build effective teaching approaches to develop students' competences and to meet the needs of qualified human resources for the labour market.

Keywords: *operationalizing competences, didactic co-design, integrated didactic approach.*

Introduction

The discussion about learning goals and their role in designing experiences/teaching activities is multidimensional given the changes in the curricular paradigm, but also the models of other educational systems that have favoured the students' school success in international tests. Beyond theoretical studies, the following variables define an effective educational model: focusing on the student's needs, increasing the student's motivation for learning, increasing the quality of life and social equity. The investigation of the role of the school is made from the perspective of the interdependence between the involvement of the school in the development of the technical competencies of the future adult (quality of labour force) and /or the involvement of the school in the development of the student's features. (Stan, 2014, p. 86)

A possible solution in the innovation of the educational approach in the context of competence-centred training is the DIDACTIC CO-DESIGN (Hattie,

2014, p. 141). The development of this collaborative approach in didactic planning involves the re-evaluation of all variables of the educational context. One can start by arousing the answers to the following questions (Senge, 2016, pp. 180-181): what do students do in an ordinary day and what practices help them to progress, how are the training activities organized and who organizes them, how the classroom is organized and how much time students spend inside and outside the classroom, how students interact with each other and how they interact with the teacher, what kind of information students receive from informal sources (books, newspapers and magazines, internet) and what kind of support do they receive for finding and processing this information, etc.

Theoretical background Operationalizing competences

The operationalization of competences is a challenge when designing the learning situations. Designing the educational approach from the competence instruction perspective implies the identification of an operational model of building the competence.

There are numerous studies that demonstrate the need to quantify competences, coming from various fields of knowledge. A competence is manifested through a set of attitudes towards the associated task and which, through motivation and interest, engages the set of skills and knowledge, respectively the sets of cognitive, emotional and physical abilities that put into action specific behaviour, contextualized by task and role, in order to give a successful resolution to a situation.

Referring to the complex process of competence building, R. Etienne and A. Lerouge (1997) in Bocoş, 2008, p. 278) show how “the construction of a competence depends on a fair dosage between the isolated activity of its various elements and the integration of these elements in operationalized situations.”

The teacher’s activity will focus on organizing and coordinating learning, as well as on providing feedback, and as for the student, he /she must prove that he/she knows how to use what he /she learns. Competence-based pedagogy must give meaning to learning, facilitating real learning contexts, through which the student is motivated that everything he /she learns will be useful to him /her. For this, however, lists of monodisciplinary contents are no longer sufficient, but it is necessary and mandatory to adopt creative and innovative interdisciplinary approaches. Competences should not be seen as a sum of knowledge, skills and other acquisitions, but as the result of their combined utilization for solving concrete situations.

The school environment must offer the whole field of experiences that students are able to undertake in class, because “educating a child does not mean adding one brick to another to make a wall, but rather helping a tree, considered as an organized ensemble, to develop, to grow in the best

conditions” (Clausese, 1972 in Minder, 2011, p. 105); “To place the subject to be taught in the context in which it acts, in which it means something to the student. (...) Moving from textbook to life is a change of context” (Clausese, 1972 in Minder, 2011, p. 155).

The integration of transversal competencies into the curriculum is the requirement of a curriculum that offers each student the optimal chances of social and professional integration. “In order to be a teacher, you have to be a prophet - because you are trying to train people for a world that will exist thirty or fifty years in the future”. (Gordon Brown in Senge, 2021, p. 71)

The need to develop transversal skills is determined by the labour market (OECD - 2030 - SKILLS FOR 2030). Most future jobs will combine several fields (human, tech, creative, digital, etc.): astronauts who are also digital entrepreneurs, farmers who will use programming assets, artists and creators using new media, data detectives, engineers of robots for therapy and psychology. Graduates should demonstrate a high level of understanding of the environment in which they work, an ability to apply information, which gives them a competitive advantage in the labour market.

The content of the competence must be operationalized in relation to the learning context, and conversely, the complexity of the learning operations must be found in the content and category of the competence. The content of the competence can be related to various learning theories, for example to the constructivist theory, which emphasizes the construction of knowledge through the intimate resources of the individual: initiative, engagement, own experience. In this matter, we identify, in the pedagogical literature, some ways of organizing the contents in order to favour the development of competencies. On the one hand, the functional organisation of the curriculum, which is privileged by “vertical cuts organizing the programs around the logic of different disciplines” (Meirieu, 1994 in Minder, 2011, p. 108). The teaching sequence is articulated around a concept /theme (imposed by students, by real life or by the teacher, but in accordance with the training needs of students and of real life), and the ordering of the contents is done according to the internal logic of the subject. Another way is the integrated approach to content, which involves a “combination of school subjects in an active project that allows students to encounter real-life situations combined in a single activity” (Everett in Borzea, 2017, p. 69).

A model for operationalizing transversal competencies for pre-university education is presented in Programme de formation de l'ÉCOLE Wuebecoise, 2003, Ministry of Education of Quebec, Canada. The 9 transversal /inter-curricular skills are grouped into: 4 intellectual skills (information exploring, problem solving, critical thinking practice, creative thinking implementation), 2 methodological skills (effective learning methods, exploration of information and communication technologies), 2 personal skills and communication skills (communicate accordingly). (Cretu, 2019, pp. 207-208)

Other examples of operationalization of competencies can be found in specialized studies, which propose different instruments for measuring competence.

For example, the tool for measuring *sustainability competence* (applicable to students in BadenWuerttemberg secondary schools) measures 4 dimensions: knowledge about sustainability, affectivemotivational beliefs towards sustainability, behaviour related to sustainability and intentional knowledge of applied sustainability. (Waltner, Riess, Mischo, 2019, p. 13).

The *problem-solving competence* training model suggests the measurement of 3 dimensions:

building knowledge (based on communicating the ideas and expertise of others and establishing common understanding among group members), negotiating between group members (involving finding solutions at group level), maintaining team function (reflects a positive group dynamic in which members are aware that they are part of a team and proactively contribute to team success). (Sun, Shute, Steward, Yonehiro, Duran, D'Mello, 2019, p. 14)

The transversal competence *critical thinking* is operationalized by performance descriptors associated with each component of the competence (Cretu, 2019, p. 208): the dimension of *building one's opinion* – KNOWLEDGE is measured by descriptors such as the ability to discern the question, to appreciate the situation from the logical, ethical or aesthetic point of view, to explore different options and possible points of view, to adopt a position; the dimension of *expressing one's opinion* – SKILLS is measured by descriptors such as the ability to communicate one's point of view, to communicate in ways and linguistic constructions that best translate one's way of thinking, to justify one's position; the dimension of *relating one's opinion to others* – ATTITUDES is measured by descriptors such as the ability to compare one's opinion with the opinion of others, to recognize prejudices, to assess the balance between reason and affectivity in the opinion expressed, etc.

In the pedagogical literature we identify a few models for formulating performance indicators for some learning outcomes in the *values* category (T. Martin, P. Teeuwesen and J. Molnar in Borzea, 2017, p. 94). Competence pedagogy clearly specifies the values and attitudes specific to school discipline. The system of attitudes revolves around motivation, interest, respect, tolerance, responsibility, commitment, perseverance, fairness, creativity, self-control, critical thinking, respect for national values, etc. The formula of attitudes differs from one discipline to another (from curiosity, tolerance, cohesion and discursive coherence – to the Romanian language and literature; to the development of aesthetic and critical sense; the development of an open, creative thinking and a spirit of objectivity, impartiality and tolerance – in mathematics, or to elaborate projects

for the conservation and promotion of local, national and universal patrimony objects, capitalizing on the historical past - in history).

Didactic co-design

From the perspective of the operational approach to competence, we highlight the collaborative dimension of didactic design (didactic co-design). Although there are different approaches to didactic design, a solution to optimize this approach involves the collaboration between teachers who teach different subjects “to develop common ideas about what is worth teaching (...), in order to understand their beliefs about stimulation and progress and to evaluate the impact of their teaching conception on students’ results.” (Hattie, 2014, p. 83)

In this respect, Hattie proposes a model for designing training situations defined by 4 factors (Hattie, 2014, p. 83): the student’s initial level of performance (initial acquisitions), the student’s expected level of performance (visible acquisitions), rate of progress (performance), collaboration between teachers and critical thinking in planning teaching. The level of students’ initial acquisitions is a predictor of the success of the lesson (Hattie, 2014, p. 83): previous acquisitions in relation to the new topic, students’ personal qualities and their own motivational system. The expected level of performance is determined by clearly established objectives in relation to the success criteria associated with them, these objectives and success criteria being necessary to be shared with students. In this sense, performance is understood by the progress made by the student from the initial level of acquisition to the level of projected success.

The didactic co-design is based on the model of didactic meetings built on an essential principle in the didactic design: the progress in learning is a consequence of the enrichment of the content, the competence of the teacher and the engagement of the student in the learning process. (Elmore, Fiarmen, Teital in Hattie, 2014, p. 131)

Building teams of teachers for to develop common didactic projects/ plans implies observing the following criteria: the teachers who work together have common fields of interest, the teachers use the same system of evaluation criteria /descriptors and the same grading system. (McNulty, Besser, 2011 in Hattie, 2014, p. 129)

In order for the didactic design to become flexible and efficient, Marzano recommends 3 areas of focus of the learning unit: knowledge, problematic situations, and the opportunity for students to explore. (Marzano, 2015, pp. 302-307). Focusing on knowledge involves students discovering useful information and organizing this into content units. Focusing on problematic situations involves building learning situations around hypotheses, problematizations, which lead the student in the process of applying knowledge, checking them and issuing solutions. Focusing on the opportunity of exploration involves the construction by students of tasks of interest to capitalize on the knowledge and

skills practiced. All 3 directions involve reporting to the standards to be met, these standards being defined by the concrete expectations that the teacher has of what needs to be achieved.

An approach to the teaching situation from the perspective of achieving standards is found in the system of assessing students' skills, in which the reference in school assessment is presented by qualitative descriptions of students' skills (in the form of performance descriptors, value judgments). (Manolescu, 2015, pp. 186-190)

Discussion

The use of the *didactic co-design model* to build /develop students' competencies becomes a possible solution for optimizing the didactic design approach in the conditions of rendering the educational process flexible, by introducing the forms of online organization /ICT system /integrated contents etc.

In this respect, the design benchmarks of the integrated didactic approach can be analysed as follows (Borzea, 2017, pp. 205-206):

- analysis of the disciplinary contents in order to identify the content elements, the significant concepts with integrative potential (disciplines from the same curricular area or from different curricular areas);
- identification of the "hard" core and of the disciplinary specifications for the content elements, of the significant concepts with integrative potential ("curricular fields" – concepts specific to each discipline /curricular area that can be explored within the integrated learning experience);
- correlation of the content elements with the specific competencies to whose development it contributes (application and transfer of knowledge and operating structures in new, relevant contexts, in real-life situations);
- designing teaching and learning activities (time resources, human resources, material resources, procedural resources);
- designing assessment strategies (methods, assessment tools, performance indicators correlated with learning outcomes and integrated contents).

In the didactic approach, the specification of a competence assumes the specification of the targeted capacities or of the learning outcomes. Competences are manifested in a certain field and can be assessed on the basis of specific results that must be observable, measurable and subject to the learning process. (Drake, Reid, 2018, p. 34)

Didactic co-design will focus on highlighting competence in the form of abilities /learning outcomes. We highlight 2 models of operationalization of competencies that can be used: the SOLO taxonomy of the structure of observed learning outcomes, the taxonomy of MARZANO's educational objectives.

SOLO's taxonomy of the structure of observed learning outcomes (Biggs and Collis, 1982 in Borzea, 2017, pp. 182-186) highlights learning out-

comes for different levels of thinking development: surface learning (unistructural – an idea, multistructural – more ideas), deep learning (relational – association of ideas, conceptual development - development of ideas). Adapted to the online educational system, the design of educational approaches for courses that use *open resources* analyses several variables in the operationalization of learning outcomes, by extending the SOLO taxonomy. The design model analyses the most appropriate open learning resources according to the learning outcomes foreshadowed by the teacher. (Villalba, Cuba, Deco, Bender, Garcia-Penalvo, 2017, p. 3)

MARZANO's *taxonomy of educational objectives* (2000, in Borzea, 2017, pp. 182-186) highlights the role of motivation in the training process. Learning outcomes are defined on several levels: the self-system (emotions associated with knowledge), the metacognitive system (reasoning and assessment), the cognitive system (application), and the field of knowledge (assimilation and understanding). Each competence can be assessed quantitatively or qualitatively, and the elements of competence are expressed at different levels of a scale. Marzano and his collaborators associate competence with the professional role of a person, which is in turn expressed through a series of responsibilities; to these responsibilities is added the person's motivation for fulfilling the professional role. (Gaeta, Marzano, Miranda, Sandkuhl, 2017, p. 408)

We demonstrate the application of the didactic co-design model by involving teachers of different specializations in designing the didactic approach to build /develop the communication competence in terms of *the ability to compare* (understood as the ability to establish similarities and differences). Through didactic co-design, teachers of different specializations (Romanian literature, history, economics, entrepreneurship, etc.) will establish the learning outcomes for different levels of thinking development, within the thematic framework specific to the discipline they teach: □ surface learning:

- unistructural - an idea: to compare 2 characters from the text under study, highlighting similarities / differences (Romanian literature);
- multistructural - several ideas: to compare 2 characters from the text under study, highlighting similarities and differences in terms of appearance (physical portrait), language, behaviour, actions in which they participate (moral portrait) etc. (Romanian literature); □ deep learning (didactic co-design is needed):
- relational - association of ideas: to compare the characters from the text under study with characters from other literary texts (Romanian literature)
- conceptual development - development of ideas: to compare the characters in the studied text with characters from social, political, historical, cultural life, etc. (Romanian literature, history, economy, entrepreneurship, etc.).

In order to achieve deep learning, the demand for collaboration between teachers is obvious for the synchronization of teaching times and the design of a unitary system of learning outcomes.

Conclusions

For practitioners, the projective curricular landmarks will focus on linking disciplinary knowledge and promoting the idea of organizing interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary educational activities, thus achieving a departure from the strict separation of educational disciplines.

We consider that the *didactic co-design* process will respond to some challenges determined by the competence-based pedagogy, namely: difficulties related to the application of the concept of holistic education (to educate the student as a whole, not on certain aspects of his personality), difficulties related to the operationalization of competencies, challenges related to the way in which teaching, learning and assessment of competencies in the educational process can be achieved.

Didactic co-design is a solution for highlighting the importance of the teacher's reflective attitude and reflective teaching practices, from the perspective of competence-based teaching design. "Sharing a common approach to progression is the key to success in any school." (Hattie, 2014, p. 128)

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Digital addiction on teenagers: implications for their future development

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Abstract: *For many families, smartphones, tablets and other devices are a normal part of everyday life. Children notice when adults are fascinated by their devices, they constantly check their email, write or read through them more than they interact with their children. Thus, the little ones end up feeling neglected and feel that they are fighting for the time and attention of their parents.*

Given the fact that most adults are absorbed by the digital world, not having the energy to spend quality time with their children, those have only one chance: to follow the parental model and spend more and more time in the virtual reality.

Many families which are strongly absorbed by their own electronic devices during the meal not only cause their children to act to get the attention of their parents, but also respond harshly to the inappropriate behavior of the child.

This phenomenon is widespread and is becoming increasingly difficult to manage, For example, Deloitte research of 4,150 people reveals UK smartphone owners' device shows that:

-39% of respondents believe they use their phone too much. Of these, 83% would like to do something about it – representative of 14 million people in the UK;

-32% of phones in the UK are on a SIM-only contract, up from 19% in 2015;

-55-75-year-olds are among the fastest-growing adopters of voice-assisted speakers.

In this context, we intend to conduct a comparative study between parents and children to find out: 1. if these parents are aware of the negative implications of technology for their children;

2. if these children realize that they are dependent of electronical devices.

Keywords: *addiction, electronical devices, parents-children relationship; future implications.*

Digital addiction-a worldwide problem

We live in a world where each of us uses, more and more, electronic devices, which make our lives easier, help us to be competitive, high-performance, efficient, but, at the same time, we find that children allocate every-

thing more time to these electronic devices, neglecting many aspects of daily life and, at the same time, developing various physical and mental problems.

Digital addiction-an international perspective

There are many medical studies that have analyzed the consequences of digital addiction, most of them affecting children in the short, medium and long term. We present some of these:

The journal Front Psychiatry published the article Cell-Phone Addiction: A Review, oct. 2016. The authors - José De-Sola Gutiérrez, Fernando Rodríguez de Fonseca and Gabriel Rubio discovered:

- young people under 20 are the ones who spend more time on mobile phones;
- children receive their first mobile phone at a younger age, and the younger they get, the more likely they are to abuse the phone in the future;
- 27% of young people between 11 and 14 years old admit that they do not turn off their cell phones, a behavior that increases with age, so that between 13 and 14 years old one in three young people never turn off their phone.

A recent study by Deloitte shows that Americans collectively check their phones 9 billion times a day;

- The average check of the phone is 47 times / day, including during free time, while watching TV, when they are with friends or even at the table;
- Young people aged between 18 and 24 check their phone even more, up to 82 times / day;
- Also, the time required to check their phones in the morning continues to decrease: over 40% of consumers check their phones within five minutes of waking up. First check chat or text messages (35%), followed by emails (22%);
- Once the day is over, over 30% of consumers check their phones five minutes before going to bed and about 50% in the middle of the night

Digital addiction-state of the art in Romania

In 88% of families with schoolchildren in Romania up to the 12th grade, there is at least one electronic device (desktop PC, laptop, tablet, mini-PC, 2 in 1 laptop, smartphone, iPod, Kindle).

- 61% of children are using a computer.
- 81.5% of schoolchildren use the computer only for games combined with movies, including XXX movies
- in Romania children under 10 years old represent 22% of the visitors of pornographic sites;

Children between 10-14 years 36% and those between 15-18 years, 42%;

- the average electronic consumption in Romania of children between 5-16 years old is around 5 and 7 hours a day, and is growing from year to year (<https://www.scoala-familiei.ro/efectele-ecranelordetoxifierea-digitala/>)

Digital addiction-consequences

Excessive consumption of digital media brings many disadvantages, such as:

- Brain volume decreases and areas of cortical lesions appear (dark spots on the brain which means that the neurons are dead)
- Decreases grades at school
- Children have problems with language, reading, memory, attention, logical-mathematical thinking, causal, impulse control because the left hemisphere is affected
- Children have trouble planning, organizing, completing homework on time, or motivating themselves in the long run because their prefrontal cortex is affected
- They have trouble sleeping, have a general state of irritation, anxiety, jump from one activity to another, are sometimes euphoric, sometimes depressed, tend to defy and offer unjustified resistance
- Their ability to interact socially decreases due to isolation, boys become shy and do not know how to behave with a girl and girls have unrealistic expectations of boys because of soap operas
- They can become addicted to computer games, porn movies, Facebook or TV (<https://www.scoalafamiliei.ro/efectele-ecranelor-detoxifierea-digitala/>)

Comparative study regarding using electronically devices in Romania

Purpose and objectives

The purpose of this study is to identify the perception / opinion of 4th grade students and their parents regarding the effects of electronically devices in children 'life (but not only)

The objectives of the study:

- to identify the parents and the children opinion regarding electronical devices;
- to find out situations in which spending too much on the phone or PC can really harm
- to discover if the electronically devices improves or not the child' life;
- to find out how many hours children and their parents spent on a phone or a laptop.

Hypothesis:

1. The children are using too much time on electronic devices because their parents are using them too;
2. The parents don't realize that these electronic devices are harmful for the children's life and for them too.

Participants

The sampling survey was applied to a non-probability sampling group. The students were selected randomly from a group present to a conference:

- 4th grade students: 36
- parents: 36.

Instrument

We used a sampling survey with predefined answers that allowed participants to complete it more easily and not feel pressured because they do not know how to answer various questions.

Procedure

The statistical method used is identifying 4th grade students and parents' opinion about the electronic devices.

The study is based on the data yielded following a sampling survey which investigates the opinion of students and parents about the electronically devices

The investigative technique used was the auto-questionnaire survey consisting in 6 questions administered in group.

Data analysis

The Statistical Package for Social Science Program (SPSS) was used to summarize and run correlation on data obtained from the survey. Frequency distribution used to mention demographics of the children and parents. Correlation technique was utilized to discuss relationship between children, parents and their need of using electronically devices.

The favored surveying technique was the individual filling in of the questionnaire in a group. (Rotariu T., Iluț P, 1997, p. 54). This surveying technique was chosen because it is the easiest and the less expensive.

Results

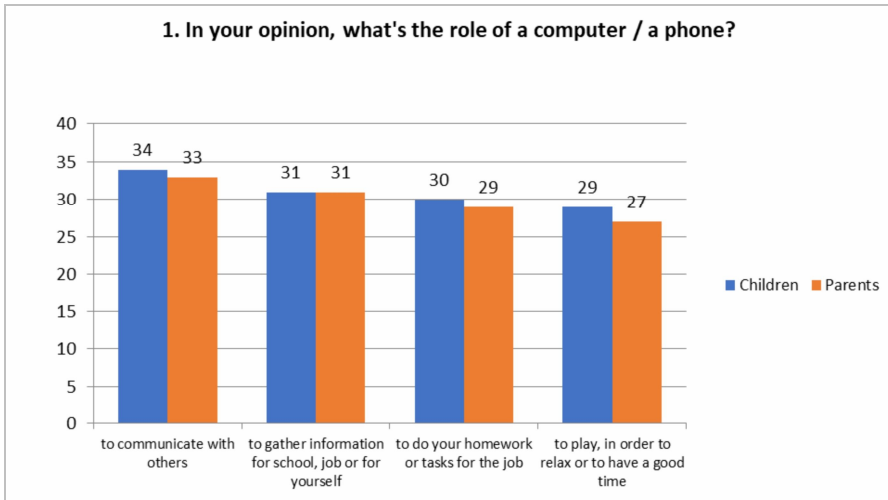


Figure 1. The structure of answers at question Q1

As we can see, 34 children (94% of students) and 33 parents (91% of parents) consider that the main role of a computer or a phone is: to communicate with others; instead, 31 students (86%) and 31 parents (86%) put on the second place the role of gathering information for school and for job. There are no differences between students and parents regarding the same subject.

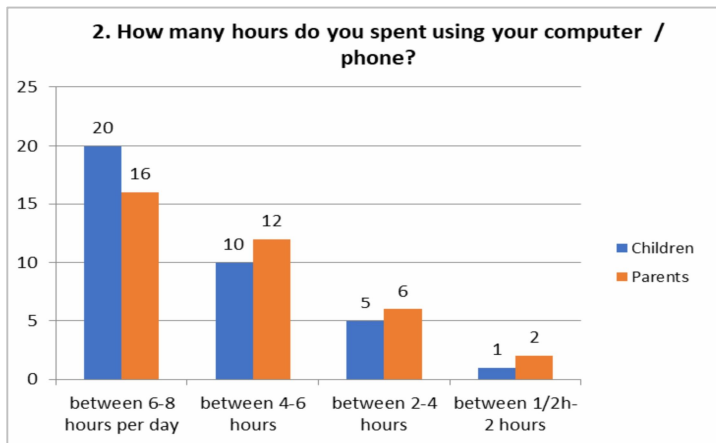


Figure 2. The structure of answers at question Q2

Looking on the numbers, we can see that 55 % from parents (20 parents) consider that they spend between 6-8 hours per day, using a computer, 44% from students (16 students) consider that they spend the same number of hours. If we look closely, we can see that 88% of parents and 77% of students spend more than 4 hours per day, using a computer, which is a big number.

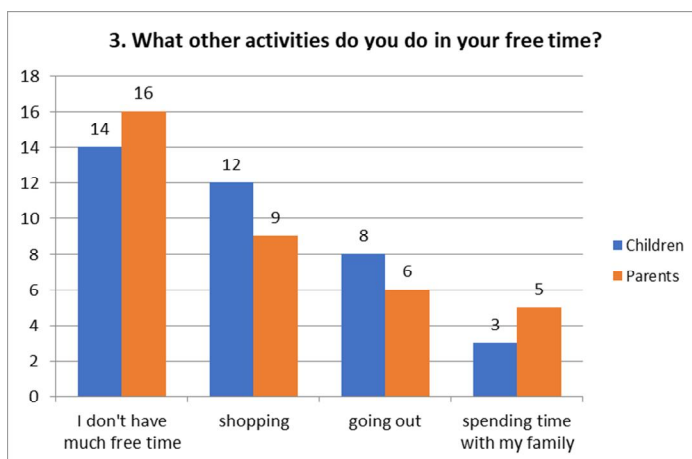


Figure 3. The structure of answers at question Q3

It is important to notice that, according to this questionnaire, 38% of the children (14 students) and 44 % of the parents (16 parents) declare that they don't have free time, but, more serious is that 33% of students (12 students) and 25% of parents (9 parents) prefer to do shopping in the free time and only 8% (3 students) and 13.8% of parents prefer to spend time with their families.

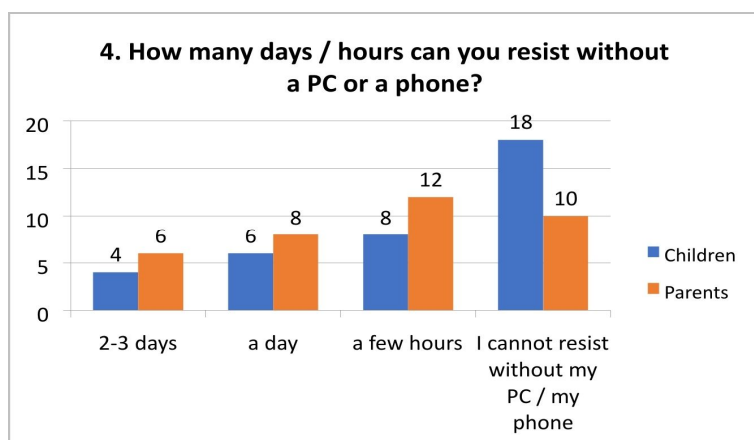


Figure 4. The structure of answers at question Q4

It is interesting to see that 50% of students (18 students) and 27.7 % of parents (10 parents) cannot resist at all, without a PC or a phone, not even a few hours and only 11% (4 students) and 16.6% of parents (6 parents) resist 2-3 days without an electronic device.

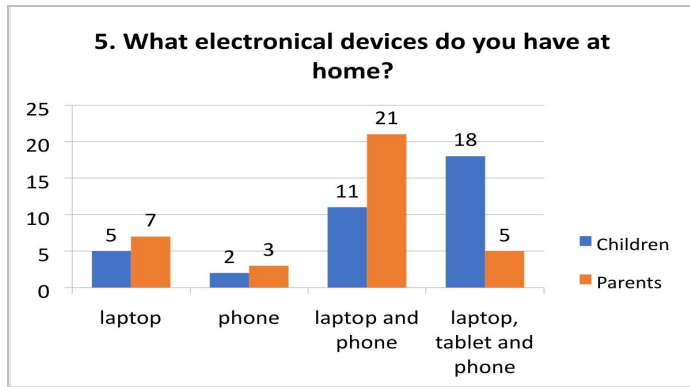


Figure 5. The structure of answers at question Q5

Looking on the figure 5, we can see that 50% of the students (18 students) have laptop, tablet and phone, comparing with parents which only 13.8% of them (5 parents) have these three electronic devices, so, there are significant differences regarding this topic.

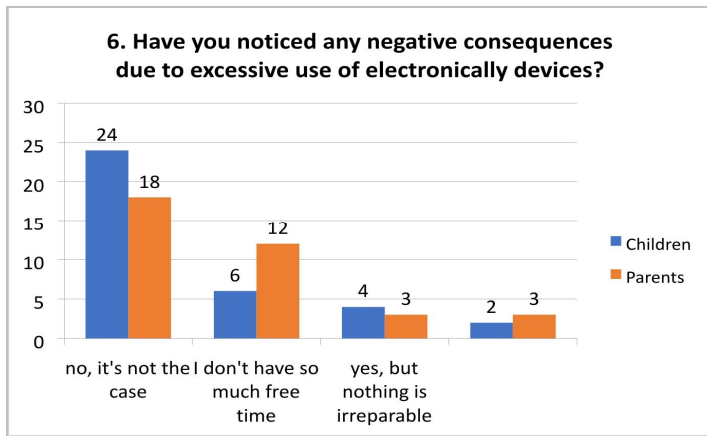


Figure 6. The structure of answers at question Q6

It is quite interesting to see that 66% of students (24 students) and 50% of parents (18 parents) consider that they didn't notice any negative consequences due to excessive use of electronically devices.

Validation of the hypothesis

The first hypothesis „The children are using too much time electronic devices because their parents are using them too;” was validated by the answers offered by children and their parents to the item 2 (more than 88 % of 4th grade students spent between 4 and 8 hours per day on a laptop or phone and more than 77% of their parents spent between 4 and 8 hours per day on a laptop or phone).

The second hypothesis “The parents don’t realize that these electronic devices are harmful for the children’s life and for them too” was validated by the answers offered by children and their parents to the item 6 (more than 88 % of 4th grade students consider that these devices are harmful and more than 83 % of their parents consider the same thing).

The main limit of the study

Sample consists only of 4th grade students and their parents from Iasi County, so these results cannot be extended to the entire population of Romanian population. There will be no pre-testing the subjects, which means that we cannot obtain the accuracy of the results; There is no control group.

Discussions

Taking into account the frequencies of the sample’ answers, we notice that both parts (parents and students) consider that the electronic devices are extremely important for them, because the main role is to communicate and, maybe this is why they have so many devices and this is why they cannot resist to much time without them.

It is sad to see that the same pattern is present not only on the students, but on the parents too because they spend a lot of time in the front of a computer, without living their life, in the true sense of it.

So, it is very important to make some suggestions:

The parents must spend more time with their children, in order to have a healthy relationship and to live a normal life the parents must consult a psychologist in order to solve their problem and their children too: digital addiction.

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Chapter III

Education for Values in Cultural Studies, Literature and Linguistics

Gamification: Assessing Students' Speaking Competences in an Offline Environment

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Abstract: *At the beginning of September 2020, when we came back to school, I needed to measure the students' competences after the online school. As one of the classes I am teaching was reluctant to speaking, I came up with the idea of assessing them in a gamified way, using a system of symbols, levels, and rewards. The system is, in fact, an observation grid containing each competence stated in the curriculum. A symbol is assigned to each speaking competence. If the student proves that he/she has that respective competence structured, he/she would receive a sticker with the symbol assigned for that competence. Each sticker represents a level. To pass a level, the student needs to obtain five points. For each competence they can also earn from one to five stars, depending on how well the competence is structured. The target group of this project was represented by a 7th grade class from Olga Gudynn International School in Voluntari, Ilfov, studying French – A2 level of CEFRL and it was applied during the first three weeks of the school year 2020-2021. Beside the observation grid for speaking, I also used a questionnaire to see the students' perception of the project and another rubric to measure students' motivation and involvement. The results of the project were good; as the questionnaire shows, the students found the project funny and were willing to continue with it, and the results of the observation grid proved that students' motivation and involvement increased. The project also ensured that all the students would answer based on the unassessed competences, as they were eager to pass the level and earn the stars or the stickers they were missing.*

Keywords: Gamification, motivation, involvement, ICT .

Introduction

Starting with March 2020, the schools in Romania went online until the end of the school year in June 2020. For some teachers, this was a big issue, as this was the first time when they taught online. Having the experience of some previous research where I integrated the ICT in teaching, for me, the online school represented an opportunity to see how it would function.

In order to do this, I needed to test if the students' communication competences were structured according to the national curriculum, but I faced a big problem – one of my classes were very reluctant to speaking because they were afraid of mistakes. Consequently, I needed to come up with an idea so that the evaluation of the speaking competences wouldn't be affected by their reluctance. In this respect, the gamification might have been a good way to make them speak. On the other hand, the beginning of the school year can be stressful for students, as they are supposed to pass initial tests in every subject they study, so I also tried to find a way to make the assessment funnier.

Defined as “use of game design elements within non-game contexts” (Deterding, S., Dixon, Khaled, & Nacke, 2011, p. 9), gamification could be a good way to motivate students (Seaborn & Deborah, 2015) and increase their involvement (Căpeneată, 2020). Used for assessing students, gamification is a way of supporting them to learn from their mistakes and experience no fear to make a mistake (Galdun, 2016), and help them get rid their inhibition in speaking (Mishra, 2019).

Methodology

The target group of the research consisted of 22 students, 7th graders, 9 girls and 13 boys, aged between, 12 and 13, from Olga Gudynn international School, Voluntari, Romania, studying French as a second language, with an A1+ level of French, most of them reluctant to speaking. The project was applied during the first three weeks of the school year 2020-2021 (September-October) and it tested all the four speaking competences stated in the 6th grade national curriculum, as I am using it as an initial test for the 7th graders.

At the beginning of the school year, I designed an observation grid (Table 1) containing the name of the students and the four empty lines for each specific competence. After that, I assigned symbols for each competence – four colored crystals, one for each competence. During the first French class, I explained to the students that we were going to play a game. Its rules are the following: this game has four levels; at the end of each level, i.e. when they complete a level, they earn a badge – in the shape of a colored crystal. To finish the game, they are supposed to earn all the four crystals. To pass one level, they must earn five stars; the order in which they finish the levels is not compulsory.

Each star represents a point, so they pass the level when they gather the five respective necessary points. At the end of the game, the points they earn become points in the initial assessment for speaking. Before each activity the teacher informs the students on the type of star they could earn and also about the bonus stars for those who manifest interest in taking part in the social interaction (the fourth competence).

In order to explore the students' motivation and involvement, I applied an observation grid, and at the end of the project, a questionnaire to collect data on the students' perception upon the project.

The table below exemplifies the assessment grid which represents the game itself. Each line represents the four specific competences from the 6th grade national curriculum (***, 2017):

1. The student can produce a message, in a usual communication context, helped by the interlocutor
2. The student can ask for information about numbers, prices, or the time
3. The student can describe a person or a character
4. The student manifests willingness to take part in short social interactions

Below, there is an excerpt from the game. The names of the students were changed, to respect the GDPR rules.

Table 1. The game (observation grid) – excerpt after one week

<i>Name</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Badge</i>	<i>Points (/20)</i>
<i>Student 1</i>	1. ★ ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it</i>		7
	2. ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it</i>		<i>You're almost there!</i>
	3. ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it</i>		
	4. ★ ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it</i>		
<i>Student 2</i>	1. <i>Keep trying! You can do it!</i>		2
	2. ★ ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it</i>		<i>You're almost there!</i>
	3. <i>Keep trying! You can do it!</i>		
	4. ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it</i>		

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Table 2: The game (observation grid)– excerpt at the end of the game

<i>Name</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Badge</i>	<i>Points (/20)</i>
<i>Student 1</i>		1. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ <i>Level completed</i>	
		2. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ <i>Level completed</i>	
		3. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ <i>Level completed</i>	
		4. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ <i>Level completed</i>	
<i>Student 2</i>		1. ★ ★ ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it!</i>	
		2. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ <i>Level completed</i>	
		3. ★ ★ <i>Keep trying! You can do it!</i>	
		4. ★ ★ ★ ★ ★ <i>Level completed</i>	

20
Game
completed

15
You're
almost
there!

Results

Motivation and involvement. As the observation grid shows, the students' motivation increased, and their involvement improved. Willing to finish the game, to earn all the four badges and to receive the prize – a better mark in the initial test, they joined the game and tried their best. They overcame their fear to speak in French without knowing, to play the game and to pass all

the four levels. In terms of the initial assessment for speaking, the results are presented in the table below:

Table 3. Results of the initial assessment

No. of students Competence	Unacquired (no star)	Partially acquired (1-4 star)	Acquired (5 star)
1	0	10	12
2	0	8	14
3	0	9	13
4	0	6	16

The game also ensured that each student would get involved in the tasks related to the competences that haven't been tested yet, providing an opportunity for each student to develop his/her unstructured speaking competence, by practicing them to earn the stars they lack.

Fun. Technically, when a game is at stake, fun is more likely to be present. Indeed, the crystals work their magic and the assessment climate changed to a positive one. The results in the questionnaire show that the students had a lot of fun, even if this activity was, in fact, an assessment, which could have been stressful. One of the students stated: "I think I like to pass tests", while another one said that he wanted to continue with this game for the entire school year.

The game also represented a good start of the year. The students were more involved during the speaking activities during the school year, even if I have no evidence that it was thanks to the game.

Conclusions

Even if assessment is stressful for students, there are always ways of making it more enjoyable, and gamification can be a good one. The pressure of the assessment of the speaking competences, especially when we face a class reluctant to speaking, can affect the objectivity of the actual measurement. This project can be a good solution to make initial assessment funnier, less stressful, and more objective. It has also the potential to motivate students to speak and to get involved in the activities.

Facing the challenge of a game, the students become more involved and unafraid of speaking, as the purpose of the activity is not showing what they know or receiving a good mark, but passing the level and earn the badge.

Used in a homo zappiens class, gamification can be a powerful tool, not only to test the students' competences in modern foreign languages, but also to

structure new competences, to make the learning process more enjoyable, more familiar to a generation which is always connected, but it can also be a good way of adapting to an environment where the use of the new media is not possible, because of the infrastructure available or because of the school rules that can forbid the use of some technologies (for example, mobile phones). Actually, the gamification project presented above is inspired by the digital tools, brings about the psychological satisfaction of computer games levels completion and it takes place in the offline class. This is evidence that ICT is inspirational in any kind of teaching-learning environment. The key is to adapt it according to the students' needs and instructional goals.

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Let's Tell a Story: Engagement and Environment are Keys to (Inter)Cultural Projects

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Abstract: *The paper draws the narrative of a decade of teaching effort directed towards empowering students to manage their own learning project. Starting from the students' ideas that got shape in projects written during the project writing class, two projects were developed in the Petroleum-Gas University of Ploiesti whose main objective was to achieve the proper match between the physical and the mental space. By student-student and student-teacher partnerships a genuine community of learning was created in the long run, which finally proved to work well both in ordinary and in exceptional conditions, such as those generated by the Covid pandemic.*

Keywords: *cultural project management, learning by doing, student-centred approach, student engagement, student empowerment.*

Empowered students dream big

This is how it all started. “Project Writing” and “Project Management” are disciplines in the curriculum of the students enrolled in the MA programme *Concepts and Strategies of Intercultural Communication*. They are there by the rightful, difficult to contest, decision of the curriculum designers, who considered it appropriate that graduate students should have some knowledge of how to write and manage a project. Just that the way of teaching these subjects can make the difference. They can be taught from the teacher's vantage point, in a very formal, commonly accepted, academic way, with students requested to master concepts and consider case studies, or they can be approached in a hands-on manner, with students learning project management while they explore concepts and try them in a learning by doing strategy.

Since 2010, the authors of this paper have been following the latter path, keen on empowering students to manage their own learning project, even

if, in the beginning, the students' projects were oriented more towards problems identified outside the academic environment. Over the years, as the graduate students got more interested and involved in the life of the academic community, the projects started looking more inwards, dealing with upcoming challenges of the university, such as the increasing number of international students. They became equally concerned with the students' problems in an environment that often failed to keep pace with the students' needs and demands.

This is how the Book-Café Project was born. It sprang from the students' bitter realization that they were deafened by the "stillness" of the university library, where "knowledge seems stagnant, boring", where it "was clustered between the covers of a book or within the traditional cubicles [...] where readers cannot face one another." (Vlad&Moroianu, 2012, p. 461)

What our students were doing at that time was identify the problem and start looking for a possible solution through a project that was a dream very unlikely to come true. They wanted a place in which "both professors and students are able to interact, expand learning activities, discuss research issues and become partakers in cultural exchange." (Vlad&Moroianu, 2012, p. 461) They were dreaming of a place organized according to a flexible library concept that (re)models the classical book-centred space so that it stays tuned to nowadays culture and becomes centred on a community of readers. In very simple terms, the Book-Café is a friendly place, that favours dialogue and overcomes the perimeter of the "I and the book I read" little box, i.e. the traditional cubicle where knowledge is developed and expanded in isolation. (Vlad&Moroianu, 2012, p. 461)

Their dream, however, had but little to do with the way the academia understood, and still understands, the teaching-learning process. The students' voice was hardly audible in a context in which investing in an outdated library was an undesired extravagance, to say the least. This was probably the reason why two of the MA students from whose article we have quoted decided to have their project presented to a broader international audience, looking for a validation of their findings.

The Story continues: from students' dream to institutional projects

The students' suggestions, reflecting their worries and needs in an environment that they perceived as rigid and stale, are at the basis of two interconnected projects implemented in the university. The first, a smaller scale one, was financed through the Institutional Development Fund (IDF) and its primary objective was the cultural integration of the international students. Two relatively small rooms were a good enough starting point. It is maybe noteworthy to say that before the IDF grant the two rooms had been notoriously unpopular among students and teaching staff alike: with a NNE geographical

and end of corridor orientation the respective learning environments had been cold and far from the lively areas where students felt like hanging with one another. These rooms were refurbished following the students' suggestions. The MA students at that time got involved in designing the space, making it match the Book-Café team's dream. They used both their already developed skills as intercultural communicators and their emerging ones as interior designers to turn the two seminar rooms in a friendly space where the international students should feel at ease, at the beginning, at home, later on.



Figure 1 – Images from the two refurbished rooms under the IDF grant

The furniture was so designed to be flexibly arranged, the traditional desks and chairs were given up and replaced by colourful stools and cushions, as well as by small tables to the utmost awe, it is true, of teachers, some very young, who already missed the rows of desks where students could be disciplined to the classroom order. The change was difficult to accept because the reshaping of the learning space presupposed an even more dramatic change of the teaching strategies. Moreover, the international students' integration was not only about the different organization of the space and about rethinking the teaching process. Integration means interaction and interconnectedness, a sense of belonging. And this is where the MA students stepped in again. Their learning outcomes from the project management courses were now international student-oriented. They befriended the newcomers and got involved together in a number of activities that were no longer confined to the walls of the university, but opened up towards the real life. They went on trips together, they cooked, went to movies, students and teachers alike. Diversity was now a fact of life and

difference was no more perceived as threatening. It had all started from rethinking the space and ended up in the students' genuine understanding of themselves and the others. The international students and the MA students became part of what the name of the project represented, UNIVERS, where the cultural encounter and exchange had become possible.

The second project is a larger scale one. More than five years passed since the ideas of the Book-Café students were publicized through the paper included in the ICT for Language Learning Conference proceedings. In 2017, the opportunity occurred that these ideas should come to fruition through a project financed by ROSE university grant scheme. Two generous spaces were fully rethought to serve as a place of encounter not of a restricted group, such as the international students, as the case was with the previous project, but of the whole community of students and teachers. The vision of the Learning Centre project was that the students should benefit from a friendly learning environment where [b]oth undergraduate and graduate students [could] use their creative thinking, improve their communicative and inquiry competences and where to become free producers of knowledge, skilled researchers and specialists in a variety of domains. Moreover, for such a goal to be attained, professors and students should work together in learning partnerships. (Vlad&Moroianu, 2012, p. 461)

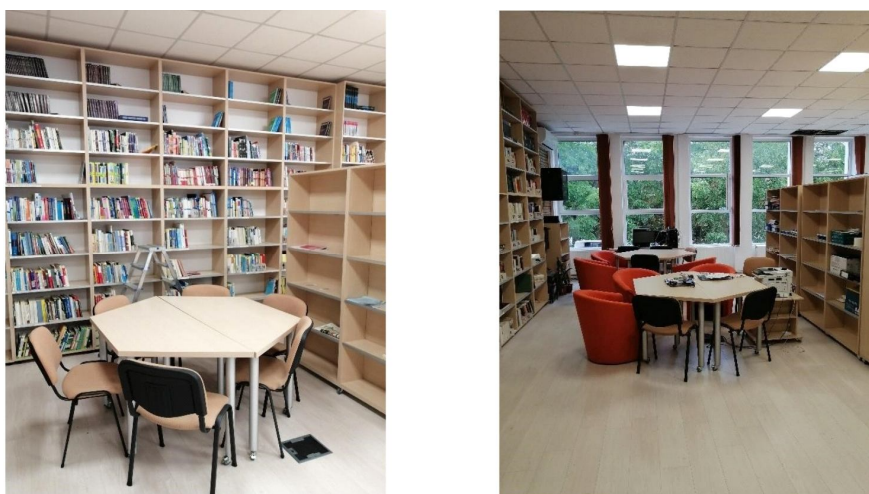


Figure 2. Images from the Learning Centre

The renovation of the rooms took almost a year. The much-dreaded cubicles were removed, hopefully together with the old-fashioned “I and the book I read” concept. The furniture modules were so designed to allow a flexible organization of space. Students and teachers were given the freedom to

reconfigure the space so that it could serve better their learning needs. Comfortable armchairs were scattered here and there to offer the comfort of reading in a relaxed home-like atmosphere.

The suffocating stillness of the reading room gave way to the effervescent talk of people working together and exchanging ideas.

One full year before the pandemic, the Learning Centre was the students' favourite venue. They no longer came here because they had to, but because they resonated with the friendliness of the place. They had been given freedom of thinking, of deciding, of interconnecting.

The students enrolled in the MA programmes continued to get involved in activities organized in the Learning Centre. As the number of international students decreased in a context dramatically affected by the pandemic, they started developing new learning partnerships with their younger colleagues. They kept on thinking up projects that could satisfy the freshmen's learning needs. They identified problems and they looked for solutions. They made long-standing friendships. They turned it into their task to make the first-year students feel at home, which helped the latter perform well even in the subsequent year that was exclusively one of on-line learning. A community of learning was formed.

The 2012 Book-Café project has finally come true. It was just a dream at that time, it is now part of the academia's life. We may say it was the starting point of a change of mentality and approach to education.

The unthought of sequel: The case for the zoom-school

The environment in the Learning Centre invites to democratic knowledge and shared experiences. The space per se does not work any miracle yet it promotes openness and dialogue. The same happens with technology. IT offers incredible opportunities for fast communication, fast documentation, support for content creation... But human action is needed to make things happen and happen effectively and efficiently. Transformation and benefits do not take place automatically when we enter in the digital school. Nevertheless, the teachers, who made their apprenticeship along the Book-Cafe dream and later wrote the project applications for the IDF and ROSE grants and implemented them, did not find themselves at a loss. Afterall, the fluid space in the Learning Centre with its mobile shelves, meant a good rehearsal for the dynamic of a zoom class with an active breaking rooms function! Beyond the special feature of the virtual space, what matters most in online learning is the partnership among teachers and students, and the empowerment of the latter. Technology makes interaction possible in multiple ways, with the digital content inclusively. Unfortunately, connectivity is not connectedness. The participants in 100%

online education feel the lack of the genuine relationship which is unmediated by the screen.

The pandemic brought about an abrupt change in schools; consequently, there is an immense load of literature dedicated to the educators' response to the Covid challenge. Some come from practitioners who looked for ways to improve their teaching performance in a new environment (Dhawan, 2020; Oranburg, 2020), some represent more sophisticated analyses or meta-analyses (OECD, 2020; Van Mart & al, 2020). They all speak about the advantages of the tool that allows schooling whatsoever, but invariably mention the absence of the real interaction and the dramatic disruption of the daily school learning activities. The courses of the master programme were primarily affected by the dissolution of the international group. In the spring of 2020, the project management course continued online, via zoom, in an interactive way, that was satisfactory for the participants; but all the planned activities among the two groups could no longer take place due to the restrictions. Nor was it the time to reconstruct the whole project work into a digital framework! In a strange twist of events, the first representatives of the Gen Z in the MA programme could not solve the (digital!) problem in the context of the pandemic. This happened in many establishments. It shows again that technology, though a very useful instrument for learning, cannot be the universal panacea. The 2020-2021 academic year brought about a routine of the disruption. The students managed better the ever-changing learning environment and embarked on new projects to support the freshmen in the Philology

Department since the international students' numbers decreased. The hybrid format as well as the initial planning with social media as primary instrument of communication allowed the development of new perspectives on student engagement. Everybody started to understand the social distancing limitations and looked for solutions to keep on going.

The data we collected so far indicate that students can adapt to new learning environments if given the opportunity and necessary support on behalf of the teachers. There is definitely a change of perspective in between the "before" the pandemic and the current situation. A sum up of the students' views in the final questionnaire for the cohorts before the pandemic reveals interesting feedback:

The use of cinematic material for the exploration of project management concepts is unanimously praised; more than 75% consider the learning partnership with G1 as a very valuable experience for life; more than two thirds consider teamwork an asset of the course and would like to have more opportunities of this kind during their higher education; their comments refer to the need for more courses like the project management one to involve them in critical thinking and discussion of the subject matter. (Dobrinescu&Sarivan, 2019, p. 208)

The developments of the zoom-school change the perspective to a certain extent. The latest questionnaire (June 2021) shows a more obvious interest in teamwork – 100% of the students (compared to 70% before) consider teamwork and relationships during project work as their most valuable experience. Could we consider this a bonus of the otherwise drama of the season? Teamwork might have filled the ‘longing for belonging’ to a community, so often quoted in the literature because of social isolation during the pandemic. The perceptions of the students concerning the usefulness of the cinematic materials remain unchanged. The 2021 questionnaire introduced questions about the online activities. There is a divide among the group as far as preferences are concerned. Some would rather have f2f work others would rather have it online and a few are undecided. Nevertheless, all highlighted the advantages of the zoom school, while some also pointed out some of the disadvantages, namely the human isolation that the technology equipment we now possess cannot solve. Some of the grads also mentioned that their projects with the freshmen were often hindered because of social distancing and human isolation. Overall, at the end of the academic year 2020-

2021, perceptions are positive, and students enjoyed the opportunity of carrying out ‘real life’ projects, that respond to their younger colleagues’ needs.

The story reloaded: where to?

The language grads project management course gradually transformed the traditional relationship between the academic curriculum and assessment: students are no longer given tablets of knowledge to take, process and then return in the exam. The point of the course is to facilitate the management of cultural projects in the academic community. Thus, the object of the course becomes a project framework, where students make their apprenticeship for writing and managing small scale projects of their own. It is like a frame story. Empowered students transformed it into a success story.

Sometimes, mainly during the fall term, students are disappointed because projects do not come out as planned. Gradually they learn by doing an important aspect of project management which is assess and adjust. On the one hand this helped our (small) zoom-school to adapt in times of (global) crisis. On the other hand, it reminds us all that methodology needs to adapt, target groups need to change and even a success story needs a reload and update. Not for the sake of change but to respond effectively to its Erwartungshorizont. In the 21st century Academia cannot copy/paste the course for next year, no matter how successful it might have been. The course becomes effective when it allows the participants to take courage and course. And write their own project/ story!

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On Ideals: written in stone or calligraphed? – a shot history of calligraphy versus educational ideals

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Abstract: *Calligraphy represents a powerful reference when we think about education. It is a symbol of the way teachings were transmitted and culture was propagated. Calligraphy was, in the times of handwritten books and manuscripts, and even of stone carved inscriptions, an aesthetic indicator. It still remains so until today. It evolved throughout history, changing its outer form dramatically, but managing to preserve the essence, that is to transmit coherent and consistent information in a cryptic system of signs. Education also evolved in terms of ideals, embodying the specific needs of the society in each important period of history. There are similarities between the evolution of calligraphy and of educational ideals that provide a new approach of these two intersecting fields when studied in parallel. The focus of the present paper stays on the most important moments in the history of the Western European educational ideal development, maintaining a permanent comparison with the visual expression of the written texts in Latin scripts, in an attempt to find similarities and challenging perspectives*

Keywords: *calligraphy, educational ideals, visual expression, written texts.*

Each period in the history of mankind has found a definite spirit of time, the so-called *Zeitgeist*, manifested generally visible in cultural and artistic products, which are among the most “Vocal” representations of the accumulation of features specific to the time in which they are produced. Context temporally affects all aspects of life, in some cases the time model being adopted or reflected faster and more visibly, in other respects may manifest subtly and later.

The way humanity feels and expresses the spirit of the time was intertwined with the way it chooses to communicate values, the way it promotes and perpetuates them, how it inoculates them. And considering we mostly transmit the values better when we transmit the information, education becomes an extremely important vector in spreading the spirit of a period of time. Through the educational act an aesthetic dimension attaches itself to the disseminated knowledge. This can be analysed not only through the lens of the

actual knowledge necessary to read and interpret artistic products, but also through *modus vivendi* as an embodiment of aesthetics in the philosophy of current life, as “man exists and unfolds not only in accordance with intellectual-practical scopes, but also in accordance with the laws of beauty, of harmony and coherence of aesthetics in nature, society and the work of art. (see, C.Cucos, 2014)” (Constantin Cucos, *Pedagogie*, Editura Polirom, 2014)

Development and education, by themselves aligned with the times, are subject to precepts that generate synthesis of values that are propagated in the educational process and crystallised in the educational ideal. The educational ideal is represented by two essential components: the utopian one – in which the desire to achieving the goal ignores the tangible reality and the existing potential, the importance being held by the intention and desire to reach that goal - and the realistic one – in which the dream and its fulfilment are tarnished by the limitations of physical nature and the precariousness of each person involved (E. Stan, 2020).

In its evolution throughout history, the educational ideal has known forms specific to each period, being supported by the values and the way of manifestation specific to the stages in time. And as said before, that art is one of the obvious manifestations in which the spirit of time is reflected, one of its components being the art of writing and producing books, we consider a challenging parallel between the values of the educational ideal and the visual expression, congruent or not, which we find in these cultural products, with emphasis on the written component, more precisely calligraphy.

For a time-related perspective upon calligraphy, it is worth mentioning that this form of artistic and utilitarian manifestation registered as well substantial evolutions that marked its history, delimiting some timeframes dedicated to certain aesthetic features of writing. The handwriting, used as a way of writing books (manuscripts) and administrative acts, was the main form of inscription on various media (papyrus, parchment, paper, etc.) until the time of printing, approximately around 1450 when it Johannes Gutenberg invented the movable type¹ printing press in Europe. And after this period of inventions in the art of printing, the handwriting continued helping to produce written materials, but from a moment on its decline was dramatic, until calligraphy was transformed from an independent profession into an adjacent activity of lesser importance in chancelleries or administrative offices. Starting with the early twentieth century, it almost completely disappeared as a *métier* and was reborn in the form of art.

We propose a conceptual parallel, a courageous approach perhaps, covering both the values reflected in the educational ideal and also the aesthetic

¹ ”movable types are metal letters formed in a mould, which could be assembled into pages of text, used for printing, cleaned and then returned to a storage tray for further use.” - Ewan Clayton, *Writing: Making Your Mark*, The British Library, 2019, p.65

ones from the calligraphic writings point of view, extended over a period starting from Antiquity up to the present day in Europe, focused on latin calligraphy. We could find similarities between the expected characteristics that education should provide to the very young members of the society, characteristics that could be translated into visual correspondents regarding calligraphy, as if the desired pedagogical outcome could be somehow echoed by the result of the rules applied to handwriting.

During European Antiquity times, the triad of good-beautiful-truth – kalokagathia – was intended to stand out and impregnate both the beauty of the body and the moral features of a person, harmonising ethics and aesthetics. Education in Ancient Greece and Rome focused on both sides, the physical and the cognitive-spiritual, either sometimes simultaneously or some other times letting one of them to prevail, intertwining health of the body with that of the mind and implicitly of the spirit. An ideal of education in those times was to prepare free citizens, ready physically and militarily, as an expression of power and freedom, or harmonious and morally developed people.



Figure 1. Roman Imperial Capitals, Inscription on the Trajan Column, Rome, AD 113

This desire to access a form of perfection, which was inspired by the way the gods were imagined, is to be found in the visual expression of letters from the Latin alphabet in its Roman form, more precisely in the form of Imperial Capital letters. Those letters were, and managed to remain over two millennia, a well known standard of proportions, an indisputable landmark of beauty and harmony of the written sign. Studied by artists and specialists in design and printing, they were analysed in the smallest details of their shapes and components of each letter. The exact construction of form, of proportions, the equilibrium between thick and thin strokes, the extraordinary subtlety of serifs transformed them into an epitome of sophistication though maintaining

only the essential lines. Echoing the power and perfection of body, mind and spirit, the frontispieces of Roman buildings bear up to date stone inscriptions that represent a hard to overcome aesthetic ideal.

Towards the end of the first millennium, from the late 8th century, a great visionary ruler shaped the landscape of culture and education in Western Europe: Charlemagne, known for his lifetime struggle and partial success in overpassing his own illiteracy. But mostly under his reign education was meant to be reformed during the so called Carolingian Renaissance. The ideal of education in those times was designed by great scholars invited at court to create schools with standardised curriculum, trivium and quadrivium of liberal arts education, inspired from ancient Greece: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music and astronomy.

In terms of calligraphy and production of manuscript books, the script used in those times became also more consistent and classicised, starting to take the form of so called Carolingian minuscule. The letters in this book script are very legible, they developed and became a calligraphic standard in the medieval Europe. The letters were round, uniform, disciplined, spacing was more generous. They became an international script and were used as a model for a later script, developed during the Italian Renaissance, the same as the standardised schools developed during this period were the buds of the future Universities in Europe.

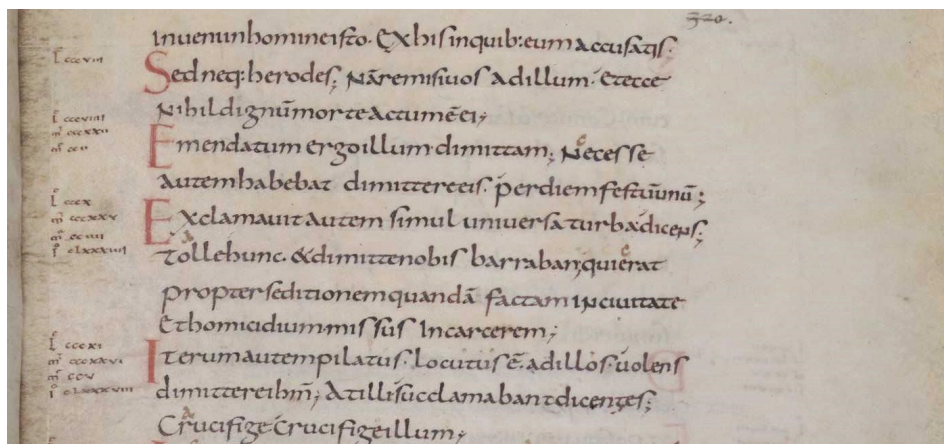


Figure 2. Carolingian Script, By

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp>, Public Domain

During the Middle Ages, in times of brave deeds and chivalrous ideals, when one hand manipulated the sword and the other the cross, the Christian values were the ones preached. Of these, sacrifice and asceticism were virtues

and the supreme acts that promised a Christian believer access to salvation and redemption. Sacrifice was also the value that was inoculated through education, earthly life being only a preamble full of turmoil before the eternal life. The two directions, either the path of the clergy or the one of the secular feudal, shaped the educational ideals. The seven liberal arts, already mentioned before, that were considered important for the first category were opposed the ones needed for the secular education, namely the ‘seven chivalry arts (virtues): riding, fencing, hunting, swimming, playing chess, and reciting rhymes accompanied by a lute’ (Rata, G., Palicica, M., 2010, p.225).

In the often gloomy atmosphere, heavily tested by wars, diseases, turmoil and abandonment, in graphic representations and in manuscript writings appeared a loaded, heavy, extremely geometric and dark style, the so-called Blackletter, a family of Gothic hands, with angular letters, spaces exploited to the fullest on parchment paper, sacrificing readability to the economy and austerity of writing. As a counterweight, the illuminated manuscripts of this period knew an unprecedented development in terms of ornamentation and decoration of the page, remaining up to now examples of marginalia art (the decorated border around the text) that can boldly stand in line with major arts.

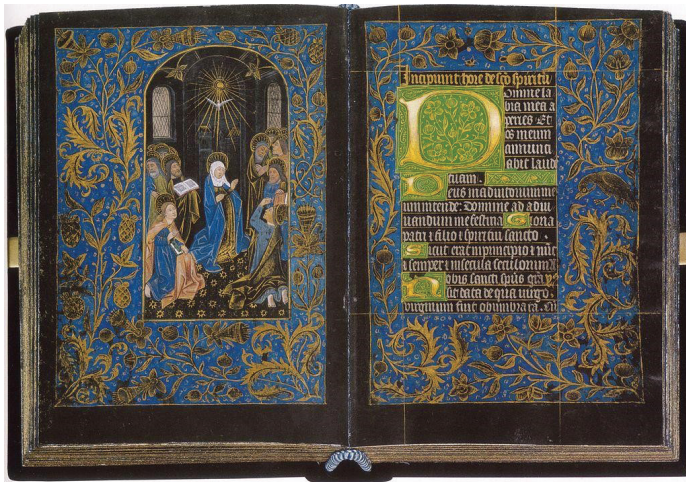


Figure 3. Gothic Textura Quadrata script, Black Hours, 1475–80.
Morgan Library & Museum, New York

The European Renaissance builds the bridge over time between the XV-XVI centuries and Antiquity, by revisiting and bringing to the fore the virtues preached by the philosophers of ancient Greece and Rome. Putting the man in the centre of the universe, stating the power of the “homo universalis”, the educational ideal is meant to help preparing the young generation ready to

acquire any goal, Renaissance also reopens access to the canonical beauty and virtues of the body and the soul. Education is in turn marked by an unprecedented openness and an appetite for knowledge, that period being the time when the brilliant minds of the polymaths shone. If we are to mention only Leonardo da Vinci, we have the essence of the genius of the human mind and the incredible power of accumulation of knowledge and generation of brilliant ideas and projects.

That rebirth is also the moment which marks a visible change in art and the aesthetics of writing. There are treatises on writing about a style known Italic, an expression of the innate aesthetic sense of Italian calligraphers. An elegant writing, easy to decipher, pleasant to read, supple, which allows almost a cursive succession of letters, ensuring most conditions to make writing easier also by giving it a refined look. Italic script is, in fact, the ancestor of nowadays cursive handwriting, the type of writing we study in school and which we call - involuntarily restricting a world of multiple scripts to only one type - "calligraphic writing". The human-centric ideals of Renaissance, focusing and glorifying all human characteristics, are to be recognised in the Italic script, probably the script that uses most efficiently the natural way of the hand moving on paper, of tracing lines at a specific angle and of connecting letters due to their continuous ductus.

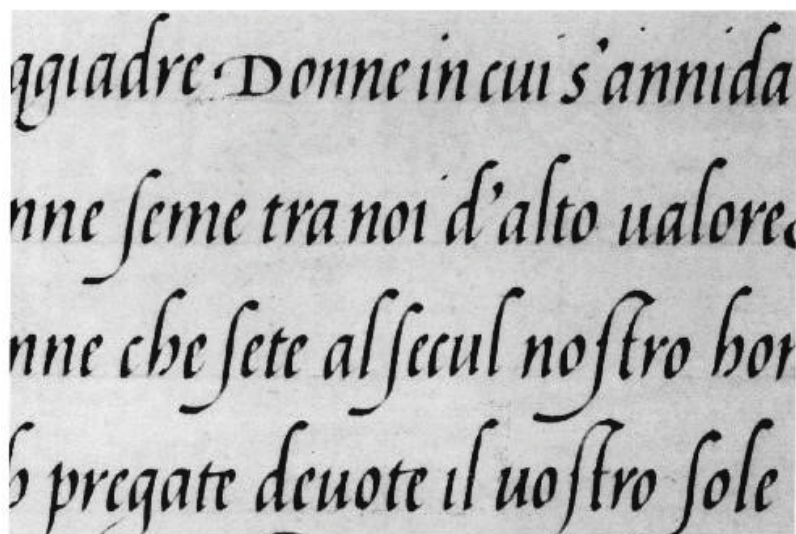


Figure 4. Bernardino Cataneo, 1545

Modernity comes with revolutionising and changing paradigms, with exacerbating virtues as freedom, equality, fraternity, legality. The sciences

break free from the dogma and from the church, the emphasis is on individualistic thinking. The evolving industrial environment required an adaptation of the educational ideal, so that the workforce is prepared for the machine age and mass production. The State should provide education access to more individuals. The times are no longer focused on traditions, but on disruptive evolutions. The old order and reference to antique values are dismissed.

The role of science and technology is growing, the printing is also in full development. It is also the period when calligraphy faces an accelerated decline, its place being taken by much more efficient printing presses.

The handwriting with the quill is replaced with the metal nibs writing. Moreover, writing is easier multiplied on plates by engravers, who have a much greater freedom than traditional calligraphers considering by the tools they used and the way they could manipulate them. The canonical rules of executing letters on parchment or paper is replaced by lettering. Like this, Copperplate writing emerged, trying to mimic calligraphic writing with a quill, but using engraved letters on copper plates and subsequently print them.

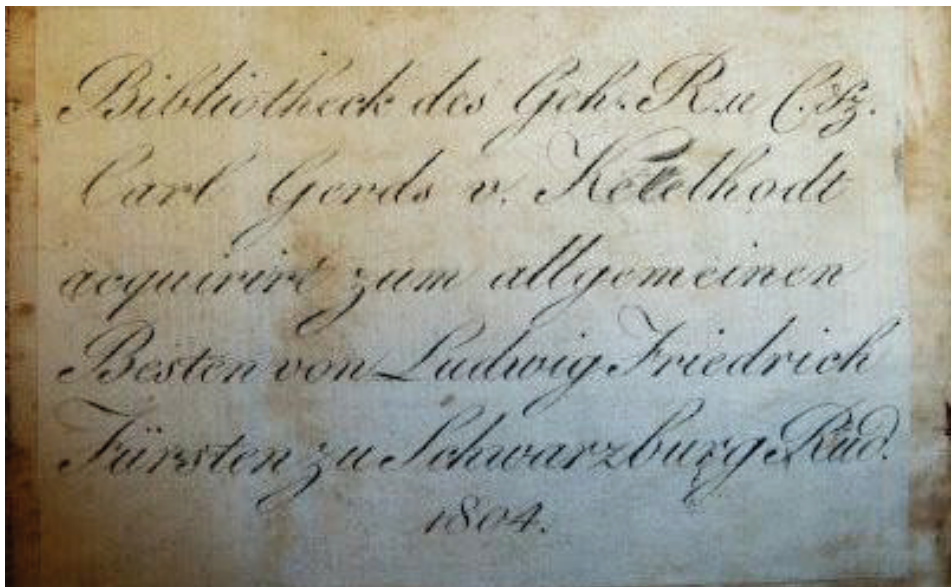


Figure 5. Engraved Copperplate script

Starting with the twentieth century, educational ideals focus a lot on practical skills, on inclusion in society, on the development of skills to ensure the necessary training for employment in a job. Education is now part of more

democratic societies in Europe. The purpose of education aims the timeframe after graduation. Patience and meticulousity in the act of learning is no longer an attribute, the real life pace is to be found in the educational behaviour as well. More often the pragmatic side aspects are required to be included in the ideal of education. If a learned concept does not have immediate pragmatic utility, it loses its attractiveness. Aesthetics goes through the great post-modern paradigm shift, which can absolutely transform anything in art only by declaring the intention, the program or the artistic manifesto. Handwriting reaches the stage of Modern Calligraphy, the rules disappear, the canons are no longer useful, needed or desired, every artist is free to develop their own style. Handwriting becomes almost a contested relic, seen as a weirdness, revived only by enthusiasts or nostalgics. One can apparently live without calligraphy or cursive writing, only that the absence of the writing gestures leave irreplaceable voids in the cognitive development.

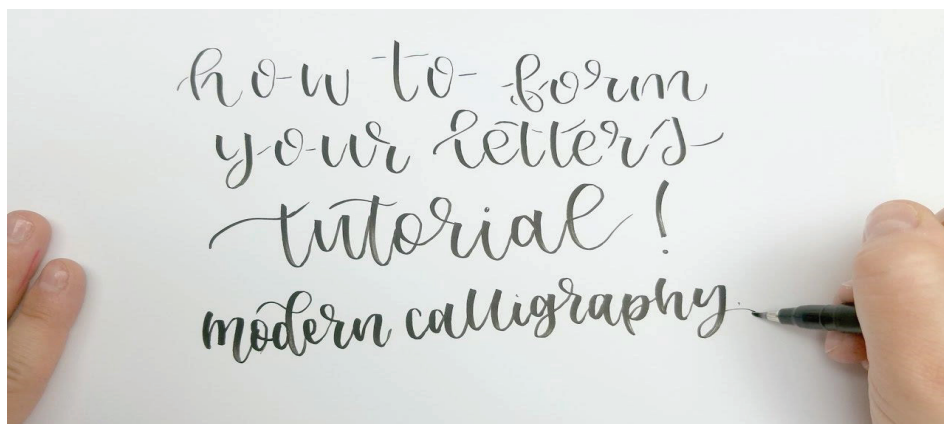


Figure 6. Modern Calligraphy, How to Hand Letter,
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UkuezbAO62A>

The future evolution in education and the ongoing replacement of many human operations by artificial intelligence might totally eliminate handwriting as an activity performed in schools. Subsequently, the educational ideal will adapt accordingly. Still, the revival of calligraphic art beyond the traditional two-dimensional media and migration into the immersive environments leave an open door towards reinterpretation of letters and of the handwriting aesthetics, together with a redesigned inclusion in a activities to serve a future educational ideal.

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The Zany Sense of Humor of Queen Elizabeth II. A Particular Brand of Royal Visual Humour as Manifest in the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony

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Abstract: *The aim of this paper is to analyse a specific brand of humour, royal humour, as manifest in a particular and highly symbolical moment, the London 2012 Olympics Opening Ceremony. The investigation tries to reveal some of the features of visual humour (such as incongruity and visual memory, to mention but a few) as articulated in a royal context. The paper also attempts to explain why the monarch made the unprecedented decision to play a cameo role in a short film broadcast during the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Summer Olympics. The analysis of the event aims to interpret the symbolism of the moment and the connection between this symbolism and the role of a constitutional monarch in the life of the nation. Furthermore, it aims to prove that, sometimes, royal humour can be safely used to show how the monarch joins the popular festive mood at a time of great celebration for the country.*

Keywords: *visual humour, visual memory, visual immediacy, incongruity, royal humour.*

Introduction

This paper aims to investigate the zany sense of humour of Queen Elizabeth II as illustrated visually in the short film entitled *Happy and Glorious*, broadcast by the BBC at the beginning of the London Olympics Opening Ceremony in 2012. The cameo role played by the queen sets this film apart because her performance is an unprecedented event in British royal history.

In our investigation of visual humour, we have made use of Alexandre Mitchell's concepts: "surprise", "suspense", "incongruity", "visual memory" and "visual immediacy". Paul Clements' approach to humour also benefits our investigation. But one cannot attempt to analyse royal humour without tackling identity and how it is constructed. As far as royal identity is concerned, we have used Jan Blommaert concepts of "ascribed identity" and "achieved identity". Furthermore, in order to clarify the role of the monarch in the state architecture and in the life of the nation, we have used Walter Bagehot's taxonomy regarding the English constitution. Furthermore, drawing on Michel Foucault and Jan

Blommaert's concept of "archive", we have coined the term "royal archive" and tried to roughly define the concept, because it is important to our research.

The short film *Happy and Glorious*, starring Queen Elizabeth II (who plays herself)¹ and actor Daniel Craig (who plays James Bond, the famous British secret agent)², is directed by Danny Boyle, a Baftaawarded British director and producer, and the artistic director for the Opening Ceremony of the London Olympic Summer Games in 2012. The short film is produced by the BBC, with a screenplay by Frank Cottrell-Boyce, a British screenwriter and novelist.

The title of this short film makes reference to the line "Happy and Glorious" of the British national anthem, "God Save the Queen". It also is the title of a 1952 British television series about the life of Queen Elizabeth II's great-great-grandmother, Queen Victoria, and the Prince Consort, Prince Albert.

The short film *Happy and Glorious* starts with James Bond's arrival at Buckingham Palace in one of the famous London taxis. As he was expected by the queen, the secret agent briskly climbs the steps of the Grand Staircase in Buckingham Palace, followed closely by the queen's corgis. Bond is ceremoniously welcome by a footman³ and invited into the queen's Audience Room where the monarch, sitting at her desk and working on some papers, pretends not to notice the arrival of her secret agent.

After a few seconds, the queen gets up and greets him with a short line: "Good evening, Mr. Bond". Then, Bond escorts the queen through the Bow Room out of the palace and together they board a helicopter and take off, leaving the corgis on the steps of the palace. The helicopter flies over several landmarks in London, such as Nelson's Column in Trafalgar Square, Big Ben, the London Eye, the Parliament and Parliament Square, where Winston Churchill's statue comes alive when the queen flies past it. Everywhere, Londoners applaud the monarch and her secret agent. The helicopter follows its itinerary flying over the Thames, passing under the Tower Bridge decorated with the seven Olympic rings, before arriving above the London Stadium, where crowds of spectators are ready for the Opening Ceremony of the Games. The aircraft hovers in the sky as the queen and James Bond jump from the helicopter, both opening parachutes in the colours of the Union Jack. A few second afterwards, Queen Elizabeth II makes her entrance onto the stadium, accompanied by the Duke of Edinburgh and welcome by the President of the International Olympic Committee, Jacques Rogge.

¹ Actress Julia McKenzie played Queen Elizabeth II on board the helicopter.

² Stuntmen Mark Sutton and Gary Connery play James Bond and Queen Elizabeth II, respectively, in the skidiving scenes.

³ The name of the footman who appears in the film is Paul Whybrew. See Robert Jobson, *Prince Philip's Century 1921-2021. The Extraordinary Life of the Duke of Edinburgh*, London, Ad Lib Publishers Ltd, 2021, p. 249.

Boyle and Boyce, the director and the screenwriter, respectively, are responsible for the visual humour that the short film contains. So, they are, in fact, the authors of the humorous scenes. But since the queen accepted to play herself, we can naturally assume that she gave her seal of approval to the film. And, as she is the main character in the film, it is fair to say that *Happy and Glorious* catches a glimpse of the queen's sense of humour expressed in a visual manner. The queen's zany sense of humour is revealed by a well calibrated mixture of linguistic and non-linguistic elements.

Humour versus laughter

What makes *Happy and Glorious* stand out is its own brand of humour, clearly and carefully marked by the unprecedented presence of the queen, who plays herself. The queen's performance can definitely make us giggle, but can it make us laugh? It is not far-fetched to guess that, although most watchers may find the queen's performance amusing, it may not make them roar with laughter, simply because it is not meant to cause laughter for reasons that will be uncovered below. Meanwhile, we can more easily understand the difference between humour and laughter by comparing them.

Humour is "an intellectual construction" (G. Mitchell, 2009, p. 8). It is "a mental quality and state that relates to an action or text (visual, written or oral) that often excites and stimulates amusement but not always laughter" (Clements, 2020, p. 14) while laughter is a "physical [...] response (involuntary and semi-voluntary to a stimulus, for example to tickling or inhaling laughing gas), therefore not dependent on humour" (Clements, 2020, p. 13).

Royal identity and humour

An analysis of royal humour (visual or verbal) would benefit greatly from an understanding of how identity develops. In trying to illustrate how royal identity is created, we will make use of Jan Blommaert's concepts of "ascribed identity" and "achieved identity" – an apposite taxonomy because it underlines the role played by the group in establishing identity. Identity is like a coin in the sense that it is double-sided. Part of one's identity is "ascribed identity": a "particular social identity [...] that can only be bestowed on people *after* identity-performing acts have occurred" (Blommaert, p. 206). The ascribed side of the queen's identity is that of a reigning monarch as she was crowned and anointed in 1953. The other part of one's identity is the "achieved or inhabited identity" – "a self-constructed and self-performed identity [...] through which people claim allegiance to a group" (Blommaert, p. 253). Elizabeth II's achieved identity is her personal identity.

There is always a tension between one's ascribed identity and achieved identity as identity is marked by creativity, but as far as creativity manifests itself, "*there is a limit to choice and freedom*"

(Blommaert, p. 99). Blommaert maintains that such limitations are contained in an “archive”, a concept he borrowed from Michel Foucault (2002), which he defines as “The totality of all meaningful statements and their rules of production at any given time in a given society” (Blommaert, p. 251). He also underlines that the archives impose restrictions on what can be said meaningfully” (Blommaert, p. 251). However, in spite of its restricted nature, the archive is never rigid, but rather dynamic. What accounts for the dynamic character of the archive is, according to Blommaert, “creative practice”, a concept that he borrowed from Raymond Williams, who defines it as “practical consciousness”, which is born from “the tension between the received interpretation and practical experience” (R. Williams, 1977, p. 130.) of life. Furthermore, Blommaert claims that the dynamic character of the archive may modify its content by adding “‘supplements’ to what is already in the ‘archive’” (Blommaert, pp. 105106). Hence, creative practice produces “both ‘push’ and ‘pull’ forces, forces that pull someone into the existing hegemonies and forces that push someone out of these hegemonies” (Blommaert, p.106). Applying the Foucauldian concept of “archive” to a royal context, we can coin the term “royal archive” and broadly define it, from a semiotic perspective, as not only the material traces of royal life, such as royal artifacts, traditions, rituals, pageantry and royal ceremonies, but also codes of conduct and rules that govern the combination of these elements into a coherent mix, aimed to fit in and give meaning to a particular royal event. The key role in the process of supplementing the royal archive is played by the monarch, who, out of his/her own personal experience and practical consciousness, believes that the royal archive can be enriched with new meaningful elements, thus challenging old or prevailing beliefs.

Hence, the royal archive can be developed creatively by the monarch, but there are also limitations to it imposed by the monarch’s constitutional role. According to Walter Bagehot, the English Constitution is made of two parts which, although “not indeed separable with microscopic accuracy”, illustrate how a monarchic constitution works: firstly, “the dignified part” – meant to “excite and preserve the reverence of the population”. Secondly, “the efficient part” – by means of which the constitution “works and rules”(W. Bagehot, 1966, p. 61), that is, the executive. The queen embodies the dignified part of the state. This role that she is expected to fulfil imposes limitations to the royal archive. But how can these constitutional limitations be challenged creatively? The queen’s inhabited identity can provide an answer, with the help of her own personal experience as reigning queen for more than sixty years. Being humorous in public can be quite risky for a public figure. But she has developed a keen sense of risktaking which helps her manage those “push” and “pull” forces that are manifest in a royal archive and regulate what a constitutional monarch can and cannot do.

Features of visual humour

The short film *Happy and Glorious* is mainly a display of visual humour. The constituent elements of visual humour in this film are surprise, suspense, incongruity, visual memory and visual immediacy.

The element of surprise manifests in the queen's very appearance in the film, which is unprecedented. In addition, surprise always goes hand in hand with suspense, both elements making each other more effective.

Suspense is built up gradually throughout the entire film and becomes more intense as the film reaches its climax. Suspense is created from the first scenes, when we see James Bond rushing up the stairs of Buckingham Palace. We cannot say exactly who he is going to meet until we see the queen's dogs, the corgis. Bond is then formally greeted by a member of the royal staff and invited into the Queen's Audience Room where the queen, working on some documents, seems to ignore the arrival of agent Bond. A few seconds elapse, another source of suspense, during which watchers can only guess what the queen's reaction would be. Then, the queen greets him by simply saying: "Good evening, Mr. Bond". Her line is short not because her imagination is sterile, but because she is the embodiment of the "dignified part" of the Constitution, expected to "excite and preserve the reverence of the population". She is not meant to be a jester and make puns. But she can entertain us in more apposite ways for her status: by means of suspense, for instance.

Then, Bond escorts the queen out of the royal residence and together they leave on board a helicopter. We believe the queen is in the helicopter although the person we believe to be the monarch is filmed from behind when she comes aboard the aircraft. Suspense is maintained by the fact that the queen's destination is not revealed yet. The helicopter follows its planned route flying past several landmarks in London before arriving above the London Stadium, where crowds of spectators are waiting excitedly for the Opening Ceremony of the Games. As the helicopter approaches the stadium, darkness is falling, which creates a kind of suspense comparable with that in a theater before the beginning of the performance, when all the lights are switched off. Once arrived at the destination, the helicopter hovers in the sky above the stadium for a few seconds (thus marking the climax of the film). Here, a nail-biting suspense is created by the fact that watchers are made to guess what may happen next: is the queen going to jump or not? The sound background, the sound of the spinning rotor blades hitting the air, which accompanies the scenes, reinforces the climactic moment. Suddenly, the side door of the helicopter opens and the queen and Bond jump into the void.

At this point in the film, a particular ingredient causes humour: visual memory, which is defined as "a visual collective unconscious" (G. Mitchell, apud Diana Popa & S. Attardo, 2007, p. 210), comprising countless images that

our brains record unconsciously, images that we have received and somehow remembered. As far as Queen Elizabeth II is concerned, we all have a visual memory of her since we see her face everywhere: in magazines and newspapers, on TV, banknotes, coins and stamps, or other memorabilia. This visual memory of the queen also includes the types of behaviour typical of a monarch. She has always displayed a natural sense of propriety and decorum. To put it in a nutshell, she has always been dignified. Out of a sudden, the visual memory of the queen is challenged by the image of a person resembling the queen (the parachutist is filmed from some distance, so we cannot really tell who the person is, the real queen or a stuntman impersonating the monarch), who has just parachuted from the helicopter. The juxtaposition of our visual memory of the queen and the unexpected image of someone resembling the queen, floating in the air, creates humour.

This unpredicted and startling juxtaposition discloses the third element of the mechanism of humour: incongruity, which “consists of different elements being incompatible with each other” (G. Mitchell, apud Diana Popa & S. Attardo, 2007, p. 210). If we compare the beginning of the short film and its end, they are antithetical. The beginning is characterized by the quiet dignity and classical elegance of the royal residence and its chatelaine. The queen’s stylish and beautiful peach-like dress and black gloves (as if she was getting ready for a formal event) contribute to the creation of a dignified setting. The end is full of humour and hugely entertaining. There is a stark contrast between the image of the queen jumping off the helicopter, her elegant dress blown off by the airflow, and the queen receiving Bond at the palace.

There is another constituent of the mechanism of humour which manifests itself simultaneously with the other elements already introduced: visual immediacy. It is a constituent element of humour “defined by a number of events happening at the same time in the narrative” (G. Mitchell, p. 298). The climax (marked by the queen’s parachute jump) continues for a few seconds with the queen’s descent. The scenes are filmed from below the helicopter and, as soon as the parachutes open, the images are accompanied by the piece of music entitled *The James Bond Theme*, which maintains the suspense and prepares the queen’s action-packed arrival on the stadium. But split seconds afterwards, while the parachutist queen was still on her ride back down to the ground, we see the real queen, Elizabeth II, make her entrance on the stadium and take her place on the official platform, accompanied by representatives of the International Olympic Committee and members of her family. The visual immediacy, based on another juxtaposition (the parachutist queen gliding down, and the real queen, the monarch, making her entrance on the London Olympic stadium) ensures that the last part of the film, the grand finale, does not arouse derision.

The symbolism of the timing and setting of the queen's cameo role

The queen's cameo role was a great success due not only to the significant contribution of the film director and screenwriter, and to the queen's own appearance. It was also due to the careful timing and setting of the short film, which was broadcast during the Opening Ceremony of the London Olympic Games of 2012, the year of the queen's Diamond Jubilee. Both occasions are types of festivals where people are invited to celebrate a significant event. The Olympic Games are the biggest athletic festival in the world, watched by millions of people worldwide. The Diamond Jubilee was a public celebration of the sixtieth anniversary of the queen's reign. The symbolism of the festival (in terms of the ancient Greek tradition) is instrumental in unlocking the queen's decision to literally take part in the making of the film.

In the ancient Greek tradition, comedies were performed only during festivals, like the festival

Dionysia, which were considered "sacred periods of the year" (G. Mitchell, p. 298) during which irreverent attitudes towards the mightiest were allowed. Furthermore, the fact that humour can sometimes be astringent or even venomous, it requires "a safe space" (G. Mitchell, p. 18), which, during the ancient Greek festivals was the theatre, which enabled comedy plays to be performed in "a special fictional place" (G. Mitchell, p. 18). Because of the crucial social function which they had in society, the function of social relief, festivals and carnivals, which permitted "a temporary reversal of values, principles, and rules" in order to give people the chance to express themselves freely without any political or social repercussion, needed both a safe space and a safe time to take place. For Elizabeth II, the safe time was the double festival of 2012 (including her Golden Jubilee and The Summer Olympics, both events much anticipated by the whole country), and the safe space was the London Olympic Stadium, which replaced the ancient Greek theater.

Conclusion

To conclude, we can say that the unprecedented appearance of the queen in this short film, her cameo role, can be considered Elizabeth II's peculiar and entertaining addition to the royal archive. By accepting to be filmed in her own palace and by starring in the film, the queen signals that she, too, looks forward to the Olympic Games with much anticipation, like any Briton, and joins in the celebrations. The manner in which she performs her cameo role is elegantly compatible with both her ascribed identity and her achieved identity. The constituent elements of visual humour (surprise, suspense, visual memory, incongruity and visual immediacy) are blended in

such a way that the reverence of the population is preserved. This cameo role also gives us an insight into how additions to the royal archive can be made. The royal archive can be extended on condition that the process is coherent. This coherence can be achieved through precise timing and appropriate setting, which clearly illustrate the essence of the royal archive, a semiotic construction which is characterized by both constraints and creativity.

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Teenagers' religious behavior and the counselling activity, in a transdisciplinary approach

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Abstract: *This paper provides the framework for creating a transdisciplinary perspective over the religious behavior, starting from the idea that in order to understand a religious behavior, we must understand the interaction of all levels of reality that exist and interact simultaneously. In addition to this we took into account the fact that a religious behavior cannot be "broken" from the man who experiments it in a social, cultural and particular context, thus presenting some empirical results of the study of religious behavior in a transdisciplinary approach. Finally, we acknowledged the effectiveness of a counseling process can be realized only by a coherent transdisciplinary approach in balancing cognitive, emotional and social aspects (see ternary {Knowing- Understanding - Living!}) thus we suggested a set of benchmarks that can increase the consistency of educational counseling services provided to students.*

Keywords: *religious behavior, ternary {knowledge - understanding - living}, included third, Hidden third, transdisciplinary perspective of counseling.*

Religious behavior in a transdisciplinary approach

The formulation of a transdisciplinary perspective over the behavior and religious behavior in particular is possible only starting from a disciplinary approach (Nicolescu, 1999, 2002), in this case of psychology. The transdisciplinary perspective has the role of refining and completing the disciplinary studies. The transdisciplinary approach of the religious behavior was based primarily on approaches from religion psychology, and through the analysis of these approaches from the perspective of the transdisciplinary grid, meanings of religious behavior were generated. These meanings, in turn, represent an important argument for the necessity of a transdisciplinary approach, as a complement to a disciplinary one, in studying the religious behavior.

Seen from a transdisciplinary perspective, the religious behavior is read through a transdisciplinary methodology (Nicolescu, 1999, 2002, 2010) as third-

person included, as the third-person access to the Hidden Third-Person, thus recognizing its complexity. The religious behavior is the result of the simultaneous interaction of all the reality levels of the Subject, since the understanding of the religious behavior cannot be achieved from a single level of Reality.

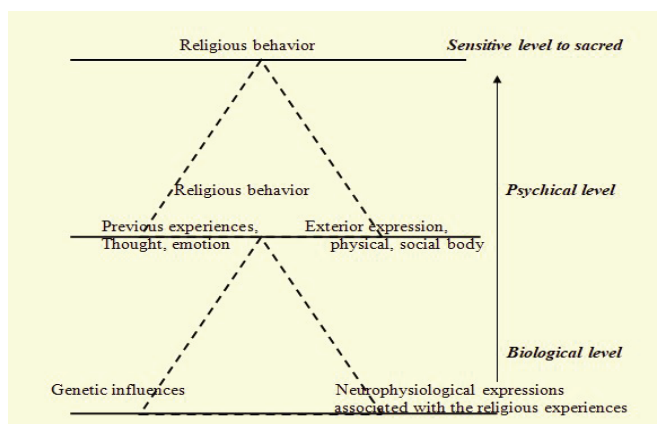


Figure 1. Human behavior as third-person included. Reality levels of the Subject

In conclusion, the religious behavior belongs to and manifests itself at all levels of reality, the man tending to unification through the integration of the sacred. The religious behavior makes possible the communication between human beings by resorting to the sacred, mediates the communication between man and divinity, and refers to communication for oneself and into oneself, assuming adapting the gestures to living and thinking, implying an unison vibration of the whole being.

The religious behavior is described from the perspective of the logical axiom, as a third party included, namely, as prayer, rite, sacrifice and the creation of myths (Newberg, *et al*, 2008, 2009). If we refer to the religious behavior as being the third party included, then the religious behavior unites. Religious behavior becomes language. Religious behavior, seen as an attitude, understood as living and doing, towards the sacred, can be a language, a trans-language, because it makes possible the dialogue between human beings by resorting to the sacred. Man can become an unified being in self and with self, only through and after the integration of the sacred.

Religious behavior is also approached from the perspective of the ontological axiom (Nicolescu, 1999, 2010), and under this context it provides the person's entry into the Hidden Third-Person by contemplation - meditation in the presence of the sacred and by holiness or mystical life (Magnin, 2007,

2007b). The idea is that of the third party and Hidden Third-Party, the third-party being the one that unites the opposites, and here, the religious behavior is the one that unites. Religious behavior is therefore understood as the result of the interaction of biological, psychic and sacred levels that interact simultaneously. From this point of view, at behavior level there is the unification, the connection between the internal, subjective, genetic, neurological, psychological experiences with the outside, the objective, social, and cultural. The two environments are contradictory at the same level of reality, but are unified in a different level of reality through behavior. In this context, the religious behavior becomes language, communicates something, sends a message to the other, to himself and to the divinity. It is a communication for self which involves adapting gestures to living and thinking, an unison vibration of the whole being by virtue of prayer, ritual, sacrifice or creation of myths as a third-person included.

For example, prayer is not just an act of faith or persuasion, it also involves word, living, and gestures; the prayer being, at the same time, word and gesture and living, into a different level of reality. Prayer as a third party ensures the communication between proximal reality levels, for example between the biological level and the psychic level, or between the psychic and the one sensitive to sacred; the consciousness flow crossing all levels of reality. Man, through prayer, as an attitude of openness to God, participates with his whole being. Man's communication with the Hidden Third-Person involves the ability to dialogue but also the ability to listen, give, and receive at the same time. The sensitive level carries with it the man's availability of giving and receiving. And to give it is important, first of all, to receive the other, and to receive the other is necessary to give myself to him. In other words, for a dialogue to exist, to become true, it is necessary for the other, which is different from me, to be received, tolerated in a transdisciplinary sense, that is to find myself in him, but without being myself. Or, it may mean assuming one's own vulnerability and the limits in order to become more powerful, unitary by constantly resorting to sacred.

Religious behavior means, in this case, the person's entry into the Hidden Third-Person, and through contemplation and holiness, man tends to resemble to God. The man who tends to be likened to God, or the man eager for spiritual ascension, has the essential premise of faith. Faith being a state of expectation of the communion that God offers, but also a response to the call of God; faith is therefore waiting or accepting and answering or calling. The union with God is or becomes thus knowledge and love. Love drives knowledge, and knowledge legitimizes love. The desire of man who tends to resemble to God is to enter into a relationship with God, and this is not a mere curiosity, but an irresistible inner vocation and attraction.

Transdisciplinary study of the teenagers' religious behavior. Empirical results

The transdisciplinary research of the religious behavior starts from the ternary (knowledge – understanding – living). In taking this approach, three studies were carried out and their results were analyzed and interpreted through thematic analysis. Studies aim to identify the meaning of the religious behavior through *knowledge*, *understanding* the religious behavior as third-party and identifying the religious behavior through *living*. Understanding a religious behavior from a transdisciplinary point of view can only be achieved by an unification on the being of the two forms of knowledge, contradictory but complementary, namely the inner and the outer knowledge, the rational knowledge and the mysterious one. In the absence of this unification, one cannot speak about understanding or harmonious communication between Subject and Object (Nicolescu, 1999, 2002, 2010), but about confusion. Also, understanding or finding the meaning involves uniting the knowledge with the living. Thus, by interpreting, one can accede to the unity of understanding, which creates the connection between the concrete data of the research, which represent the product of the participant's subjectivity and the researcher's subjectivity, which gives a meaning and significance to other meanings and significances. This double filtering is essential in building understanding.

An important mention regarding these studies refers to the use of the reflexive analysis. This has represented a vital component in conducting the studies and in analyzing and interpreting data. The dialectical and hermeneutical complexity was enhanced due to data subjectivity, of the participants to studies, and due to their own subjectivity.

The studies involved a variable number, between 56 students during the first study, 23 during the second, and 13 during the third study. Participants are students at the Faculty of Letters and Sciences within the

Petroleum and Gas University from Ploiești and have ages between 19 and 40 years old. Following the thematic analysis we identified as topics:

- Religious behavior as "lifestyle", predominantly towards self, towards another and towards society; religious behavior as a series of attitudes towards God, as an external manifestation of faith, the connection between inner living and its external manifestation, oriented towards the relationship with the sacred; religious behavior-attitude towards representations of faith; religious behavior as a whole of external manifestations;

- The word, gesture, religious experience are considered expressions of faith; the act of faith having as indicators the gesture, the word and the religious experience, the latter understood as inner vibration; faith and its expression, religious life, represents an existential need, a need for meaning; faith being determined by the man's need for meaning; the religious man, is at the crossway

between spiritual and material; also, faith is described by the presence of doubt, which can be tempered by the need for meaning; faith is a way of modeling and interpreting reality; the word, the gesture, the religious experience provides the connection with the divine; religious life has individual value and is a subjective element, becoming the conscious and free resorting of man to divinity; faith becomes an essential aspect of the existence, being a natural component with a guiding role; the unity between word, gesture and experience suggests the unity of religious behavior; between the three aspects of the behavior there is a complementarity relationship, but also of congruence and constancy.

These perspectives on the religious behavior of teenagers are also found in the psychological researches aimed at studying the psychological concrete, that is, facts, reactions, measurable religious behaviors, which are linked to the intentions and significances of the person, thus achieving the connection between affectivity and its behavioral expression. Also, the major role of the religious behavior is to ensure the person's communication with the divinity, but at the same time, practicing certain behaviors ensures the acquiring of an identity; the religious behavior thus ensures the performance at the same time of identity and communion.

Students' counseling activity, in a transdisciplinary context. Possible benchmarks

We initiated the reading of the religious behaviour through the transdisciplinary methodology, starting from the idea that in order to understand a religious behaviour we must understand the interaction of all levels of reality that exist and interact simultaneously through the ternary (knowledge - understanding – living). We also took into account the fact that a religious behaviour cannot be "broken" from the man experiencing it in a social, cultural and private context.

Also, the frequent taking of another type of attitude by the postmodern man who "builds his own reality where he can assert his subjectivity, to express what he likes and what he does not, to experiment, to consume diversity, to enjoy his freedom and his autonomy "(Bodea, 2017, 23), made us think about the perceiving by the students of the quality of the faculty experience as a stage of transition to the adult stage. In this context, MJ Montgomery and JE Côté (2009, 180-205), while analysing a series of studies, observed that students get better results, are stimulated to learn, to develop themselves cognitively, when the focus falls on the interest in behalf of the faculty towards them as individuals, on the efforts of the academic environment of making them feel socially integrated, and on the provision of support services (counselling, guidance and the existence of certain individualized classes dedicated to the development of academic survival skills). In our country, we believe that these

wishes are real challenges for the Career Counselling and Guidance Center (CCOC), established on the basis of the Framework Methodology regarding the organization and functioning of Career Counselling and Guidance Centres in the higher education system from Romania (see OMECS no. 650/ 24.11.2014, amended and completed by Order No. 3070/ 14.01.2015) and for the educational counselling services, respectively psychological counselling and assessment provided by these centers (according to Article 4 of the Methodology). There are numerous works where the authors explain the conceptual delimitations between counselling – education – psychotherapy, benchmarks being a series of criteria (the reasons behind these activities, the persons involved, the roles played, the goals pursued, the time needed, the means used). We note as relevant for this work only the fact that these counselling services should aim at the “optimal functioning of the person from a somatic, physiological, mental, educational, social and spiritual point of view”, “promoting health and well-being” (Tomşa, Viorel and Popescu, 2008, 474) and to facilitate to the person, therefore, the “realistic selfknowledge, self-acceptance and optimal valuing of own resources and availability” (Dumitru, 2008, 13).

Appreciating as very important the “formative nature” of education and agreeing with Emil Păun (2017) who proposes the reconciliation of the rational-technological paradigm (dominating the contemporary school) with the educational-humanist one, which militates for a person-centred education, on the "revaluing of the subjective dimension of the educational act", on the dialogue between individual - society, subjective - objective and rational - affective, we see the students' counselling activity as effective only through a coherent transdisciplinary vision, which should balance the cognitive aspects with the emotional and social ones (see the ternary {knowledge - understanding - living} that I was talking about earlier).

Here are some benchmarks that can help to a stronger status and to an increased consistency of the educational counselling services provided to students (our recommendations are based on the valid valuing and exploitation of both the bibliography in this field and our experience in the field of school counselling):

Possible goals and contents

We previously argued that understanding the religious behaviour cannot be achieved on a single level of reality, the religious behaviour being the result of the simultaneous interaction of all the reality levels of the Subject (see Figure 1). Consequently, the students' counselling activity, in the transdisciplinary context, could be organized around several components corresponding to these levels. We present below these components by also associating them with several priority objectives and contents as it follows:

a) *Physical component* - Biological level. Priority goals: Awareness of physical health

condition, knowledge of genetic influences and of aspects related to prophylaxis; maintaining a constant care towards one's own person and body balance (see the identification of high-risk situations for health, reducing stress); avoiding the overload (recognition of fatigue, physical discomfort and the need to take a break). Priority contents: Counselling for a healthy lifestyle in order to promote physical health (prophylaxis, recovery, relaxation, use of certain regulatory strategies and abilities, focusing the conscious attention, learning the awareness of the person's sensorial environment, exploitation of interest for hobbies, counseling for the acceptance of self and for the crystallization of a proper body image of self, for a clear knowledge of personal strengths and weaknesses, of the responsibility for own body, and of taking a positive attitude towards the environment).

b) *Time component* - Psychic level. Priority goals: Taking a proactive attitude towards personal career, self-description in positive terms; recognizing certain skills that are not developed or exercised at any given time and their training/ development; assuming realistic, achievable goals, on short/ medium/ long term in the form of certain responsibilities, tasks, duties towards self, family, school, community; identifying certain problematic/ crisis situations occurred in personal and school/ professional life, respectively searching for alternatives/ solutions; choosing those optional modules of education and training in accordance with the own interests; self-update of their own potential (increase in the perceived self-efficacy, independence of personal choices, optimism for the future etc.); scheduling the study/ daily program and during sessions. Priority contents: Counselling for training self-knowledge skills, selfdecision, self-assessment (see counselling for establishing personal goals, planning and decision, use of the decision matrix for the realistic self-assessment at an intellectual, physical, skills level; training the capacity of self-analysis of errors, mistakes, failures, of predicting the consequences of the own decisions and behaviours, personal development (motivation techniques), counselling for responsible risk-taking and lifelong learning, developing certain personal action plans in various educational contexts with dysfunctional potential (intra/ interpersonal, real and fictional level) and for achieving certain school and personal goals, time management;

c) *Emotional-social component* - *Psychic level*. Priority goals: Expressing flexibility and the availability to change one's behaviour, to take different roles; initiation, maintenance and development of effective communication relationships, of mutual support, cooperation with family, colleagues, other people; open and free expression of positive and negative feelings, respectively anger management and training self-control; development of self-confidence and self-esteem; recognition of certain emotional and social barriers in the

process of learning and overcoming them; increasing the sensitivity to aspects of social diversity; the formation of attitudes of accepting the changes in the social, economic, cultural and political environment where the graduate will graduate his/her activity. Priority contents: Counselling for training the assertive communication in order to keep the balance in success and failure situations/ development of certain personal strategies to avoid school failure; stress management (managing negative emotions, increasing tolerance to frustration, resilience); counselling to exercise autonomy, control; conflict management (negotiation, mediation) in order to improve interactions; participation to social life of the school/ local community and exercising the social skills (solidarity, teamwork etc.).

d) *Spiritual knowledge - Level sensitive to sacred*. Priority goals: Active searching for certain ethical choices in the personal and school/ professional life (see exploitation of criteria on the good and bad axes); keeping self-confidence, but also towards family members/ other people – resource and maintaining a realistic optimism towards the potential challenges of life (obstacles, crises we can face at a certain moment); developing the social support – spending time with friends and family, accepting their help, taking part to various activities/ volunteering in clubs and community organizations/ religious services; manifestation of astonishment and admiration towards life in any form. Priority contents: Counselling for searching the meaning and purpose in life (prosocial behaviour, counselling for listening with understanding and empathy towards the others, interdependent thinking by valuing cooperative skills, engaging the flexibility of thinking, metacognition, and sense of humour).

Ways of achievement and expected results

The ways of achieving the goals of the students' counselling activity in a transdisciplinary context are diverse. Here are mentioned just a few, they being the more effective as they can attract more the students' involvement and effort, and can encourage the sense of belonging, of academic and social integration of students. Besides the classical counselling activities (individual and group), we suggest (under the supervision of a counsellor):

- Regular organization of certain support groups, where students can meet (whenever they feel the need) with the aim of mutual support, finding together solutions to problems that trouble them, as "learning together and from the others" is always an effective method. This way it is stimulated the perception of the academic environment as being a friendly one, a culture of relations with colleagues, making friends within the university campus;

- It would also be useful to set up certain study groups for the students according to the students' learning styles/ multiple intelligences dominant at the level of a working group, depending on subjects, age categories, which should

be aimed at involving students in effective learning techniques (see, for example, notes, sheets, diagrams, schemes, drafting certain conceptual maps), but also in other activities that even the students might propose to their colleagues: specialty circles/ clubs for those passionate of a field, as healthy ways of spending the free time, of interacting with colleagues/ colleagues from other specializations and of encouraging certain transdisciplinary visions over some topics studied;

- Students' involvement in physical and sports activities in collaboration with professional sports organizations, the special value of these activities being highlighted by the opportunity to better define their identity and ability to transfer skills associated with character values such as responsibility, perseverance, risk-taking, courage and self-control, towards other life sectors (see Danish, Taylor and Fazio, 2009, 125135);

- Revival of certain known means used in guidance and counselling (vocational, professional in particular): self-knowledge and inter-assessment exercises; visits to enterprises and to other institutions for knowledge, information, guidance purpose; inviting certain personalities, people of different professions and the presentation of their work (among the graduates with significant professional achievements), valuing certain works (auto/ biographies, books, articles, educational movies, newspapers specialized in economic and work reportages);

- Valuing clearly, then, an individual approach, compared to a collective approach (see the counselling of entire groups of students), a new resource that the counsellor has now available we assess as being the school coaching. "This new practice of school accompanying" is defined by D. Sălăvăștru (2016) as a way of supporting the individual development of the pupil/ student, as a specific form of coaching in order to support him/ her in the discovery and development of his/ her own resources, in the awareness the potential that he/she has, in the development of self-confidence in order to produce the desired changes, and also as help in preparing an important exam or for managing the success (see 192 et seq.). We sustain that this "customized guidance" activity, despite certain real objective limitations, is better suited to our students;

- We also think that the best working method of the counsellor at the university level should be one based on learning by projects, by combining various activities and resources. Referring to learning by projects, C. Ulrich (2016) appreciated that although this is a heavy task for teachers/ counsellors, assuming a lot of work and organization, we cannot ignore its advantages: developing the capacity to establish relationships with the others, to maintain collaboration relationships and to take team decisions. "Superheroes of our days", "How do we build our own social and digital networks?", "How do we harmonize compassion and solidarity with a relationship marked by indivi-

dualism and competition?”, “Flexibility and rigor in education and training” are just a few possible titles of projects that the counsellor could initiate in an academic environment, inspired by the work of the aforementioned author and which would actively train several categories of actors.

As a consequence, we assess the counselling potential as an activity for the teenager’s positive development in order to optimize motivation and perseverance in learning/ work, to streamline the individual and team work, to increase the students’ self-confidence, to facilitate attitudes based on tolerance and understanding in the academic environment, but also in interpersonal relationships from the families/ couples, increase in responsibility and undertaking certain behaviours oriented towards future and planned. The portrait of a student who has benefited/benefits from psychological and educational counselling would describe a teenager “with a direction in life/ with plans for the future” with the sense of his/her own value and who has found his/her place in a constructive group, “a healthy person, involved, ethical” etc. (see also the definition of positive development in the form of certain desirable results in Danish, Taylor and Fazio, 2009, 120). Or, synthesizing, a teenager who has the ability to be mindfulness, an “increasingly valuable social and individual trait... [which] must be educated through counsellors and psychotherapists” (see Pânișoară, 2016, 170 et seq.).

Conclusions

Religious behaviour represents the result of the simultaneous interaction of all the reality levels of the Subject, and the understanding of the religious behavior cannot be achieved on a single level of Reality.

Consequently, the students’ counseling activity, in a transdisciplinary approach, could be organized around several components, corresponding to the biological, psychic and sacred-sensitive levels. Students’ counseling and guidance should not be an occasional, punctual activity, but a truly coherent, graduated approach, throughout the faculty. The counselor has the mission to motivate and bring together all the human, material, informational resources available of the school/ university, to make the clear link between various activities, constantly targeting certain targets for different groups of students, so as to provide permanent occasions of self-assessment, analysis and substantiation of decisions about the future. The resources proposed for counseling and guidance activities exploit, first of all, certain working methods in various contexts, in small, less formal groups, with content negotiated together with the beneficiaries, and where the counselor can work in teams with different professionals (see graduates, business people/ professionals in diverse fields, human resources specialists, NGO representatives, sociologists, priests, nutritionists, sports professionals).

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Education and the Problems of the Contemporary World

Beyond the Rankings: Solutions to Improve Learning by Analysing PISA Data

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Abstract: *Our students score low in PISA ever since this study has been carried out in our country. What are the underlying factors that lead to the Romanian students' low performance? By analysing PISA data, we explore possible answers to this question as well as routes to improve the student achievement. Our working hypothesis is that a similar type of inappropriateness is practiced in the teaching of both reading and math. We investigate data from the PISA 2018 International Report and perform more in- depth analyses on the students' results for each item. We can thus identify the students' typical misrepresentations/ misconceptions and infer on how these come into being. Our conclusion is that decontextualized practice in both the math and mother tongue classes hinder transferable learning outcomes. Students study within an artificial bubble of standard textbook examples and canonical texts. They are not challenged with real-life problem solving like the PISA tasks do.*

Keywords: *PISA, effective curriculum, reading literacy, mathematics literacy, assessment*

Introduction

PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment, a large-scale assessment study that investigates how the 15-year-olds use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and abilities to solve current

problems. That means the program does not test academic subjects. Instead, it analyses how the students apply their acquisitions in new situations and how they make use of learning strategies (OECD, 2018). This is particularly important in a dynamic society and a volatile labour market where the only constant is the fastpaced rhythm of change. The focus is no longer to replicate what we learn in school but face problems and find solutions that we cannot anticipate today (Schleicher, 2019). To put it bluntly: the cultural products that are served in school are pointless if the effects of learning are not beneficial for the students' achievement in their life and world.

In technical terms, the assessment is done by combining clusters of cognitive units (that comprise multiple choice items and constructed response ones) into rigorous sets the students need to answer. Each item focuses on a certain *cognitive process*. There are specific cognitive processes for each of the three domains involved in the assessment. These processes define the functional knowledge and abilities that scaffold the cultural instruments one uses for a full participation in the society.

The study is carried out on carefully designed national samples. The coding is done by thoroughly trained national coders who use very detailed guides to make sure the appraisal work is objective and homogenous. The complicated endeavour of preparing a PISA cycle is shared among an international consortium of reputed experts and the national team. All the procedures for quality assurance are mandatory and any breach could cost the exclusion from the data base. From this perspective, PISA results are irrefutable.

In Romania, PISA is perceived – more than once – as either a foreign intrusion (blind at cultural specificity), or as a tool to highlight the wrongs of the system and look for scapegoats (among decision makers or experts in education), or as a ranking system (to establish hierarchies like in a football league and generating similar passions). There are very few analyses that focus on finding solutions even if the Romanian students have constantly scored below the OECD and EU averages since 2006 (the first cycle we participated in).

Our paper intends to focus on the PISA goal and explore routes to improve the student achievement. Our research question is: What are the underlying factors that led to the low performance of Romanian students in reading and mathematics? Our working hypothesis is that a similar type of inappropriateness is practiced in the teaching of both reading and math.

Methodology

We claim that if we identify the points of low achievement, we can develop solutions to improve learning. For that reason, we select data from the international reports and perform further detailed analyses. Our main concern is to isolate learning misconceptions/ misrepresentations that help us reinforce

practice for various areas in the curriculum. The lower the score of a student, the less structured is the respective ability/ competence that represents the focus of an item. Furthermore, given the operational/ procedural features of the abilities aimed at by the PISA assessment tasks we could infer how the respective cultural instruments can be developed from one traditional school subject to another by means of varied learning contexts.

For each cognitive process, the performance by items has been calculated, and presented through a bar graph. The percentage per each item is related to the number of students who took a certain cluster and represents the degree of achievement of that item. The degree of achievement was determined based on the correct variant of answer, respectively on the wrong variants in the case of multiple choice or true/false questions, or the answer codes in the case of open questions. In our present analysis, we consider Math and Reading and the subsequent processes. Given that the performance of an item can be decided either on the basis of the variant 0/1, or on the basis of the variant 0/1/2, the resulting score, as a maximum level, may differ from the number of items to be achieved (in case of performance situations that receive partial or full credit). As such, the degree of achievement is an indicator that measures the share of the score achieved by the student from the total possible score to be achieved for the respective item.

Results and Discussion

The assessment done by PISA at age 15 is meant to provide an early indication of how individuals may respond in later life to the situations involving reading, math or science, they will encounter along their lives. From this assumption, the definitions of literacy used in PISA framework derive.

Thus, reading literacy means “understanding, using, evaluating, reflecting on and engaging with texts in order to achieve one’s goals, to develop one’s knowledge and potential and to participate in society”. Similarly, mathematical literacy is an individual’s capacity to formulate, employ and interpret mathematics in a variety of contexts. It includes reasoning mathematically and using mathematical concepts, procedures, facts and tools to describe, explain and predict phenomena. It assists individuals to recognise the role that mathematics plays in the world and to make the well- founded judgements and decisions needed by constructive, engaged and reflective citizens.”

Relevant diagrams to understand the Romanian students’ proficiency in reading and mathematics are the ones below. The diagrams present the scores obtained by the Romanian students per levels, compared to the first ranked countries, the OECD average, and the countries in the same range of scores as Romania.

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

Figure 1. Students’ proficiency in reading

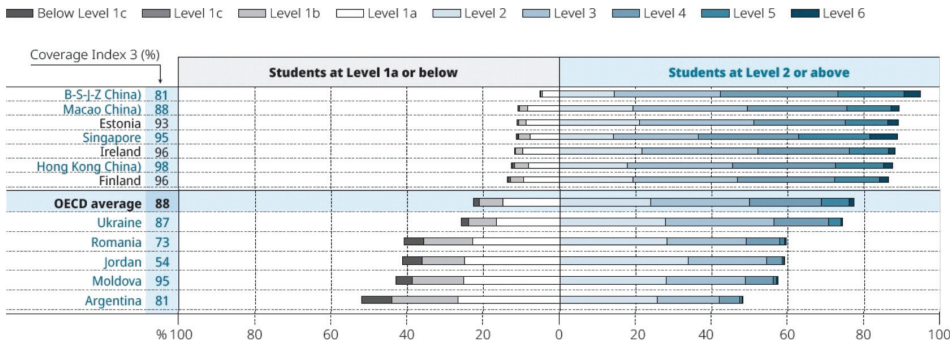
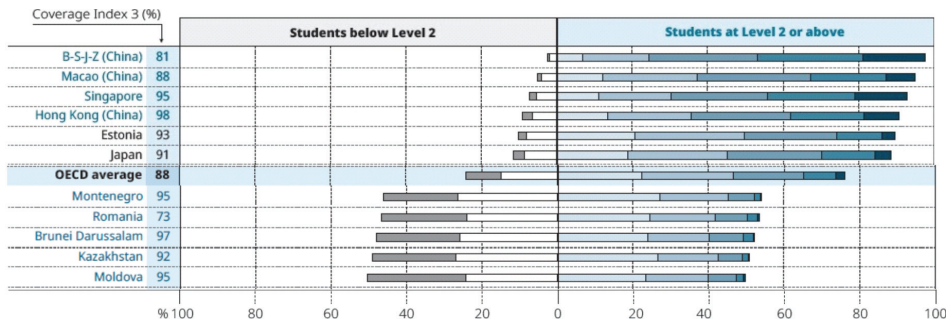


Figure 2. Students’ proficiency in mathematics



Reading Proficiency at Level 2 means that “students begin to demonstrate the capacity to use their reading skills to acquire knowledge and solve a wide range of practical problems. Students who do not attain Level 2 proficiency in reading often have difficulty when confronted with material that is unfamiliar to them or that is of moderate length and complexity. They usually need to be prompted with cues or instructions before they can engage with a text. In the context of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, Level 2 proficiency has been identified as the “minimum level of proficiency” that all children should acquire by the end of secondary education.” (PISA 2018 Database, 2019, p.89). The PISA report “considers students who scored below Level 2 in mathematics as “low-achieving students”. Indeed, at Level 2, students begin to demonstrate the ability and initiative to use mathematics in simple real-life situations. The global indicators for the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals identify Level 2 proficiency as the “minimum level of proficiency” that all children should acquire by the end of secondary education. While students who score below this minimum level can be

considered particularly at risk, Level 2 proficiency is by no means a “sufficient” level of mathematics proficiency for making wellfounded judgements and decisions across a range of personal or professional situations in which mathematical literacy is required.” (PISA 2018 Database, 2019, p.105).

In reading, on average across OECD countries in 2018, 77% of students were proficient at Level 2 or higher. In Beijing, Shanghai, Jiangsu and Zhejiang (China) (hereafter “B-S-J-Z [China]”), almost 95% of students performed at or above this benchmark, as did between 88% and 90% of students in Estonia, Ireland, Macao (China) and Singapore. In mathematics, more than 90% of students in B-S-J-Z (China), Hong Kong (China), Macao (China) and Singapore, and close to 90% in Estonia achieved the benchmark for level 2. On average across OECD countries, 76% of students attained Level 2 or higher (that is, were proficient at Level 2, 3, 4, 5 or 6).

We can see from the diagrams in Figures 1 and 2 that more than 40% of Romanian students are at level 2 or below, in both reading and mathematics. What are the underlying explanations of this situation? Some of them come out from a careful analysis of the data.

In order to manage all the actions that define reading, an individual needs to perform a range of processes. According to the PISA framework (OECD, 2019) these are: locate, understand, and evaluate & reflect. Each of these categories are further defined as: access and retrieve information within a text (scanning a single text in order to retrieve target information consisting of a few words, phrases or numerical values), search and select relevant text (searching for information among several texts to select the most relevant text given the demands of the item/task); represent literal information (comprehending the literal meaning of sentences or short passages, typically matching a direct or close paraphrasing of information in the question with information in a passage), integrate and generate inferences (going beyond the literal meaning of information in a text by integrating information across sentences or even an entire passage, e.g. to create a main idea or to produce a summary or a title for a passage), integrate and generate inferences across multiple sources – integrating pieces of information that are located within two or more texts; assess quality and credibility (evaluating whether the information in a text is valid, current, accurate, unbiased, reliable, etc), reflect on content and form (evaluating the form of the writing to determine how the author is expressing their purpose and/or point of view, for instance to compare, contrast or hypothesize different perspectives or viewpoints), detect and handle conflict (determining whether multiple texts corroborate or contradict each other and when they conflict, deciding how to handle that conflict).

At a first glance, the processes as listed above seem to be ordered in progression, towards complexity. But a *locate* task can become difficult according to the reading text or context. If a student has to scan and locate data in a graph or a table that is part of a multiple text (made up of words and

figures), it is more complicated than to find information in a paragraph. The idea is that the reading processes become complex if there is no adequate reading practice to support students in handling various, multiple texts. In PIRLS 2011 (Noveanu et al, 2013), the results showed that each time students at the end of primary education had to read information in tables and icons they scored lower than when they handled simple text. This issue, if not addressed, expands low achievement later on.

Reading as a tool for learning can further hinder achievement in other academic subjects in school and informal education. We exemplify with the *locate* and *literal representation* processes respectively (See Fig. 1).

- Less than a third of the students manage a question of locating information in an advertising leaflet that offers discounts within certain limits. The issue here is that they face a multiple text that contains visual and linguistic data.

- Less than a quarter of the students manage a question on a multiple text - which combines an information article, a leaflet including linguistic and visual information within a table.

- About 20% of the students successfully solve two items on the same functional text that involves the use of instructions from a given menu. The difficulty in this case is the combination of linguistic and numerical codes.

As mentioned above, the *scan and locate process* is not at all an easy to perform one when the text is multiple and combines various codes. Finding (linguistic) information and then locating numerical data become operations of great complexity even if the chunks of information do not need further analysis, inferences, interpretation... Why is that? A possible reason might be the decontextualized math practice, where algorithms are never to be worked upon in current situations where numbers are involved. Likewise, reading practice can be at fault, since teachers in middle school pay more attention to literature interpretation than working on functional and information texts (Sarivan et al, 2020).

Another crucial process for learning is the literal representation which basically helps the reader to figure out what a text is about. It does not seem very complicated. Yet, here are some degrees of achievement from the PISA 2018:

- Only 30% of the students manage a question that has a visual support (a graphic organizer that compares two entities) and has a true / false format regarding various statements that must be proven with the iconic text.

- Only 20% of the students manage to correctly solve an item with a true / false question for statements that must be correlated with the information in a chart of an information article.

- 11% of students succeed in solving a question that asks them to identify the best option in a list based on understanding and corroborating the information in the information text.

- 10% of students manage to tick correctly from a list of activities to be corroborated with items in an information text.

- Only 5% of students can correctly solve a true / false question that involves understanding the correct criteria to make a choice and then test it with the information in the text. The text is an ad and combines linguistic, numerical, and visual information.

These low scores indicate poor prediction for adequate text comprehension and ineffective learning consequently. The reading text in all these cases is a functional one – be it a multiple text combining various symbolic codes or something as plain as a list! The lack of adequate reading practice leads nonetheless to misrepresentation. We can explain the results by the same absence of practice with non- canonical texts in the mother tongue class combined with the decontextualized practice in the math class. The mobility of the acquisition could be acquired and consolidated if the learning context varies and if the students find purpose in what they do.

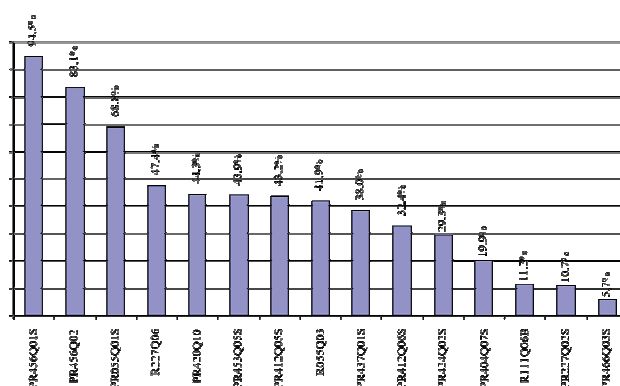


Figure 3. Students' performance in *Scan & locate* and *Represent literal meaning*

To uncover students' mathematical ways of thinking, PISA deals with the following mathematical processes: formulating situations mathematically; employing mathematical concepts, facts, procedures and reasoning; interpreting, applying and evaluating mathematical outcomes. Among these, we focus this short research report on the last of the three processes, which we assume of being more connected to reading comprehension. Exploring how students proceed with tasks involving *interpreting, applying and evaluating mathematical outcomes* offers us the possibility to go deeper into this assumption.

Specifically, this process of interpreting, applying and evaluating mathematical outcomes includes activities such as: interpreting a mathematical result back into the real-world context; evaluating the reasonableness of a mathematical solution in the context of a real- world problem; understanding how the real world impacts the outcomes and calculations of a mathematical procedure

or model in order to make contextual judgements about how the results should be adjusted or applied; explaining why a mathematical result or conclusion does, or does not, make sense given the context of a problem; understanding the extent and limits of mathematical concepts and mathematical solutions; and critiquing and identifying the limits of the model used to solve a problem.

The graph in Fig. 4 shows the Romanian students' results on interpreting, applying and evaluating mathematical outcomes.

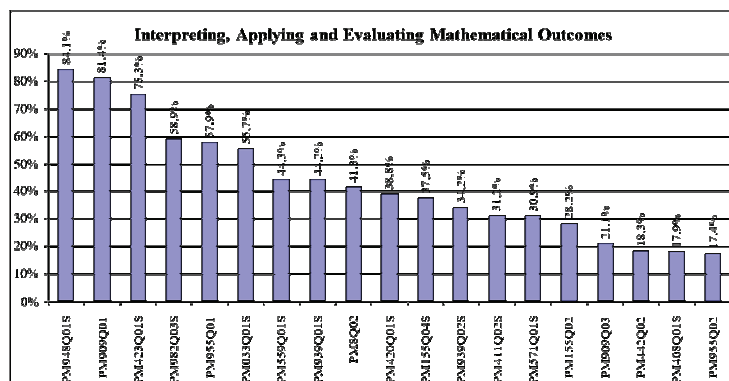


Figure 4. Students' performance in *interpreting, applying and evaluating mathematical outcomes*

In order to find an explanation for the low level of mathematical proficiency of Romanian students, we have analysed the nature of the three items with scores below 20%. For a simple reference, we will call these items for short Ma, Mb, Mc.

In Ma, students had to decode a list of symbols and to use the discovered code to represent a fraction. In Mb, students had to identify true or false statements formulated based on a situation when probabilistic inferences are needed. Mathematically, this leads to writing fractions, but to get the right answer, one has to decode the meaning of the given sentences in correlation with real-context situations, an ability that is common to a basic literate communicator. The item Mc deals with correlating data from a table with the given linguistic explanations. Further, the student has to explain the meaning of a given conclusion, derived from the data.

From a strict mathematical point of view (of "first literacy") these items are dealing with fractions, decimal numbers, basic logic, and basic probability that is expressed as a fraction of favourable cases over all possible cases. Mathematically, these are elements studied in grades 5-6. However, the results at the age of 15 are the ones synthesized in Table 1.

Table 1. Results for three items from the process *Interpret data and evidence scientifically*

Items		No. of students	0	1	Non-answer	Total
PM442Q02	Ma	837	54,1%	18,3%	27,6%	100,0%
PM408Q01S	Mb	865	79,3%	17,9%	2,8%	100,0%
PM955Q02	Mc	840	61,5%	17,4%	21,1%	100,0%

Looking at the content of these items, the difficulty seems not to be mathematical! Where does the difficulty come from? All these items, as many others, show a strong relationship with communication and the linguistic abilities of a student. Is this a consistent assumption? We move further with a deeper analysis.

The hypothesis is confirmed by analysing students' answers to items from another mathematical cognitive process, namely *Employing Mathematical Concepts, Facts and Procedures*. For example, the item that has been correctly solved by most of the students (82%) is Md (Table 2). This item requested to retrieve explicit information given in a table. However, when the students are supposed to retrieve information that has to be obtained from the same table, but in correlation with a piece of information given above that table, the scores abruptly decrease from 82% to only 28,8% (Table 2).

Table 2. Results for two items from *Employing Mathematical Concepts, Facts and Procedures*

Items		No. of students	0	1	Non-answer	Total
PM982Q01	Md	850	13,5%	82,0%	4,5%	100,0%
PM982Q02	Me	850	65,9%	28,8%	5,3%	100,0%

Therefore, we arrive at the same conclusion uncovered above: the lack of practice of tasks that correlate simple information from different modes of representations make the vast majority of Romanian students fail when confronted with problems that seems depicted from real-life contexts. This is because real-life contexts always integrate various ways of representations, while the formal learning in school is kept theoretical and decontextualized.

In a possible sequel to this brief research report, we consider worth exploring how we could capitalize on the students' strong points that are revealed in the PISA results (see the left-hand side of Fig. 3, 4) Likewise, these type of analyses can help us test how acquisitions in mathematics and reading

could be intertwined in solving problems that simulate real-life situations in the class or within project-work to respond to school and community needs.

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A Study on the Effects of Migration on Middle-School Pupils in Suceava County

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Abstract: *National statistics show that, for at least two years, 12,000 children aged 10 to 14 have been living with both parents working abroad. Psychologists and sociologists draw the attention on the fact that these children are at risk, a situation which derives from lack of support and supervision.*

Taking into consideration that a large number of pupils in Suceava County come from families with migrant parents, between March 20 and May 15, 2019, The County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance carried out a study regarding the effects of parent migration on children. The study enlisted 400 pupils and 200 teachers and had the following objectives:

- *To identify certain possible risks regarding school participation, which derive from their parents going abroad for work (absences, low motivation for learning, etc.);*
- *To assess the pupils' degree of involvement in the consumption of substances harmful for their age or in antisocial activities;*
- *To assess the pupils' preferences of spending their leisure time;*
- *To identify the main problems facing the pupils whose parents went abroad and to identify the sources of educational assistance;*
- *To assess the level of emotional distress and of the main resilience factors (optimism, self-esteem, feeling of self-efficiency).*

The findings of our study indicate that, alongside the extended family, teachers and other specialists in child development and assistance are challenged to identify measures of protection of the children's rights to education and social inclusion. A positive approach, through the presentation of some examples of optimal adjustment to school and social life, in the context of certain difficult familial situations, could help to avoid instances of negative self-perception or of stigmatizing this category of children.

Keywords: *parent migration, emotional distress, resilience.*

Introduction

According to official statistics, in 2014 over 80,000 children living in Romania had at least one parent working abroad. National statistics show that, for at least two years, 12,000 children aged 10 to 14 have been living with both parents working abroad. However, numerous NGOs claim that the real dimension of this phenomenon is still unknown in Romania, despite the fact that public authorities have tried hard to determine the real number of children living in this country, who have at least one parent working abroad (Save the Children Romania, 2007; The Soros Foundation Romania, 2007; UNICEF Romania, 2008). Romanian authorities have included the children affected by parent migration in the category of vulnerable children. Thus, in the National Strategy for the protection and promotion of children's rights 2014-2020, it is explained that these children have low school performances and are at a high risk of school abandonment. Although not all studies showcase a real drop in school results, the change of attitude towards school is significant, an attitude facilitated by the multitude of accessible recreational activities (Brebuleț, S.D., 2018).

Psychologists and sociologists draw the attention that these children are at risk (Toth, G., Toth, A., Voicu, O., 2007), a situation which derives from lack of support and supervision. Thus, in many cases it is ascertained that the relationship with the parent who is away suffers; there is a tendency not to attend school on a regular basis or even to drop out of school, and sometimes, a higher incidence of deviant behaviour (consumption of illegal substances, breaking the rules, and problems with the authorities) can be observed, compared with the students in average families.

Research methodology

Taking into consideration that a large number of pupils living in Suceava County come from families with migrant parents, between March 20 and May 15, 2019, the County Center for Resources and Educational Assistance carried out a study regarding the effects of parent migration on children. School counselors from 20 middle schools interviewed teachers and asked a batch of 400 pupils with one or both migrant parents to answer a questionnaire. The children involved in the study took part, with their own consent or their guardian's consent, in group counseling sessions, focused on the communication of opinions and emotions linked to the parents' going away and on the identification of sources of support and social, emotional and academic assistance. The study objectives were:

- To identify possible risks regarding school participation, which arise from the parents going abroad for work (playing truant, low motivation in school, etc.);

- To assess the degree of the pupils' involvement in the consumption of substances harmful for their age or in antisocial activities;
- To assess the pupils' preferences of spending their leisure time;
- To identify the main problems facing the pupils with parents who went abroad and to identify the sources of educational assistance;
- To assess the level of emotional distress and of the main resilience factors (optimism, self-esteem, feeling of self-efficiency).

Concurrently, the study attempts at testing the following hypothesis: there are differences between the children with one parent living abroad and the children with both parents living abroad as far as the felt emotional distress is concerned. It is also possible for pupils with both parents abroad or just the mother, to experience lower self-esteem or a decreased feeling of self-efficiency, as well as a decreased level of optimism.

Findings

According to the data obtained, we ascertain that parents try to maintain a relationship of communication with the children left behind in the country, 80% of the pupils declaring that they talk with their parents on a daily basis, with just 5% stating that the relationship of communication is a sporadic one. In general, pupils consider that their parents being abroad is an opportunity to travel and have a higher living standard, but especially, they see the situation as a sacrifice on the part of the parents, which they appreciate, but which they would not consider following. Thus, almost all the pupils questioned agree that it is important to have both a happy family and a good education, although, irrespective of their school results, many pupils feel that they do not like school so much (approximately 30%). However, 95% of respondents state that, upon finishing the eighth grade, they are determined to continue their education at a high school (87%) or a vocational school (5.9%), while only 5% would like to seek jobs in the country or abroad. Among the professions that the pupils have in mind are IT engineer, physician, lawyer, architect, teacher, entrepreneur, professions held in high esteem by public perception. These findings express the pupils' confidence in the role of education in their personal development and in achieving the desired social mobility. Taking into consideration these aspirations, most pupils spend enough time on school work, 68% stating that they spend at least 2 hours a day doing their homework. The 20% of pupils with parents working abroad, who state that they spend less than an hour on their homework, are not to be neglected. The lack of supervision, as well as the constant need of seeking emotional security, determines pupils to use the internet and play computer games excessively. Thus, 65% of pupils state that they spend a minimum of 2 hours a day on the internet, while one in four pupils admit that they use the computer at least 2 hours a day, and not necessarily for

school tasks. The study also draws attention to the risk of pupils adopting deviant behaviour or behaviour inadequate for their age, under negative peer pressure. Thus, 10% of the pupils questioned stated that they started to smoke, 18.8% occasionally drink alcohol, 4% drink larger amounts of alcohol, while 3% have already been under police investigation. In the experience of the school counselors who work with these children, the deviance is not so much the result of lack of supervision or lack of pro-social role models, but first and foremost it is a sign of the need of emotional saturation. The main problems facing the middleschool pupils whose parents are abroad do not differ too much from those of the other pupils: the marks (I), lack of free time (II), homework (III), not spending enough time with their parents (IV). The main source of support in dealing with and solving some problems arising in school is the mother, in the children's opinion (71%), but there are children whose parents are abroad who rely on friends (8%), teachers (3.8%), or the father (3%) in mediating some problems arising in school.

Research carried out in Romania and Moldova have stressed the higher frequency of depression symptoms in the children left at home, as effects of their parents' temporary migration. Although most pupils perceive the future in an optimistic light, there are still 22% of the children in this category who state that they are rather lonely, 17% feel that they are not loved enough, that they are neglected, or are even unhappy. One in five pupils whose parents are abroad experience a feeling of confusion, as they are unable to fully understand what is expected from them, while one in three children sees themselves as being rather different from the other children. At the same time, the analysis of the basic statistic inventory shows certain differences between the pupils whose both parents are abroad and those with only the mother or father abroad. Thus, the children whose mother is abroad ($MD=2.74$) or both parents are abroad ($MD=2.82$) experience the feeling of loneliness more often than those with only the father abroad ($MD=3.01$). Furthermore, the children whose mother works abroad ($MD=2.76$) experience a feeling of confusion more frequently than those whose father is abroad ($MD=3.00$). The same differences are also noticed at the variable emotional distress-the feeling of unhappiness.

These data indicate that, at the age of adolescence, some pupils are confronted with a feeling of abandonment and with the need to solve a series of problems by themselves. The children are even more affected when, prior to their parent's or parents' going away, the familial climate was optimum, capable of ensuring security and affection (Stegar, I., 2015, p.360).

More than half of the children questioned state that, in general, they accept the things which cannot be changed. The risks, on an emotional and behavioural plane, of the parents working abroad are much diminished, especially when the extended family take over the care and upbringing successfully. However, a particular effect of parents' migration is the decrease

in the children's affective sensitivity towards their parents' being away. In spite of the home visits and the conversations mediated by the modern technological means, many parents were confronted with negative emotional reactions and a coolness of relationships upon their return home after a longer period of working abroad.

The studies show that there is a series of needs specific to the children, determined by the parents going abroad: emotional support (to be listened to and understood), the development of the sense of responsibility and the preparation for a healthy lifestyle, the motivation for school activities, developing abilities of management of resources (money, time), abilities of problem-solving and decision-taking, developing the capacity for adequate self-appreciation, developing social competences through the facilitation of positive interpersonal relationships, understanding their own emotions and learning certain self-control strategies. The data of a survey carried out on a batch representative for the population of middle-school pupils indicate significant associations between the absence of both parents or just the mother's, and the frequency of symptoms of depression in children (Toth, G., Toth, A., Voicu, O., 2007, p. 9).

Conclusions

What makes the difference, in so far as the consequences caused by the changes arisen as a result of migration are concerned, lies in the children's resilience (Luca, C., 2013), in "their capacity to find themselves again, to re-organize themselves, to re-adjust, and recuperate following the confrontation with the stress of migration which can be perceived by the children as being different in intensity and length" (id). Most theoreticians consider resilience as a process in which the risk factors and the protective factors interact and lead to certain specific consequences. The child whose parents are both abroad is at a potential high risk. As far as the children are concerned, the protective factors can be found in a series of characteristics specific to children: healthy/secure attachment, self-control and emotional adjustment, selfconfidence, relationships of support, intelligence, abilities of problem-solving.

Without being able to intervene on all the factors which influence resilience, the psycho-pedagogical counseling program can plan to intervene on the following protective factors: the ability to express emotions, self-esteem, self-efficiency, assertive communication and co-operation, willingness to ask for and get help, ability to identify and maintain relationships with the people who offer support. The school counselor, together with the social services assistant, have to monitor the children whose parents are abroad, as they fall into a category of pupils at risk. Thus, it is necessary that the educational policies aim at drawing up a national strategy to identify and monitor the

children who find it difficult to adjust at school and go through emotional distress, while ensuring all schools have staff qualified in services of psycho-pedagogical counseling.

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Psychosocial predictors of academic maladjustment in Romanian students

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Abstract: *The benefits of academic adjustment are reflected at individual, institutional and societal level. Academic adjustment refers to the student's ability to comply with and to cope with academic standards. In order to explain and predict the difficulties of students' academic adjustment it is necessary to identify their specific factors. The main aim of the study is to explore the relationships between perfectionism, test anxiety, self-efficacy and academic maladjustment on a Romanian student sample. The study had been carried out on a sample of 149 de students from Romania. Data collection had been obtained by means of Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ), Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R), Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale (CTAS) and General Self-efficacy Scale (GSES). The results showed that perfectionism has a negative direct effect on Self-efficacy and positive effect on Test anxiety. By using a serial multiple mediator model we observed that high perfectionism explains high maladjustment, this effect being explained by the mediating role of self-efficacy and test anxiety, self-efficacy having a suppression effect on test anxiety and thus, reducing the impact of test anxiety on maladjustment. The obtained results can be used by universities in subsequent development, support and intervention initiatives in order to counteract the negative effects of students' academic maladjustment.*

Keywords: *academic maladjustment, perfectionism, self- efficacy, test anxiety, undergraduate students.*

Introduction

Students' successful academic adjustment is associated at the individual level with academic performance (Richardson et al., 2012), well-being (Chui & Chan, 2020), at organizational/ institutional level with the retention rate (Freidman & Mandel, 2011), and at the social level with the labour market insertion level (Menz, 2020).

In the context of social dynamics having a direct impact over the labour market, the concern for studying the students' academic adjustment process comes from the necessity felt by high education institutions in Romania to build coherent strategies in order to attract and maintain students in the study programs and to train qualified graduates for the labour market. Academic adjustment is a dynamic, multidimensional process in which students interact with the academic environment and through which a fit between their demands, values and expectations and the demands and regulations of university life over time is set (Baker & Siryk, 1984). Students must cope with the multiple challenges of the university environment, with new liberties and opportunities, as academic adjustment has multiple dimensions – academic, emotional and social (Baker & Siryk, 1984). They have to adjust to new academic exigencies and demands, to new teaching methods, to develop new learning skills and routines, to finalize academic tasks on schedule, to pass the exams, to obtain the graduation diploma to time, etc (academic adjustment), to adjust emotionally in situations which determine fear of the unknown, the exam stress as well as burnout (emotional adjustment), and also to assume the new professional role (social adjustment). Studies show that not all students have the same rate and rhythm of adjustment, the determining factors being mainly the personal ones, as well as a low level of learning skills and of the necessary prerequisites to cope with academic curriculum (Holder, Robinson & Krass, 2006), and also personality traits (Montgomery et al. , 2019) In order to perform the tasks at a performance level (personal standards), some students manifest the tendency to be perfectionists (Lee, Park, Cho, 2020). Perfectionism represents a personal characteristic having both an adaptive value – possession of high standards in the absence of excessive self-criticism, and a maladaptive one - the degree to which an individual perceives a gap between his or her high standards and actual performance (Slaney et al., 2001). Students who manifest high personal standards in the absence of excessive self-criticism – *adaptive perfectionism* have a better academic adjustment (Stoeber & Otto, 2006; Montgomery et al. , 2019), as compared to students who manifest excessive self-doubt, criticism, and excessive worry about making mistakes – *maladaptive perfectionism* (Rice & Slaney, Montgomery et al., 2019). A variable which could explain the effects of perfectionism over academic maladjustment is self- efficacy. Self - efficacy, defined as an individual's belief that the person is able to accomplish a task or reach a future goal (Bandura, 1977) is negatively associated with perfectionism. This can be explained through the fact that those unreal beliefs over standards related to academic environment prevents their irrational awareness, maintaining their reference and having a direct impact over self-efficacy. (Brett et al, 1998). Academic maladjustment also refers to students' poor ability to manage their emotions in the academic activity. This can be explained through test anxiety defined as the emotional and behavioural responses that

accompany concern about possible negative consequences or failure on an exam or similar evaluative situation. High levels of test - anxiety can be negatively associated with the negative consequences of academic maladjustment such as poor motivation, poor self evaluation, lower sense of well-being, lower self-control etc. There were no identified studies which highlighted a direct relation between the levels of test anxiety and academic adjustment. Empirical studies showed positive associations between perfectionism and test anxiety, but results proved to be inconsistent (Burcas, Cretu, 2021) in point of width. Thus, students with high levels of text anxiety tend to be more preoccupied with errors, more doubtful about their performance, and more concerned about others' high expectations (Burcas, Cretu, 2021).

Aim and hypothesis

The main aim of the study is to explore the relationships between perfectionism, test anxiety, self-efficacy and academic maladjustment on a Romanian student sample (Figure 1).

The hypothesis of the study are the following:

Perfectionism predicts test anxiety.

The predictive effect of perfectionism on academic maladjustment is mediated by self-efficacy and test anxiety.

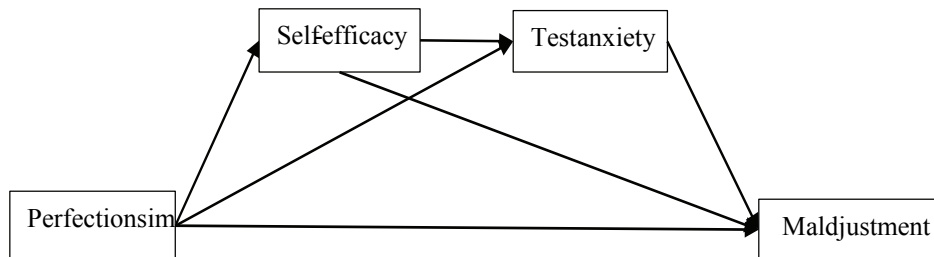


Figure 1. Mediation model for the prediction of academic maladjustment

Methods Participants

The sample consisted of 149 undergraduate students from different Romanian universities and different study programs, covering both Humanities and Science. The sample is balanced, the males representing 40.9% of the participants, the mean age being 22.44 years (SD = 4.7).

Measures

1. Test anxiety was measured with the Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale (CTAS) (Cassady & Johnson, 2002). CTAS is a 27-item measure focused on the

cognitive domain of test anxiety. The items are measured on a four-point Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from “Not at all like me” to “Very much like me” and focus on behaviours such as: engaging in task-irrelevant thinking, comparing self to others, experiencing intruding thoughts, and have relevant cues escape the learner’s attention. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient obtained in this study was .91.

2. Perfectionism was measured with the Almost Perfect Scale-Revised (APS-R) (Slaney et al., 2001). The 23 items measure three dimensions of personal perfectionism: High standards (7 items, Cronbach’s Alpha = .77) assessing the expectations for personal performance, Discrepancy (12 items, Cronbach’s Alpha = .92) assessing the perceived failure to live up to his or her standards and Order (4 items, Cronbach’s Alpha = .77) assessing concerns with organization and neatness. The items are measured on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree”.

3. The academic maladjustment was measured with the Academic Adjustment Questionnaire (AAQ) (Cliniciu, 2014). AAQ consists in 24 items (Cronbach’s Alpha = .86) measured on a dichotomous scale (Yes/ No) covering two dimensions, Academic neuroticism (14 items, Cronbach’s Alpha = .87) focusing on anxiety, depression, self-depreciation, irritability, anger, hostility, and vulnerability and Academic procrastination (10 items, Cronbach’s Alpha = .81) focusing on tendency to delay or postpone current academic tasks. High scores indicate academic maladjustment.

Self-efficacy was measured with the General self-efficacy Scale (GSES) (Jerusalem & Schwarzer, 1995). GSES consists in 10 items measured on 4-point Likert scale ranging from “Not at all true” to “Exactly true” and it is a unidimensional scale (Cronbach’s Alpha = .92) assessing perceived self-efficacy regarding coping and adaptation abilities in both daily activities and isolated stressful events

Results

The analysis of the Pearson correlation coefficients showed significant associations between the study variables, perfectionism being positively associated with test anxiety and academic maladjustment and negatively with self-efficacy. Test anxiety was significantly associated with academic maladjustment and with all its dimensions, students with higher levels of test anxiety being more maladjusted. On the other hand, self-efficacy showed significant negative correlations with all the other variables (Table 1).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, indicators of scale reliability, Pearson coefficient correlations of the study variables.

	M		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<i>SD</i>										1
1 High standards		38.42	6.82	.77						
2 Order	20.65	5.21	.67***	.85						
3 Discrepancy	42.75	15.17	.15	.07	.92					
4 Perfectionism		101.82	19.89	.63***	.55***	.83***	.87			
5 Test anxiety	61.60	14.03	-.01	-.08	.62**	.45***	.91			
6 Neuroticism	4.84	4.10	.02	.01	.68***	.53***	.76***	.87		
7 Procrastination	5.34	2.95	-.21**	-.34***	.29***	.05	.45***	.47***	.81	
8 Maladjustment		10.18	6.09	-.08	-.16	.602**	.38***	.73***	.90***	.80***
9 Self-efficacy	30.14	6.43	.05	.08	-.49***	-.34***	-.54***	-.54***	-.32***	-.52***

Note: *** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, $N = 149$, Cronbach's Alpha was listed on the main diagonal

To test the main hypothesis of the study, a serial multiple mediator model (Process 3.0, Model 6) (Hayes, 2017) had been used. The results showed that perfectionism has a negative direct effect on Self-efficacy and positive effect on Test anxiety. When considering the serial mediation effect, the direct effect of perfectionism on maladjustment became not significant, while the effect through both self-efficacy and test anxiety was significant, showing a total mediation effect (Table 2). The mediating effect on maladjustment of Test anxiety is higher than the mediating effect of Self-efficacy, showing a higher impact of Test anxiety; however, their combined effect remains significant. High perfectionism explains high maladjustment this effect being explained by the mediating role of Self-efficacy and Test anxiety, Self-efficacy having a suppression effect on test anxiety and thus, reducing the impact of test anxiety on maladjustment.

Table 2. Path estimates and explained variance from serial mediation and moderated serial mediation analyses

Serial multiple mediator model (model 6)	Path	LLCI	ULCI	R2	F (df)	p
Predicting Self-efficacy				.12	19.27 (1, 147)	<.001
Perfectionism	-.11	-.15	-.06			<.001
Predicting Test anxiety				.37	43.71 (2, 146)	<.001
Perfectionism	.21	.12	.31			<.001
Self-Efficacy	-.95	-1.25	-.65			<.001
Predicting Academic maladjustment				.54	62.59 (3, 145)	<.001
Perfectionism	.02	-.02	.05			.35
Self-Efficacy	-.16	-.08	-.03			.012
Test anxiety	.27	.21	.32			<.001

Serial multiple mediator model (model 6)	<i>Path</i>	<i>LLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i>	<i>R2</i>	<i>F (df)</i>	<i>p</i>
Indirect Perfectionism effect through Self-efficacy	.02	.002	.04			.045
Indirect Perfectionism effect through Test anxiety	.06	.03	.09			.010
Indirect Perfectionism effect through Self-efficacy and Test anxiety	.03	.01	.05			.010

Note: LLCI, ULCI: lower and upper levels for confidence interval

Discussion and conclusions

The present study highlights the effect of perfectionism over academic maladjustment, explained through the personal traits self-efficacy and test anxiety. Personal variables represent predictors of academic maladjustment, having direct and indirect effect according to the proposed model (Table 1).

The results underline the importance of personal factors (perfectionism, self-efficacy and test anxiety) which influence students' academic maladjustment in connection to aspects related to the emotional angle, well-being and mental health but also to behavioural aspects such as the irrational procrastination of academic tasks. Moreover, the study offers an advanced perception of students' immediate needs and suggestions for further research in order to develop adapted and efficient counselling and intervention programs.

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Facilitating collaboration between teachers who carry out activities with the student with special educational needs (SEN)

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Abstract: *The presence of children with SEN in mainstream school requires the provision of additional services, human and material resources, which lead to equity in education. It is important that all those who contribute to the education of students with SEN collaborate, develop professionally, support each other to ensure the best educational strategies for the student with SEN. However, according to the literature, collaboration, although desirable, may be a practice for some teachers or may not exist for others. One of the objectives of the study is to identify the opinion of teachers regarding the collaboration between them in the activity with the student with SEN. Moreover, we are talking about additional support for students with SEN, but we must not lose sight of the fact that adults (teachers, parents) may feel the need to be supported in this activity. On the other hand, online education, by restricting face-to-face meetings between educators, determined us to find solutions, alternatives by developing an online platform so as to stimulate/ develop collaboration between educators in the activity with the student with SEN.*

Keywords: *SEN; collaboration of educators, support, online platform.*

Introduction

Children with disabilities and / or other SEN are part of society, some of whom are integrated into mainstream school. In fact, as Westwood and Graham (2000) have argued recently, there has been an increase in the number of students with SEN in mainstream school.

In UNESCO's view, SEN refers to "all those children and young people whose needs (needs, necessities) are generated by disabilities or learning difficulties" (UNESCO, 1994, as cited in Vrăsmaș, 2015, p. 20). The literature but also the legislation of some states as well as that of Romania specify that in the case of a child with SEN, additional resources are needed for his education, educational support (Vrăsmaș, 2012), "additional measures, methods and

means” (Vrăsmaş, 2014, p. 270), a complex assistance (OMENCŞ no. 1985/1305/5805/2016), for the student to overcome the obstacles encountered. It is necessary to provide the student with SEN with additional public and / or private resources (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2007) and the school to adapt to the child’s needs, only in this situation can we speak of equal opportunities for all children (Vrăsmaş, 2011).

The fact that the student with SEN benefits or, on the contrary, does not benefit from inclusive education, an education that fits the student’s profile, depends on the strategies, the practices used by teachers in the classroom (Meijer, 2010). Among the necessary conditions in working with the student with SEN are those aimed at the existence of an intervention team and collaboration between all teachers involved, and collaboration, as appreciated by Pugach and Lawrence-Johnson (1989), must become an important aspect in redefining the relationship among teachers. In fact, most definitions of inclusion bring to the fore the collaboration between educational actors (August et al., 2012 and Kaikkonen, 2010, as cited in Howle, 2020). Theoharis et al. (2016, as cited in Howle, 2020) considers that it is necessary for teachers to have the disposition and ability to collaborate with other adults, other teachers, educators, to come to the aid of children. However, collaboration within educational groups may exist, be a practice developed by teachers (Lakkala et al., 2014) or, on the contrary, be weak, fragmentary (Apostu et al., 2009; Paju et al., 2016), being difficult to implement due to barriers (Da Fonte & Barton-Arwood, 2017), such as, among others, the reduced time for planning the way of collaboration (Nochajski, 2002).

We understand by the collaboration between teachers the establishment of common goals in the child’s education, an exchange of experience between educators, a common action in the educational-therapeutic intervention.

Methodology

Objective

This study is part of a larger research conducted for the doctoral thesis.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the opinion of different categories of teachers regarding the collaboration between them and the support needs felt by them in the activity with the student with SEN, in order to improve / optimize this educational-therapeutic activity.

Through this study we aimed to:

- Evidence of the opinion of teachers (from mainstream education and support teachers, speech therapists and school counselors) on the need for support from colleagues to carry out the activity with the student with SEN.
- Identifying the opinion of the various categories of teachers regarding the existence of collaboration between them in the activity with the student with SEN.

- Presentation of an online work practice that favors the collaboration of teachers in the activity with the student with SEN.

Participants

Data were collected from 180 respondents. The participants in the study are 28 support teachers (16%) employed in special schools in Prahova County (5 special schools), who work in integrative mainstream schools, 10 speech therapists (6%), 14 school counselors (8%) from County Resource Center and Educational Assistance (CJRAE) Prahova. There were also 128 teachers (71%) working with children with SEN enrolled in schools in Prahova (teachers from 18 schools), primary level (57 respondents) and middle school (62 respondents). There were also 9 respondents-teachers who teach at both primary and secondary level.

The study population was gathered according to the availability of teachers to participate in the study.

Instruments

Questionnaire for teachers - Collaboration and school results for students with SEN, adapted after Questionnaire at school level- Horga et al. (2016, pp. 111-121). The questionnaire contains several items, but we analyzed only the items that aim at collaboration, in general, between teachers (with the support teacher, with the speech therapist teacher, with the counsellor teacher, with the class teacher).

Questionnaire - the needs of teachers in the activity with the student with SEN-adapted after Questionnaire at school level- Horga et al. (2016, pp.111-121). Items that indicate the opinion of teachers working with the student with SEN on the need for support from other educational factors in areas such as knowledge of the characteristics of the student with SEN, developing the necessary work tools in the activity with the student with SEN were analysed. The response options were as follows: 5 = "I need support to a very great extent", 4 = "I need support to a great extent", 3 = "I need support to a very small extent", 2 = "I do not need support", 1 = "I don't know / can't appreciate".

Procedure

The study took place between January and August 2019, in Prahova County.

In the analysis performed, teachers were divided into two categories: general education teachers (T) and support teachers, speech therapist teachers and school counsellors (STSC).

In order to analyze the teachers' opinions regarding their own support needs from the others, in the activity with the student with SEN, we calculated for each specific need (SN) an average of the scores for the two categories of teachers. We compared the averages with the t test for independent samples and if the average for one category of teachers is higher than the average for the other category of teachers then we concluded that one category of teachers shows a specific need more accentuated than the other category of teachers. We also used the ANOVA test to see if there were differences between the answers of the four categories of teachers included in the research.

In the analysis of the obtained results we used Microsoft Excel (for the realizations of charts).

Data analysis

The data were analyzed following the formulated objectives.

After centralizing the answers (Figure 1) it is observed that the class teachers (91.40%), the speech therapist teachers and the school counsellors (87.50%) consider that they have a good collaboration with the support teacher. Only a small part of the T-category teachers consider that there is no collaboration with the support teacher. The investigated teachers (8.60% - teachers from category T and 8.30% teachers from category STSC), claim that there are schools that do not benefit from the presence of the support teacher, not being assigned in these institutions. Some of the teachers (34.40% teachers from category T and 57.10% teachers from STSC category) consider that there is collaboration with the speech therapist teacher. It should be noted that high percentages of teachers' answers are found in the *does not exist in school* option (45.30% teachers in the T category and 35.70% teachers in the STSC category). We point out that not all schools in the county benefit from the services of a speech therapist. And the collaboration with the school counsellor teacher is appreciated by less than half of the respondents (25.80% -teachers from category T and 44.70% teachers from STSC category), the other respondents claiming the lack of collaboration or absence of this teacher from the institution).

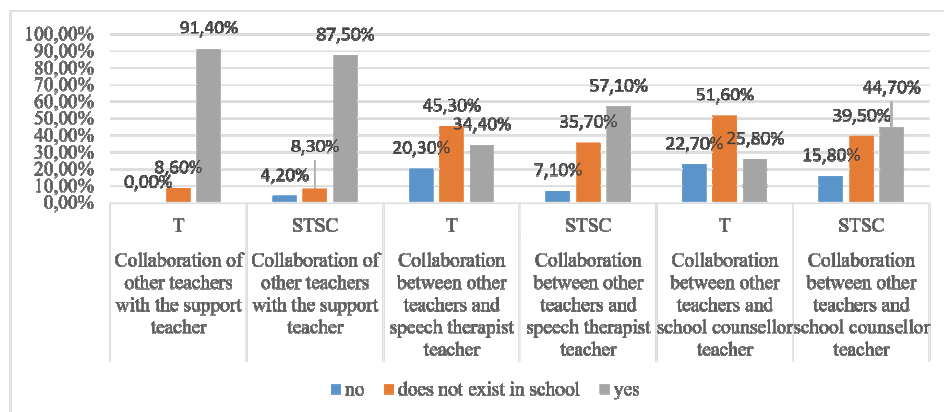


Figure 1. Collaboration between teachers

T-test generated results that show that in the analyzed items we have significant differences between the two categories of teachers ($sig < 0.05$, Table 1), those who feel more intensely the need for support from others, in the activity with the student with SEN, are teachers from class. However, we can see that the other teachers, to a lesser extent, appreciate that they need support from others in carrying out the activity with the student with SEN.

Table 1. T-test analysis of specific needs of teachers in the intervention on the child with SEN (centralization)

		Mean	SD	Sig
Knowledge of the characteristics of the student with SEN	STSC	3.08	.95	.000
	T	3.95	.95	
Development of work plans	STSC	2.92	1.13	.000
	T	4.12	.87	
Making curricular adaptations	STSC	3.19	1.32	.000
	T	3.95	.098	

One-way ANOVA, for the need for support felt by teachers in “Development of work plans”, indicates significant differences between the responses of the four categories of teachers involved in research ($sig = 0.00 < 0.05$), according to Table 2.

The highest score is recorded by the classroom teachers in mainstream education (4.11), who consider that **they** need a lot of support in the elaboration of these documents, and the lowest score is recorded by the support teachers, the value obtained by them (2.36) lying between *I do not need support* and *I need support to a small extent*. The need for support in the elaboration of

documents specific to the activity with students with SEN is also felt by counselors and speech therapy teachers, the averages of the values obtained by them being between the need for support *to a small extent* and *to a large extent*.

Table 2. Statistics Descriptives - The need for teacher support in Development of work plans

		<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>95% Confidence Interval for Mean</i>		<i>Minimum</i>	<i>Maximum</i>
	school speech therapist teacher			1.34	.21	2.77		1	5
	school counsellor teacher	56	3.86	1.07	.14	3.57	4.14	2	5
	general education teachers	512	4.11	.87	.04	4.03	4.18	2	15
	Total	720	3.77	1.09	.04	3.69	3.85	1	5
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Score	support teacher	112	2.36	.61	.06	2.24	2.47	2	4
		40	3.20				3.633		

Results analysis

The results obtained indicate the need to develop collaboration between teachers working with the student with SEN. It also outlines the idea that teachers also need support from others to work with students with SEN.

The results obtained in the research on the need for support felt by teachers in the development of specific SEN documents reflect what was found in the studies conducted by Apostu et al. (2009) or by Horga et al. (2016), in our country. These studies highlight this need for support from teachers due to their limited experience or the complexity of the documents.

The elaboration of such documents implies a team work, the collaboration between all the educational factors involved in the activity with the student with SEN. According to the law, the support teacher is the one who coordinates the work team in preparing the documents. In the absence of the support teacher, other teachers have to take on this task. Not being familiar with these documents, they may not know how to prepare them, hence the need for support.

The conclusions obtained (a partial collaboration between the teachers involved in the activity with the student with SEN and the finding of a need for support from other teachers felt by some respondents) required the identification / development of strategies to stimulate collaboration between teachers, to provide their support in the activity with the student with SEN. Moreover, this

pandemic period (as a result of the Covid-19 virus) required the realization of the distance learning process, online, which did not favor the collaboration between those involved in the education of these students. On the other hand, we must also take into account the fact that digital is more and more present in our lives and can help us keep in touch with others even when face-to-face meetings are not possible (lack of time being the most frequently invoked reason—appears in a study by Song et al., 2019). The solution that we considered useful was to develop a platform through which we gave the possibility to the educational factors involved in the activity with the student with SEN, to have a click away to access useful information and provide necessary information to other teachers involved. As arguments for using this platform we could list: facilitating meetings within the online work team; the possibility of creating easily accessible educational resources; timely access to information on the activity with the student with SEN, the platform providing an overview in this regard.

We consider this platform as a resource through which general information about the student with SEN can be delivered but, at the same time, a support, a way in which the student becomes the object of the work / activity of several teachers, therapists. It is a working tool for the intervention team for the student with SEN.

The platform is created on Google Classroom, by creating a class for each student with SEN with whom the work team carries out activities. The platform includes: a) a section dedicated to online resources – general information about special educational requirements, definition, their characteristics, working tools used in the activity with the student with SEN: models of service plans, educational plans, intervention programs, worksheets work and so on; b) a section dedicated to the presentation / description of educational support services for children with SEN; c) a section in which the work team uploads the documents necessary to carry out the activity with the student with SEN. It is a way in which each educational factor is an active participant in the elaboration of the documents, it is informed on the proposed objectives in the case of the child; d) each teacher, therapist or parent - in a specially designed section or on the flow of the class - can upload on the platform what the child has worked (various worksheets, results of the child's activity and so on) or what the student has to do before the future meeting; e) another section is dedicated to a centralization of the activities carried out with the respective student. An Excel worksheet (Google Sheets) is used, which the teachers edit together, after carrying out the activity with the student.

Thus, a clear image is made, in real time, of the educational and therapeutic intervention in the case of the student. The activity carried out is noted, the results obtained and proposals / suggestions can be made. Through this online platform, a global image, a profile of the student, an x-ray of the activity with him and the child's evolution are made. The whole process of commu-

nication between those involved in the activity with the student with SEN and in the creation of specific documentation is easier and is constantly updated.

Discussions

Following the data analysis, there is a good collaboration of teachers with the support teacher and a reduced collaboration with the speech therapist teacher or the school counselor teacher (information that can be deduced from other studies). Also, in the activity with the student with SEN, there are teachers who need to be supported in their educational approach. Those who feel the need for more support from other educators are the teachers in the class. In these conditions, it is highlighted that in general, the support for the other educators, in the activity with the student with SEN, is provided by the support teacher, and the collaboration between the educators must be stimulated. The solution, in the current context, was to create an online platform that would encourage collaboration between educators in providing support for the student with SEN.

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Resilience in the educational field

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Abstract: *The phenomenon of 'Resilience' is analysed from the psychological and educational perspective field and we aimed to approach the development of a quality life of adolescents by customising the concepts to individual needs. The approaches of the research have a strong improving value, recommendations and suggestions for increasing resilience as well as stopping bullying violence, in accordance with the specific needs of adolescence, are obtained based on the results. The phenomenon of 'Resilience' seems to be another insufficiently acknowledged problem in the Romanian society and maybe an uncomfortable topic. For many of the adolescents interviewed, the topic of 'increasing resilience' seemed surprisingly a new topic. 'WHAT IS RESILIENCE? Resilience is the capacity of any entity – an individual, a community, an organization, or a natural system - to prepare for disruptions, to recover from shocks and stresses, and to adapt and grow from a disruptive experience (see. J. Rodin, 2014, p.3). The dream of any teacher is to prepare their students to become independent people, with a bright future and a successful career, the dream of any child begins with a teacher or an adult who believes in him/her.*

Keywords: *resilience, education, bullying, adolescence.*

Introduction

The adolescence is a social construct, a period of biological, cognitive, psychological and social transition, from childhood to adulthood. The adolescence offers opportunities for growth in terms of physical size, cognitive and social competence, autonomy, self-esteem and intimacy. In order to develop in the most positive and healthy way, young people need support from teachers, parents and the community they belong to.

If we want our children to experience the world as much as possible with all its adversities and opportunities, our goal must be resilience.

'THERE ARE FIVE MAIN characteristics of resilience and they can be developed, to a greater or lesser degree, by any individual, community, or organisation. To be resilient and is to be aware, adaptive, diverse, integrated and

self regulating. These characteristics are all present, to different degrees and in different manifestation, in all resilient entities (idem. p.5).

The resilience is the ability to rise above difficult circumstances, the trait that helps us to exist in this imperfect world as we move forward with optimism and confidence. Resilience is commonly defined as an ability to recover from troubles, the quality of recovery.

The educational and academic resilience refers to the ability to achieve school performance in the face of confrontation with various risk factors. School success can be interpreted as a predictor of a high degree of resilience. The aggressive bullying behavior is often encountered in the educational field. The acts of intimidation, physical, verbal violence, destruction of objects, mockery, labelling, and exclusion are undesirable behaviours to create an environment conducive to student development. The involvement of teachers, professors, school counsellor in the emotional and social development of students takes place primarily through the development of positive traits, finding a meaning.

The aggressive bullying behaviors can affect children's areas of development such as identity formation, bodily integrity, ability to control the behavior, cognitive processing, self-confidence and trust in others, moral and spiritual development. A positive approach to the prevention of violence in schools is to increase safety in schools, the emotional and social development of students, the establishment of connections between students and colleagues, school and community. The classic intervention in the case of aggressive bullying behaviour involves finding the culprits and sanctioning or punishing them.

In this context, this paper aims to provide a clear picture of the role of resilience in the educational field, identifying the factors that influence resilience. Explaining the process by which resilience is formed at the level of emotional, cognitive and behavioural life in adolescents; we consider this paper an important topic of reflection for all educational factors.

Methodology

Through the approached methodology and topic, the paper 'The role of resilience in the educational field' is one of the few researches that focused on this issue and brings clear, quantitative and qualitative data, highlighting the role, usefulness and effectiveness of educational programs of resilience. This research is an exercise of awareness, identification, analysis and verification of the level of resilience.

The research provides a tool for increasing resilience and reducing the level of bullying, captures the conclusions of the research fructified in recommendations and directions for action, for the development of directions for action, for the development of ways of intervention. The statistical

processing on the level of resilience and aggressive bullying behavior supports the need to diversify non- violence education strategies.

In February 2020, a study was conducted at the '1 Mai' Technological High School in Ploiești on a sample of 100 students that aimed to assess resilience and measure aggressive bullying behavior.

Objectives

The general objective of this research was to assess resilience and measure aggressive bullying behavior. The resilience is an important resource for adolescents to overcome the problems they face. Within the high school education system, a major emphasis is placed on the cognitive development of the student, on the missing aspects or on the structures that need to be improved. The personal development with the help of positive psychology proposes to address everyday difficulties, traumatic situations from the perspective of the strengths that each of us has. When students face bullying (aggressive-abusive-repetitive behavior) it is useful to use the resources they already have and know from previous experiences that they can use them optimally. In this paper, we aim to highlight the link between resilience and bullying. Carrying out programs to involve students in increasing resilience and reducing aggressive bullying behaviour is a proposal that must be projected in the modern school curriculum.

Participants

The sample consists of 100 students in the 9th and 10th grades from a technological high school in Ploiești, Prahova County. In order to carry out the research, respectively to apply the questionnaires, it was necessary the approval offered by the school management, the class homeroom teachers and the written consent of the parents. The parents were informed about the research activity during the homeroom classes and proved to be very open, all of them agreed with the participation of the students in the research.

Tool

The research data obtained after filling in the questionnaires were processed and then analyzed using the JASP program, which is one of the most used programs for social statistical analysis of data. The objective of the paper is to highlight the correlation between the level of resilience and bullying in the education system. In order to achieve this goal, validated psychological questionnaires specific to the research were used. In order to achieve the proposed objectives and to validate the formulated hypotheses, the following quantitative psychometric assessment tools were applied in the research: The Resilience Questionnaire (Oshio, 2003 translated into Romanian by Cazan,

Truța, 2015) and the Behavioral Self- Assessment Questionnaire for Students built by Stevens, Bourdeaudhuij and Van Oost (2000) which was translated and adapted into Romanian.

Results. Data analysis

Out of the 100 students interviewed, the gender distribution was not fair, with a share of 43% girls and 57% boys.

Although the high school is located in Ploiești, 65% of the students come from the rural environment. To get to school, students spend between 30 minutes and 3 hours every day to get to classes. Students who come from the same towns have formed their friends, micro-groups. In general, when opting to choose the high school, an important factor is the option of friends, neighbours.

The results of the research from a psychological point of view confirm the correlation between resilience and bullying aggression. The answers were analysed for the 6 subscales of the two questionnaires, namely: victimisation, recognised bullying aggression, positive behaviours, searching for the new, balancing emotions, and orientation towards the future.

The research results showed that 61% of young people felt threatened at least once, of which 29% several times, which confirms the existence of a bullying behaviour in their environment. In terms of the type of bullying, verbal bullying is more prevalent among surveyed adolescents compared to physical bullying.

In general, aggressors consider their behaviour less aggressive than it actually is. A percentage of 34% of students showed aggressive behaviour towards other colleagues, of which 15% repeatedly. Often, the awareness of aggressive behaviour and its recognition is a form of manifestation of power, control, a way to capture the attention of others, thus, an important role is played by spectators of aggressive bullying. The hypothesis according to which 'The higher the degree of resilience, the lower the bullying aggression' was confirmed for a coefficient of -0.286 , $p=0.004$, $n=100$ (number of subjects). The association between resilience and bullying aggression is negative, which means that the higher the resilience, the lower the bullying aggression.

Through the results obtained in this research we identified that resilience has a significant role in the development of adolescents. Social and teacher support is also needed for the adolescent to form an independent personality.

Limits of research

Some limitations of this research need to be considered. The target population of this research was selected from students belonging to a single high school. The current sample is not large enough to confirm all aspects of the hypotheses made. In addition, the assessed variables were all measured at one

time, and the longitudinal research is needed to empirically demonstrate the causal relationships between the investigated variables. Also, there are no data available for this high school before the current study and we cannot make a comparison from the point of view of teachers and students.

This study can be extended in several ways. We can repeat the study in a year or two, this provides an opportunity to make a comparative analysis and see how participants in the initial study have evolved over time and how their resilience levels have improved and how aggressive or bullying behaviours have decreased or may have been devolved. In order to increase the validity of our results, we can try to combine the data collected through questionnaires with secondary data (absolute values for different indicators). We can also expand our model by including several variables that reflect the practices of high schools in Romania and on several subjects in the study, expanding the samples in future research to generalise the findings.

Conclusion

The resilience plays an important role in individual development. Without self-knowledge, without the ability to identify one's emotions, without the ability to cope with the adversities that a person may face, development becomes difficult and painstaking.

The results of the research on the relationship between the level of resilience and aggressive bullying behaviour have largely demonstrated the hypotheses that the higher a resilience score a person has, the less they are affected by bullying.

Taking into account these aspects, teachers, professors, school counsellors, parents, the local community, people who have the role of educating children, can carry out activities, programs, to help children increase their resilience to create a balance in daily life. The future research may consider emotional literacy, as a structure framed in emotional intelligence as a protective factor against vulnerabilities.

The obtained results generally support the main hypothesis of the research according to which with the increase of students' resilience, the aggressive bullying behaviour among students will decrease.

The quality of schooling influences the students' results; a good high school offers an orderly and safe environment, adequate material resources, a stable teaching staff and a positive sense of community. The school culture places a strong emphasis on study and stimulates the belief that all students can learn. It also offers the possibility of extracurricular activities, which keep students busy and reduce bullying behaviors. Teachers show trust, respect, and high expectations on students but also in terms of their own abilities.

A teenager who will be provided with healthy developmental contexts will become a resilient adult. Resilience is dependent on individual traits, family, but also on the characteristics of the community and the specifics of social, educational, medical policies, it can change over time depending on experiences, but also on stages of development (childhood, adolescence, etc.). In general, increased resilience is a protective factor against stressful experiences. The exposure to multiple stressors increases vulnerability to certain social and emotional problems. The extent to which children or adolescents exposed to stressful situations develop effective coping strategies is given by the support, attention, empathy, and time spent by relevant adults with them. The more positive and needs-oriented the interaction between the adult and the child or adolescent is, the more resilient skills they will develop.

An excellent way to build resilience and confidence for adolescents is to deal with difficult situations and get out of them successfully. When they repeatedly go through experiences in which they assess the situation, fight the problem and then propose possible solutions, connections are formed in their brain that make them more competent in the future.

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Measuring curiosity in the education sciences

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Abstract: *The paper presents and critically analyzes the most important ways in which the concept of curiosity has been measured in the practice of scientific research in the last century. After an introduction to the ancient issue of the concept, the paper highlights the way in which different researchers have operationalized and measured the idea of curiosity in various research programs. In the final part we focused on one of the standardized research tools in the field of curiosity, entitled The Five-Dimensional Curiosity Scale Revised (5DCR) which belongs to T. Kashdan. All these dimensions or meanings of curiosity were analyzed from the point of view of the educator eager to explore this fascinating human characteristic.*

Keywords: *education, educational sciences, curiosity, Five-Dimensional Curiosity Scale Revised (5DCR).*

Introduction

Any discussion of this mysterious and fascinating human trait, curiosity, must begin with Aristotle. In *Metaphysics*, the Greek philosopher treats historically not only the beginnings or sources of knowledge in curiosity or the way in which the problem of knowledge was treated before him, but even a kind of anatomy of curiosity that manages to describe the way the human being establishes a relationship with the environment. his life. Only with the help of today's ethology and neuroscience can we reinterpret Aristotle in such a way as to understand the purpose and importance of curiosity for man. That is why a reading of the inaugural passage of *Metaphysics* is needed (2000, book I, part I):

All men by nature desire to know. An indication of this is the delight we take in our senses; for even apart from their usefulness they are loved for themselves; and above all others the sense of sight. For not only with a view to action, but even when we are not going to do anything, we prefer seeing (one might say) to everything else. The reason is that this, most of all the senses, makes us know and brings to light many differences between things.

By nature animals are born with the faculty of sensation, and from sensation memory is produced in some of them, though not in others. And therefore the former are more intelligent and apt at learning than those which cannot remember; those which are incapable of hearing sounds are intelligent though they cannot be taught, e.g. the bee, and any other race of animals that may be like it; and those which besides memory have this sense of hearing can be taught.

Note the way in which Aristotle discusses the problem of knowledge. Curiosity is on the one hand a natural aspiration, which entitles Loewenstein (1994) to declare curiosity as an instinct, on the other hand it is the source of human knowledge. Perhaps confusing at first sight, knowledge and curiosity are sensations obtained by exercising these needs for her sake, without a direct utility. In short, man is a being who naturally possesses the desire to see the distinctive features of the things around him beyond any immediate utility or practical value. We are familiar with the expression knowledge for the sake of knowledge, but today it is more related to concepts such as intrinsic motivation, and has somehow left behind the general philosophical approach (metaphysics, primary philosophy) or epistemology (truth or objective knowledge). Enjoying a constant cognitive activity that you manage in becoming your own being and connecting with others through this activity is a fundamental psychological need, at least in the conception of the theory of self-determination (SDT) (Ryan & So, 2017).

Another thing that stands out in the Aristotelian passage is the biological way in which it analyzes knowledge and curiosity. The empiricist perspective on the sources of knowledge, adopted by Aristotle, favors the sensory experience for the intellectual development of the human being, but we find with the Greek philosopher that the experience of knowledge is based on satisfying a sensory need to learn new things, and curiosity is at the heart of human development. Pedagogy based on sensations, perceptions, representations or concrete learning experiences will make a career starting with Locke and is a reality unanimously accepted today in established models such as those in northern Europe. Finally, the student's well-being contains an important inner satisfaction obtained from the satisfaction of genuine curiosities in front of the world. For the researcher in the natural sciences, the unknown or the misunderstood are a permanent source of motivation, even when the problems studied are among the most abstract or counterintuitive. Equally, the student can acquire a genuine development of intellectual and emotional abilities by probing the unknown. Here is how a very popular introductory work in physics written by a researcher with remarkable results in the field of quantum physics ends: We are an inquisitive species (...) it is not against nature to be inquisitive, it is in our nature to be so. One hundred thousand years ago, our species left Africa,

probably driven by this curiosity and always learning to look further (Rovelli, 2015, p. 89). Even when understanding the world, the surrounding reality, or the meaning of one's life seems very difficult to reach, curiosity remains an inner force that pushes us forward, beyond any immediate reward. Although we are beings focused on self-preservation and safety, in the end, most of the time, we end up preferring the anxiety of a doubt to an easy certainty. In ethology, the fundamental existential situation of man described above is called the relationship between conservation and neophilia, and the lesson for education here is that any successful learning must be a safe adventure. Recent research (Kidd, 2012) confirms older research (Loewenstein, 1994) in the field of measuring human curiosity: the optimal level of stimulation in children must be a balanced relationship between a known-safe and an unknown-unsafe. Education becomes a taming of insecurity and doubt, a translation of the mystery that is always approximate.

In order to further clarify the concept of curiosity and turn it into a concrete workload for the researcher with the most rigorous scientific requirements, we can notice a simplification of the idea of curiosity in Aristotle: curiosity as a form of human sensitivity. In contemporary researchers we will find operationalizations of form curiosity: sensitivity to the unknown or misunderstood (deprivation sensitivity), (Kashdan, 2019). So the legitimate question of how to measure people's curiosity is not unanswered, on the other hand it is easy to notice that possible answers are not easy to obtain. Curiosity is a dynamic disposition of the human being that shows important variations in intensity depending on the context of life, the level of satisfaction of primary needs, such as security or hunger, age, etc. Therefore, although Greek philosophers saw in it a virtue from which philosophy itself was born, the theme of curiosity did not know distinct approaches of renown, most often being tacitly assumed alongside knowledge, losing sight of the fact that in reality knowledge is a result, a product of the natural disposition (drive) of research, and the need for the new (neophilia) is a fundamental mental process. From the first representative study on curiosity (Berlyne, 1954) and until now the concept of curiosity has known several rigorous approaches in which several directions of measurement and operationalization have been presented (Day 1971; Loewenstein 1994; Litman & Spilberger, 2003; Litman 2008; Kashdan et al 2009; Kashdan 2019). Today we know that the well-being, mental health, well-being and inner balance of children and adults depend heavily on levels of intrinsic motivation, self-determination and autonomy that are all closely related to curiosity (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

In the following we propose an analysis of the most relevant research trends of the idea of human curiosity, and at the end we will propose our own approach to curiosity based on intrinsic motivation and fundamental psychological needs. The emphasis is on the quantitative way of determining

curiosity, so the selection of research will favor the history of questionnaires and investigation scales related to curiosity. The goal is to remove the intuitive mistrust associated with curiosity research that this is a human disposition too subtle and subjective to become the subject of rigorous research. The volatile and inconsistent nature of our interest in understanding the world around us, the likely inherent decline in people's learning needs as we age, the well-known conformism and conservatism that often accompanies us, all together diminish the importance of curiosity about education, well-being, or good life. (Kashdan & Steger, 2007).

Perceptual curiosity and epistemic curiosity

Daniel Berlyne is rightly considered the father of curiosity because he initiated the curiosity research program, a program that continues today, in one way or another, his way of understanding human curiosity. From our point of view, Berlyne is important not only because he sees in curiosity a fundamental element of the biological constitution of man, but especially because he distinguishes in the footsteps of Aristotle between a sensory curiosity and an epistemic or cognitive one. The dual character of curiosity – knowledge vs. sensation – raises even today serious problems of understanding and approaching the concept of curiosity. Berlyne treats the problem of curiosity in a behaviorist context, according to the indisputable reputation of this theory from the middle of the twentieth century. That is why he regards curiosity as a manifestation of behavior, as a disposition that can be shaped by appropriate stimulation. The behaviorist perspective developed through the parallel study of curiosity in humans and animals, and, naturally, the first of the two facets of curiosity (perceptual curiosity) is therefore common to humans and animals. In Berlyne's terms, perceptual curiosity is a sensory reaction in response to stimulation from the environment (the curiosity which leads to increased perception of stimuli) (Berlyne, 1954, p.180). The second facet of curiosity is the epistemic curiosity through which we express our desire to know, which gives us an understanding of the world and which occurs whenever we face a problem, a puzzle or knowledge that does not harmonize with each other (consistency knowledge). Epistemic here means strictly human, in order to keep the behaviorist grid and at the same time the Aristotelian one, if we can say so, in line with the first idea from the passage quoted from *Metaphysics*. It is clear that the epistemic / perceptual distinction respects the superiority of humans over animals in terms of curiosity. Beyond the springs that led Berlyne to establish this distinction, it remains as a crossroads valid today. Berlyne (1960) later added a new distinction regarding behavioral curiosity, between a specific exploratory behavior and one oriented towards diversity (diversive). Obviously human

behavior is oriented by both variants of curiosity, while all other beings manifest an exploratory behavior limited to something always specific.

By combining the two types of curiosity and exploratory behavior we get the complete picture of curiosity that remained valid until the end of the century. Before we ask ourselves how we measure the two types of curiosity, we must ask what is the significance of this important distinction in terms of curiosity for the sciences of education. The synthetic answer consists of two parts, one negative, the other positive. On the one hand, in a positive and favorable way for education in general, Berlyne's distinctions drew attention to the necessary correlation between teaching activity (stimulation) and students' exploratory behavior, which led to the introduction of new tools in teaching such as teaching. curiosity based learning CBL or discovery learning, which have undoubtedly refreshed the school environment everywhere. Berlyne's distinctions did not produce major changes in pedagogy and were not even an absolute novelty for educators, in fact all education is based on the idea that in one way or another all children are curious and want to learn new things about the world, but they had the merit of accrediting through the rigor of scientific experiments the need to give more consideration to the idea of curiosity. Only a few years after Berlyne's distinctions entered the consciousness of educators, there are discussions about true syntheses of studies in the sciences of education that had as their theme learning through discovery (Hermann, 1969).

Educators have accepted the challenge of discovery-based learning and have even tried to apply it in all subjects, although obviously not all school subjects are equally suited to such a teaching tool. For example, mathematics discusses the role of the inductive method (Hendrix, 1961), which was already used in the broader context of learning by discovery, along with the method of incidental teaching which is based on learning opportunities appropriate to a natural environment of assimilation. of information through the natural endowments of children, especially the little ones. At the same time, probably the strongest promoter of the important discovery in education, J.S. Bruner (1961) proposes discovery as a teaching tool to stimulate student involvement and motivation, showing that there must be a correlation between internal or individual motivating factors, student interests we would call his knowledge, and teaching strategies. The result, Bruner points out, is an increase in the student's sense of control that is generated more intrinsically and less from the punishment-reward mechanism. The feeling of control over one's own intellectual abilities acquired as a result of satisfying one's internal curiosity is called competence in the dominant theory of intrinsic motivation (SDT).

Synthetic studies from the same period propose true gradual schemes of conceptual construction of teaching based on curiosity. For example, depending on the degree of involvement of the teacher in the context of the teaching-learning mechanism based on discovery in the classroom, we can distinguish between: a.

Pure discovery, in which the teacher has minimal intervention, limited to encouraging students to discover; b. assisted discovery, in which the teacher provides students with brief information about the stages of their discovery process and sometimes provides support in reaching those stages of learning and c. an expository learning from the teacher in which the discovery, this time, has a minimal role (Bibergall, 1966, 2006). Displaying all the future cognitive acquisitions that any school journey entails, – announcing important chapters in the syllabus or textbook – is absolutely necessary for students to be able to form their mental maps for their future cognitive path. Equally these announcing these cognitive landmarks from the beginning, which can lead to the strengthening of the student's sense of control (according to the idea: I learn at my own pace, but I know where I have to go), must still make room for a dose of mystery and unpredictable. At least that would be the moral of curiosity-based learning and / or discovery learning, especially if we associate curiosity with intrinsic motivation, as J. S. Bruner did. As there is an increasing emphasis today on balancing extrinsic motivation with intrinsic motivation, it is clear that discovery, as a direct factor in increasing students' autonomy and competence, at least in SDT's vision, must find a clear place among teaching tools. of educators, with the current challenges that education has to face (online education, education assisted by artificial intelligence, etc.).

Above, when we asked ourselves what is the significance of Berlyne's distinctions in the sciences of education, we also mentioned a negative side. It refers to the fact that most educational systems have taken on an unbalanced distinction between epistemic curiosity and perceptual curiosity, practically reducing curiosity to epistemic curiosity. In other words, if children have an epistemic curiosity, then the educational response must be an epistemic content, i.e. they have transformed the student into a universal receiver of theoretical knowledge. If we combine the principle of the universal receiving student, on the old guiding idea of medieval pedagogy through which all people had the duty to know everything that can be known (Comenius), with the behaviorist model of operant conditioning, almost efficient in traditional education, then we get a complete model. of the standard education system which for several decades has been undergoing a long and secure process of reform on the principle of antibehaviorist less is more, central in educational systems such as Finland for example, but also present in other systems or schools that have adopted an education in which performance is not just about test results. More clearly, the old behaviorist principle more stimulation (input) leads to a tailored response, now becomes less stimulation, brings an extra response. Of course, this is a forced summary, but it helps us understand the stakes of curiosity in this dispute between assisted, guided learning and intrinsically motivated learning based on internal needs in which curiosity is much more present. The dispute does not have to have

a single winner, it is rather important where we emphasize, therefore curiosity can tip the scales.

If we ask ourselves about the destiny of learning through discovery in education, we will find that there are also those who doubt that a learning based on discovery can ensure a guaranteed success of learning. Synthetic studies (Alfieri et al., 2011) that include meta-analyzes applied to hundreds of articles that measured the observable effects of improving student performance showed that if we compare learning through unassisted, or pure discovery as it was called above, and learning through teacher-assisted discovery, then assisted learning has better effects on student progress. Most often teacher feedback is a key factor. But here too it must be looked at in a nuanced way, the key word is assisted discovery, therefore it is not learning by discovery that is irrelevant in the development of students, but discovery alone, unassisted. Discovery learning is often reduced to unassisted discovery learning. The result is that educators and creators of educational content are reluctant to keep the essential ingredient for training children's minds that is curiosity. Discovery learning is only a form of methodological organization of children's curiosity, and teachers must not lose sight of the pedagogical potential of this tool.

The relationship between epistemic curiosity and perceptual curiosity

When we aim to rigorously measure curiosity, we inevitably come up with fundamental questions such as: how is it practically justified to operate with distinctions such as Berlyne's initial distinction between epistemic curiosity and what is perceptual? Or another question would be the one related to how the two facets of curiosity relate to each other. These questions were addressed by J. Litman and C. Spielberger (2003) who through a series of questionnaires measured the values of the two variables along specific items in order to validate Beryne's distinction itself, but more chosen to determine the relationship between the two types of curiosity.

At the end of a quantitative research effort, the two researchers managed to operationalize and conceptualize curiosity as a personality trait and detailed how the two facets of curiosity interrelate. In addition, the results of the two showed that everything that means exploratory behavior involves many other characteristics of the human being that can be researched in depth, such as correlating curiosity with accepting diversity, looking for new methods of solving problems, but also correlations with specific emotional states such as anger or anxiety (Litman & Spielberger, 2003, p. 85).

Dimensions of curiosity

Beyond the remarkable research results through which curiosity goes beyond the sphere of tacit intuitions regarding the understanding of its

functioning in the universe of the human being and passes on the agenda of research laboratories that aim to determine the most accurate determinations of curiosity, quantitatively affordable traits that can be correlated between different teams of researchers.

In this regard, new teams of researchers continue the complex investigation of the various facets of curiosity. T. Kashdan (2019) and his team have developed a new integrated curiosity research tool called The Five-Dimensional Curiosity Scale Revised (5DCR) which, in a single tool, brings together very different aspects of curiosity such as the emotion of knowledge, sensitivity to unknown, tolerance to cognitive stress, the search for emotions to experience new things. In the latest version, from 2019, the questionnaire received another section dedicated to social curiosity which tries to probe the social context of the manifestations of curiosity, for example the way people share the news, in short, how the need to know about others connects us all.

Before extracting the educational potential of the 5DCR questionnaire, it is necessary to understand it. So what are the significance of the five dimensions of curiosity in Kashdan's approach? First of all, curiosity means the joy of knowing, of knowing. This is the most important operationalization of curiosity because it recovers, assumed or not by the authors, the entire psychology and biology of knowledge that placed exploration among the instincts or fundamental needs of man. Today the idea of instinct is avoided, and the explanation is that we prefer other concepts considered more appropriate, such as innate behavior or basic needs, but beyond these terminological elegances, it is clear that in terms of curiosity we have to deal with a defining need: the need to explore. So exploration is the main feature that can be approached quantitatively and qualitatively when you set out to research human curiosity. In the questionnaire, exploration is seen primarily as an affective process, as an internal need or cause that subsequently generates products such as acquired knowledge, only after going through a series of emotional states or feelings. The exploration in the 5DCR questionnaire focuses on new situations we want to experience, challenges from the unknown and the unpredictable whatever they mean. The fascination with the new, the unknown, reminds us of ethologists like Lorenz or D. Morris from the last century who spoke of neophilia, the innate desire of man for novelty, of what breaks the routine of situations that succeed the same elements indefinitely. We can call this situation routine horror. At the end of the exploration, a strictly cognitive reward does not await us, such as the classic accumulation and manipulation of knowledge in school, but an enriched self, a developed variant of the explorer, or this must take into account any teacher who appears in front of students.

The second way to turn curiosity into a measurable concept is to treat it as deprivation sensibility. In short, how much does the unknown touch us? It is clear that new situations do not animate us all in the same way. Some will be

more affected by the desire to experience new things, and others, on the contrary, will prefer familiar situations and will avoid meeting the stranger. Ethology also tells us that neophilia has an even stronger correspondent, neophobia, fear of the new and the unknown, fear of the unpredictable. Through a set of some simple and direct questions, the subjects are asked about how much or how little they are bothered by the lack of information or incomplete information, the persistence of difficult problems, etc. In this way curiosity loses its aura of inaccuracy or too vague feature of the human personality to be researched, but the most important thing is that in this way curiosity becomes a working tool for educators, for example only if we think about the motivation to learn.

The third element of curiosity according to the 5DCR questionnaire is stress tolerance or rather the management of stress associated with the exploration experience. The items address self-confidence in terms of intellectual abilities, operating in uncertain situations or involving alternative solutions. We can measure the tolerance of subjects to contexts with advertising rapid reactions to problems, to the internal pressure put on subjects of exams or deadlines for completion of works for example. Here, too, curiosity is assumed diffusely because some subjects will be more tolerant of the stress included by new, creative, unanticipated or even totally unknown contexts, while others will not show the same availability to the unknown. The fourth operational set of curiosity is the opposite of the stress analyzed in the above lines, namely the search for emotion in the exercise of exploration. More precisely, it is about the performers of curiosity, those who taste the anxiety of doing new things and facing the unexpected. The resilient of the unknown appreciate risk-taking, experiments with a significant degree of unpredictability. They are adventurers and explorers par excellence. The cognitive behavior of these subjects is a significant part of the area of curiosity that helps us understand how much people can be caught by the fever of the unknown. The sociology of knowledge inaugurated by Th. S. Kuhn is convincing proof that any scientific progress is based on a cognitive behavior focused on the search for the emotion of exploration, a process that is far from being exclusively rational and not even consciously controlled. The fever of exploration includes inclinations, desires, beliefs, superstitions, intuitions to limit ourselves to some of the dominants of the human being.

Finally, the fifth dimension of curiosity is dedicated to the social curiosity that tries to test the importance of others in the process of exploration. The experimental results obtained in the last century of curiosity research highlighted something that was not foreseen among the research objectives: curiosity is not only an inner feature of each of us, but also a product of human interaction (Dunbar, 2016; Kashdan & Silvia, 2013) Curiosity can be addressed not only individually but also collectively. Social curiosity is a social construct resulting from the combination of the exploratory behaviors of a community. St.

Augustine still pointed out that the need to know about others is a risky gateway to the souls of others because it can raise us intellectually or affect us morally negatively (gossip, envy, etc.). The items dedicated to this section of the questionnaire aim at the desire to find out what others do and think, to understand the behavior of others, to find out the news in which others are involved, to wear and have access to the conversations of others. The connection of social curiosity with social psychology and communication is obvious, but no less important. As this area of study of curiosity is relatively new, we prefer to wait for the corroboration with other researches on the same subject in order to develop the topic of social curiosity.

Conclusions for educators

The purpose of this paper was to convince educators about the importance of curiosity in the educational act, but especially to draw teachers' attention to the motivational richness that curiosity can bring in the classroom. Whether it is the diversification of teaching methods and tools through the practical introduction of discovery or guided experiences that turn knowledge into an emotional adventure, or the theme of curiosity can play an important role in intrinsically motivating students to learn, curiosity is a way. mediation between the student's exit from the comfort zone (school) and his biological nature. Curiosity attenuates the artificial school environment in relation to a hyperstimulating world, especially under the siege of the virtual. Curiosity and exploration are part of the ancestral dowry of any child, and the school's primary role is to preserve and stimulate these natural developmental reflexes of the child.

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Motivational Dynamics and Managerial Communication in School Organizations

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Abstract: *The study addresses the issue of managerial communication as a key element underlying the exercise of leadership and coordination in order to harmonize the activities of organizational members. Identifying managers' means of communication and the effects that managerial communication has on the members of the organization can determine the degree of employees' motivation/demotivation in performing their tasks in school organizations, as well as generating suggestions and recommendations for optimizing managerial communication, improving communication and self-control skills at the organizational level.*

Keywords: *managerial communication, manager, motivation, school organization..*

Introduction

Communication, in various forms, is one of the most natural human activities, an activity that is carried out and perfected throughout life.

Human communication takes several forms: verbal communication, paraverbal communication and nonverbal communication, although some authors consider that elements of paraverbal language can be included in nonverbal communication.

While vocabulary has a limited number of words to express the many and varied messages being communicated, the human face has highly mobile features that can convey an unlimited number of emotional feelings that cannot be described in words, so we can say that, emotionally, the face is more powerful than the word.

At the level of a school organisation, the manager is the one who anticipates the evolution of the organisation, communicating its goals to employees. For this reason, managerial communication is the essential process by which information is exchanged to achieve the desired goal. Managerial communication thus becomes the key element underlying the exercise of leadership and coordination, facilitating the manager's intervention with a view to harmonising the activities of organisational members.

Managerial communication can be formal (when its purpose is to transmit information promptly with a view to carrying out work tasks), or informal (when it occurs spontaneously and the information transmitted is neither formal nor necessary for carrying out work tasks). Alois Gherguț (2007, p. 200) pointed out that, although this informal communication is not strictly necessary for carrying out organisational work, it is particularly important for the manager in helping to determine the state of the organisation.

Managerial communication can take place vertically upwards or downwards, but also horizontally. As the manager is positioned at the top of the organisational chart, managerial communication is carried out vertically downwards. D. Iacob, D. M. Cismaru (2010, p.121) draw attention to the cautious use of vertical, top-down communication, as there is “the danger of disconnecting the manager from the realities of the organisation, due to lack of feedback”. They therefore suggest that this top-down communication should be complemented by bottom-up communication.

Managers play a key role in shaping and maintaining the organisational group. C. Bonciu (2009, p.157) stated that within the organization, managerial communication generates two fundamental phenomena: socialization and individualization. Socialisation is the transmission of key elements to employees, while individualisation occurs when successful employees are highlighted, exerting workrelated influence on the social system around them.

The school manager, in exercising their function as the leader of an institution, performs several roles (I.Jinga, p.38):

- the role of state representative (he/she is mandated to enforce the national laws and policies relating to state education).

- the role of representative of the educational community (in relation to local authorities, school authorities, hierarchical authorities, in relation to other institutions, or to pupils’ families).

- the role of chairperson of the Teaching Council and the Administrative Council;

- the role of credit coordinator and manager of the school’s financial resources; -the role of decision-maker;

- the role of organiser of the educational space, staff and school activities;

- the role of mediator;

- the role of evaluator of staff performance and pupil results;

- the role of member of the educational community;

In education, a manager’s effectiveness is measured by the results achieved by the institution they lead, by which we mean the results achieved by pupils and teachers.

A manager is considered to be efficient if: they make optimal use of human, material, financial and time resources; have an adequate information

system and ensure good horizontal or vertical communication within the organisation; carry out relevant, objective and stimulating current and summative evaluations of staff; know how to delegate tasks and collaborate rationally; motivate, organise staff according to their individual skills, guide and direct staff towards the intended goals.

Motivation is the dynamic and directional aspect of human behaviour. Motivation is defined as the set of factors that trigger the individual's activity, direct it towards certain goals and sustain it with energy.

Achieving performance in an organisation is conditioned by the level of motivation of its individuals. The most effective motivating factor in an organization is money, because it ensures the needs of each person, allowing the individual to satisfy lower and higher needs.

Alongside material rewards, moral incentives are used in organisations, which, together with salary, are important levers used by managers to motivate employees.

Research methodology

The research aims to determine the effect of managerial communication on teachers in schools by identifying the ways most often used by managers to communicate, and the effects that managerial communication has on teachers in the process of motivating employees in the school organization.

Research objectives:

To identify the communication methods most often used by managers in school organisations and determine the extent to which these motivate teachers.

To determine the extent to which the use of poor managerial communication contributes to demotivating teachers in the school organisation.

Research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. The more managerial communication is carried out in a democratic, assertive way, the more motivated the teachers in the school organisation become.

Hypothesis 2. If the manager of the school organisation communicates aggressively, imperatively, then they will demotivate their employees.

The organising procedure and the research batch:

The research was carried out in 2 schools: Ioan Petrus High School, Otopeni, Ilfov county and Tudor Vladimirescu High School, Bucharest, from March 12 to May 31, 2021.

The research sample on which the questionnaire method was applied was made up of 85 teachers from the above-mentioned schools.

Research methods

The questionnaire method was used to conduct this research. The instrument used was “Questionnaire concerning the influence of managerial communication on the degree of school teachers’ motivation” and consisted of 22 multiple-choice questions.

Data analysis and interpretation

The answers to the questions “To what extent do you think there is a direct link between the manager’s communication style and the degree of employee motivation” (95.29% of the respondents chose

“a) To a great extent”) and “Do you think that the way the manager addresses employees can motivate/demotivate the employee?” (100% of the respondents chose “a) Yes”) confirm the existence of a close link between the managerial communication style practiced in school organizations and employee motivation. Correlation of these answers with the answers to the question “To what extent do you agree with the statement: ‘If the manager speaks to me nicely and politely, then I do what they ask?’” (96.47% of the respondents chose “a) to a great extent”), confirms the first hypothesis of the research: the more managerial communication is carried out in a democratic, assertive way, the more school teachers’ motivation increases.

The second hypothesis (if the manager of the school organisation communicates in an aggressive, imperative way for a long period of time, then they will demotivate their employees) is refuted by the responses recorded to the questions “To what extent do you agree with the statement: ‘If the manager talks to me in a nasty, rude way, then I get angry and don’t do what he asks me to do’”. (91.76% of respondents chose “c) not at all”) and “To what extent do you agree with the statement “Even if the manager tells me rudely what I have to do, I do these things because I am afraid of repercussions.” (65.88% of respondents chose “a) to a great extent”). The recorded data shows that employees are motivated to carry out the tasks given by the manager, even if the manager addresses them rudely, imperatively or dictatorially. The authority of the manager’s position is respected by employees, even when the manager’s communication style is not democratic and friendly.

The results obtained from the interpretation of the collected data prove the validity of the first hypothesis, which shows that managers with assertive communication skills, who are polite and have a democratic managerial style, are able to motivate their employees, leading them to carry out their tasks and responsibilities in the educational institution. Where the teachers investigated stated that the manager communicates aggressively and imperatively and applies a dictatorial managerial style, it turns out that employees carry out their

tasks, sometimes out of fear of repercussions, sometimes out of respect for the managerial position, or for many other reasons.

Suggestions and recommendations on how to motivate teachers in the school organisation

The main theories of motivation have been instrumental in the development of useful suggestions for increasing the motivation of employees in the school organisation.

The theory of motivation - A. Maslow

Maslow argues that all people have 5 categories of needs/ wants, which can be placed in a rough hierarchy: physiological needs, security needs, belonging needs, knowledge needs and self-actualisation needs. Applying his theory to a school, we can motivate employees by providing them with resources to satisfy basic needs first. With basic needs met, employees can move up the pyramid. Given that in schools financial motivation is not the manager's responsibility, the manager can find other ways to motivate employees, such as motivating through praise and recognition, which can be found towards the top of the pyramid. The manager's role is to provide a positive climate in which people feel safe and secure, and then to offer employees recognition and opportunities for advancement.

Herzberg's theory

Modifying Maslow's theory, Herzberg divided human needs into 2 basic categories. The first category represented survival needs (hygiene factors: relationships with bosses, relationships with colleagues, financial rewards, working conditions, job security). Hygiene factors do not in themselves generate satisfaction, but only prevent dissatisfaction. The second category is personal development needs (motivational factors: achievement, recognition, promotion, etc.). Motivational factors are a source of mental stimulation. Managers can apply this theory by ensuring that the hygienic factors are satisfied in such a way as to eliminate dissatisfaction among employees and contribute to the achievement of motivational factors (achievements, promotions, recognition) that create feelings of satisfaction.

Alderfer's theory

Alderfer condenses the 5 needs as follows: 1, 2 - existence needs; 3, 4 - relatedness needs; 5 - growth/development needs. According to Alderfer's theory, managers can apply this theory in the organisation by providing employees with:

a secure workplace, favourable working conditions, normal working hours, adequate pay, to satisfy the existence needs; an optimal framework for establishing collaborative relationships with colleagues and superiors, to satisfy the need for relatedness, free expression of creativity, or personality enhancement, to satisfy the need for growth.

McClelland's theory identifies 3 needs: needs for achievement; needs for affiliation; needs for power. In an organisation the manager can give employees with achievement needs as many tasks as possible that they can accomplish, but also positive feedback. Employees with affiliation needs can be given roles in groups, teamwork tasks, and the opportunity to communicate with others. For employees with power needs, the role of project co-ordinator, committee leader, group leader will provide the necessary motivation to function optimally in the school.

Goldthorpe's theory. It identifies 3 types of work orientation: instrumental orientation, bureaucratic orientation, social orientation. In an organisation, depending on the orientation of each employee, tasks can be distributed in a way that corresponds to their orientation: socially oriented individuals may perform tasks in the field of human resources, while bureaucratically oriented individuals may perform tasks in the administrative field.

Vroom's theory identifies 3 fundamental elements of expectancy: expectancy (effort-performance relationship), instrumentality (performance-outcome relationship), valence (outcome-value relationship). The manager can apply this theory in the organisation by offering employees the elements they are most interested in: an employee with many children, who needs money, can be offered the opportunity to work overtime in order to get a higher salary; an employee seeking promotion can be given different tasks in order to acquire new skills, so that he or she is able to advance in his or her career.

Adams' equity theory is based on two major premises: people view interpersonal relationships as an exchange: they give something, make a contribution and expect a certain outcome; people compare their situation with others. The extent to which a person sees an exchange as fair depends on the outcome of comparing their own situation with others. The employer can remove inequity by giving employees the same feedback, the same rewards for identical or similar tasks. In the same way, the employer can benchmark itself against other similar organisations to ensure linearity in terms of pay, workload, work content, etc.

In order to motivate a broad category of employees, falling into different typologies, it is necessary: to distribute tasks according to the characteristics of each one, to offer attractive salaries, but in line with one's effort, to offer constructive feedback through assertive communication to all employees, regardless of the nature of their results.

Managers can be guided in the process of motivating employees by the following recommendations:

- Each employee is a unique individual with different potential for growth and development, and each pushes their limits at their own pace. Don't standardise employees, don't treat them all the same!
- The art of employee motivation for managers is to find ways to motivate employees differently, depending on the needs of each employee.
- The manager generates a certain type of organisational climate depending on the type of leadership practised. The use of a democratic type of management, which generates a harmonious, relaxed climate, leads to increased employee motivation towards organisational performance.
- Following the principle of the proverb: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you", managers should adopt the same behaviour towards their employees as they would want any superior to adopt towards themselves.
- True managers motivate by the power of their own example, so it is advisable to carry out their work tasks the way they want the people they manage to do them.

Techniques for optimising managerial communication in schools

As a **receiver of messages**, an organisation's manager can make communication with employees more effective by applying the following techniques:

1. Allow the transmitter enough time to state their problems, ideas, etc., but don't allow the transmitter to get too far off topic! Whilst giving them time, don't forget what the discussion is actually about! If things drift off-topic, try to bring the discussion back to the topic of interest by saying things like: "you said that.../you were referring earlier to...".
2. Listen to all the transmitter's words before you start formulating opinions. If you jump to conclusions, you may (unintentionally) create conflict.
3. Also take into account the speaker's feelings and state of mind or health, as they may provide more information than the words spoken. If the speaker is upset, angry, even ill, try to reassure them, taking care not to accentuate their condition. You can use phrases such as "I understand how you feel, let's see what we can do.../don't worry, every problem has a solution.../how can I help you feel better, etc."
4. Avoid barriers that can interfere with communication! Look for a quiet place where you won't be interrupted in order to avoid communication blocks.
5. Encourage the transmitter to express him/herself freely, with verbal messages such as: "say, what happened... / you can safely say what it's about...etc, and with non-verbal communication elements: smiles, touches on the shoulder, bowing the head in approval, a relaxed posture, etc.

6. Use paraphrasing as often as possible during the conversation to make sure you get the message right. Example: “You said you couldn’t make the meeting because...”
7. Maintain eye contact with the interlocutor during the conversation, but do not fix your eyes on one spot, and especially do not look doubtful or threatening. Don’t look at the clock during the conversation as it may represent boredom, disinterest in the topic of discussion or hurriedness.
8. Use intonation and facial expression with measure and caution. If paraverbal and nonverbal elements indicate disapproval or contradiction, the speaker loses the courage to express themselves and will not tell you anything, or will not tell you the truth. Also remember that aggressive nonverbal and paraverbal communication always stirs up conflict.
9. Always listen actively to the speaker, giving verbal and non-verbal feedback, without feigning interest, because if you pretend to listen, the speaker will feel undervalued or even ignored.

As a message sender, an organisation’s manager can make communication with employees more effective by applying the following techniques:

1. Use the question technique! Direct and open-ended questions such as “How do you see this situation?”/”Why do you think it has come to this?”, etc. are the most appropriate.
2. Don’t attempt to get a monopoly on the truth by thinking you know best. Consider your employees’ ideas too, because you never know who can generate a brilliant idea.
3. Encourage employees to come forward with their ideas, proposals for improvement so that they feel valued and included. You can do this by saying things like: “What do you propose to.../How do you see it/ What do you think should...”
4. Always consult employees in the decision-making process. You don’t necessarily have to take their views fully into account, but simply asking for their help will contribute to harmonising your relationship with employees. You can use phrases such as: “Help me find solutions to.../I don’t know what to do about..., what do you think/ If you were me, what would you do about...? “, etc.
5. Try not to put pressure on employees and do not impose your point of view. Instead of issuing orders such as: “Have the paperwork ready by tomorrow”, opt for assertive communication such as: “I would like to have all the documents ready by the deadline / It would be good for all of us if you get ...”, etc.
6. Establish in advance what you want to communicate to people, to avoid pauses in expression, stutters or other errors. Bear in mind that if you don’t

know exactly what message you want to convey, your employees won't understand it either.

7. If you are communicating in meetings, it is a good idea to have a meeting plan with the main topics of discussion. Try not to overtly direct the meeting, rather give the impression of a collaborative meeting.
8. Don't adopt an aggressive stance, don't stand taller than your employees, but rather keep a close, peer-to-peer distance to create a relaxed atmosphere.
9. Do not digress during discussions to avoid losing credibility. Under no circumstances should you give the impression that you are not sufficiently prepared on the subject in order not to lose your scientific authority.
10. Make a clear distinction between the person and the issue. Don't let personal likes or dislikes affect relations with subordinates.
11. Use written communication for important announcements, decisions or requests, because once read, the message remains in the recipient's mind's eye, preventing forgetfulness.

Conclusions

Managerial communication is a key element in the exercise of leadership, therefore, it is necessary for managers to adopt the most effective ways of communication in order to increase the performance of the organization they lead. The effectiveness of an organisation is determined by the quality of its employees, therefore, the role of the manager is to motivate their staff in order to achieve organisational goals, especially educational goals, referring here to educational institutions.

Achieving performance in a school organisation depends on the level of motivation of its individuals. Teachers' motivation cannot be achieved through financial incentives and rewards, as the budget is clearly defined at ministerial level, but the manager can choose other ways to motivate, in particular moral motivation through assertive, democratic communication and empathy towards employees.

Through the effective use of communication, the manager can create a comfortable organizational climate for employees that can generate positive feedback from members of the school. Most of the time, the manager's communication skills are the fruit of hard work, involving effort in finding the right word, gesture, silence, space or time, especially when work becomes stressful, tiring. We can talk about the need for the manager's ability to harmoniously combine verbal language with paraverbal and nonverbal language, in order to increase the impact of the message conveyed to those with whom they work, which can lead to greater efficiency in their work. It is important to note that the use of positive gestures, smiling, touching, kind looks, creates a warm, welcoming organisational climate conducive to performance, as

opposed to the use of contemptuous, angry gestures, looking down on people with indifference, which creates a frustrating environment and causes employees to adopt undesirable attitudes and behaviours.

There is a close link between managerial communication and employee motivation, which is why we appreciate the value of the effective use of managerial communication, both verbal and non-verbal, in the process of motivating teachers, which is absolutely necessary to increase efficiency in achieving institutional performance.

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Resetting Private Kindergarten in Romania

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Abstract: *Kindergarten is an emotional, social and educational experience, intense and constant not only for children but also for parents and this experience is making marks both on child and family life.*

Nowadays challenges have created the context for a reconsideration of parents' image about state and private kindergartens in Romania in the sense of resetting the image of private sector for preschool education.

The purpose of our study was to identify parent' attitudes and concerns about their children educative needs considering that state kindergartens were temporarily closed / with fluctuant functioning.

A significant result showed that investigated parents, depending on their age and study level, have found a solution for their concern: private kindergarten. Their solution has solved both their children psychologic needs and their own needs during this period.

Other results are also discussed here.

Keywords: *private kindergarten, child, parent(s), psychologic needs.*

Kindergarten – an appropriate environment for children's learning and development if their needs are identified and respected.

For the last years, Romanian parents' perception about kindergarten has changed in a positive manner: from "an alternative for grandparents or nanny" to "the place where children are disciplined and have a regular schedule", and nowadays "an institution for early development of the child and its preparation for school program".

The improvement of parents' perception about kindergarten is due both to the continuous process of preschool educative system's development and to the reevaluate of the importance for family participation to the educative process consisting of understanding and assuming the responsibilities for each part.

In this context, "kindergarten is the ideal place for childhood and social development as long as, of course, child needs are recognised and respected"

(Loghin, 2019, p.65) by teachers and parents. Unfortunately, some parents are more concerned about meeting basic needs of preschool child (physiologic and security needs) and less for his / her psychologic needs. Accordingly, Gáspár György (2016), clinical psychologist and psychotherapist, indicates that preschool child essential / psychologic needs are:

- Child possibility for exploring, return and sharing (for his/her first 3 years);
- Reflection in order to develop his/her self-identity, appreciating and emphasising his/her progresses and relational security (for his/her first 4 years);
- Receiving positive feedback, verbal appreciations and encouragements (for his/her first 6 years).

Still, for the last years, there is a growing number of parents interested for their children emotional and social needs, for their outdoor / in nature activities and they commit to sustain these activities with all their resources. They ask themselves about children emotional security, about the way that children are valued, how they are rewarded and punished or how they are helped to develop their own autonomy, creativity, resilience through activities in kindergarten. In Romania many parents are attending parenting classes and integrate in their relationship with children strategies from parenting classes or books.

Kindergarten is an emotional, social and educational experience, intense and constant also for parents and this experience is making marks both on child and family life. Parents' interest for information and looking for a kindergarten is supporting children integration and their accommodation process.

In the process of selecting the appropriate kindergarten, the most important is that parents to learn about the traits of their children, to consider their temper and interests, what they like and dislike, their health characteristics, their behaviours. Family values and emotional needs should also be considered in order to choose the appropriate care service for children. (<http://www.utilecopii.ro/articole/copii-1-5ani/ghid-pentru-alegere-gradinitei-potrivite>).

For the last years seems to be a social pressure on families in the process of choosing a kindergarten for their children. We are living in a culture for competitiveness, dissatisfaction, individualism, celebrity and this determine that many parents to be focused on children success, and this involve a raised attention in the process of selecting a kindergarten.

Also, values education, parents' age, family priorities and vulnerabilities determine different visions about criteria for choosing a kindergarten for a child. There is a complex of factors for selecting a kindergarten: proximity, family budget, kindergarten professional team and their educational philosophy etc. Some parents are focused on children cognitive development, other parents are interested more about their children socio-emotional and artistic development; some are looking for a kindergarten that could discipline their child and others for a welcoming and warm community for all children.

Also, choosing a kindergarten could be a complex, profound and even exhausting experience for parents that want to satisfy their children needs and assure for their successful future; or this could be a natural experience, in a community in the proximity of their house, for those parents that are prioritizing their own needs: comfort for their needs, time efficiency and / or family budget.

Problem context: Resetting private kindergarten during pandemic times

Child registration for a kindergarten generates a lot of worries, questions and even anxieties for parents (“It’s better to choose a private or a state kindergarten, a traditional one or an alternative program, short or extended daily program? Is my child going to eat, sleep, cooperate with colleagues and teachers?

Will he/she going to be physically abused by other children?”). These worries are natural, because parents want to protect their children from traumatic experiences, emotional or physic.

Some worries are based on “fears produced by their own educational culture, fears transmitted from social environment where we have grown up and developed as adults or from other parents’ experiences... Many of these fears are fed by fatigue, by family and social pressure, and by solitude...” (Loghin, 2019, pp.111-112). Educators should be preoccupied, disponible and open to parents’ fears and doubts, to be aware that some questions are coming from parents’ lack of experience or from unpleasant experiences lived in their own childhood.

Pandemic period and its consequences have amplified parents’ worries for their children educationand their reactivity to stress generated by temporary (and undetermined) state kindergartens’ closure.

Covid-19 pandemic have emphasized the state educational system fragility, the most affected being pre-school, primary school and socio-economic disadvantaged children. Some parents have become “emergency teachers”, but many of them couldn’t support children for online education.

Many studies have demonstrated that online education have diminished pupils’ / students’ school performances on short and long term because of their language, attention, memory, even sleeping and nutrition’s alienation. Jean-Claude Larchet (2018) indicated a series of negative effects of new media that determine “a general numbness”: fragmenting and de-structuring of thinking, language impoverishment, weakness of reflection capacity, of attention and memory etc. Private kindergartens have become a real support for many working parents during this period when state kindergarten have been closed; so, the problem of excessive use of technology by children have been limited through this solution.

More, specialists noticed for the last years, that “the number of private kindergartens has grown up because there is a pressure from parents. The price

for education is not an indicator for quality, but most of private kindergartens offer good conditions”, said Ramona Coman, inspector for private education of Bucharest School Inspectorate. “Private kindergartens are already operating in a competitive environment and take into account more and more beneficiaries’ requests. This could also have influence on state kindergartens.”. (<https://jurnalul.ro/stiri/social/gradinitele-din-bucuresti-stat-vs-privat>).

Research Methodology

General aim and objectives of present study

Our interest for this study has started from an empirical observation concerning about two phenomena: firstly – suddenly, unforeseen and indefinite closure of state kindergartens from the beginning of pandemic period and secondly – private kindergartens functioning (that have rapidly identified this opportunity, a survival strategy consisting in their transformation as “Educational Centres”).

In this context, our research’s main purpose was to identify private kindergartens’ benefits in comparison with state kindergartens and if parents’ reasons to choose private education is increasingly more than before pandemic.

The objectives of present study concerned the following issues:

O1. Identifying parents’ reasons for choosing a private kindergarten and which have been their information sources about the network of private kindergartens.

O2. Indicating the most important issues for parents to remove their selection from state kindergartens.

O3. Analysing parents’ decisional process about selecting a private kindergarten for their children.

In conformity with the purpose and objectives, our research hypothesis was: “Choosing a private

kindergarten and trusting its educative program is in correlation with parents’ age and educational level.”

Participants and research methods

Study participants included 44 parents with children registered to a private kindergarten in Ploiesti, Romania (39 female and 5 male). In this sample 68,2% of parents are aged between 30-40 years old, 15,9% are aged between 20-30 years old, and 15,9% are aged between 40-50 years old; also, 97,7% of them have higher education and 2,3% have secondary education.

We have considered that the most appropriate methods to accomplish our investigation purpose were focus-group and questionnaire.

Research design have included 2 stages: during first stage we have organised a focus-group interview with 8 parents from our sample, and during second stage we have applied a questionnaire (online) for all 44 parents that have agreed to participate to our study.

Focus-group interview theme was Choosing private kindergarten – an informed choice or “fashionable” choice and the questions have been focused on identifying parents’ opinion and comparative analysis of their opinion about state and private kindergarten.

We have questioned our participants about the following aspects:

- a) Establishing the hierarchy for the first 3 reasons for choosing a private kindergarten;
- b) Identifying the most important reason for rejecting state kindergarten from their options’ list;
- c) Establishing the hierarchy for the first 3 information sources for the private kindergarten that parents have chosen;
- d) Identifying the most important issue in decisional process for choosing the private kindergarten.

Data analysis

Reasons for choosing the private kindergarten instead of a state kindergarten indicate the focus on psychological needs of children and also on parents’ needs.

Up interview and the hierarchy of reasons for choosing a private kindergarten (see Figure 1) we could identify a first significant result of our present study – the focus on psychological needs of children and also on parents’ needs. Here there are some results (reasons for choosing a private kindergarten) from parents’ answers:

- 1. A small number of children in a group (43,2%);
- 2. Daily outdoor activities (40,9%);
- 3. Daily schedule of kindergarten activities (between 7/ 8 – 18 o’clock) or a flexible program (38,6%).

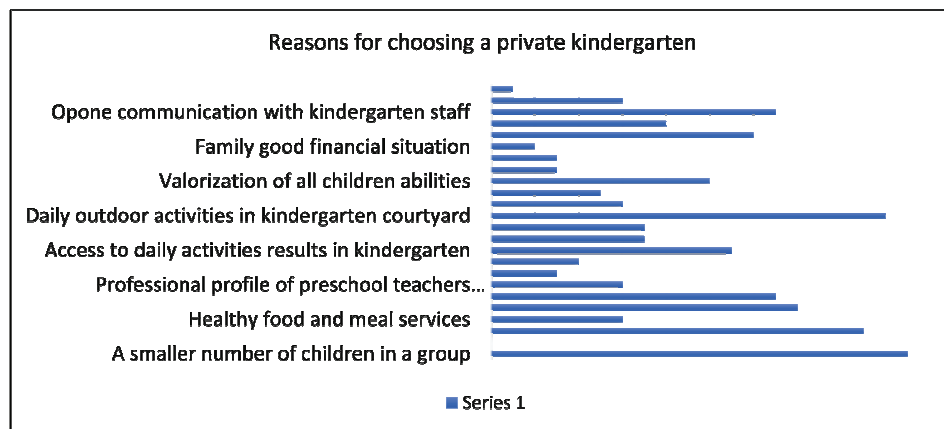


Figure 1. Parents' main reasons for choosing a private kindergarten

As we know, in state kindergartens in a group are registered between 25 and 35 children and there is only a teacher for all of them. In private kindergarten the number of children for a group is between 12 and 20. From this comparative analysis a reason that worries parents is that while state preschool education is focusing on curriculum, private preschool education is more preoccupied about children needs.

Investigated parents are aware about that a smaller number of children in a group offer the possibility that a teacher pays more attention individually to every preschool child, to help everyone to develop abilities and aptitudes better than in a larger group of children.

When a child receives attention and care "is growing up with the feeling of his/her own dignity, with the feeling of fullness and integrity, with the consciousness of their personality value, with self-respect, with the feeling of closeness and the wish to develop" (Krasnikova, 2015, p. 26).

Based on ideas of well-known specialists (A. Maslow, J. Bowlby, A. Lenge, F. Riemann, K. Rogers), Olga Krasnikova emphasises the importance of fundamental children psychologic needs: the need of self-esteem, the need of participation / being part of a group, the need of self-realization, the need of psychologic security (that targets dignity, integrity, liberty) (2015, p. 25).

Also, daily outdoor activities and daily schedule of private kindergarten, longer than state kindergartens (between 7/8 – 18 o'clock) and more flexible (bringing in and taking the children from kindergarten depending on parents' schedule) is mentioned by our subjects as important reason for choosing this kind of kindergarten. We could notice that these parents are busy parents or "contaminated by a wildness of career and earnings" (Pleșu, 2011, p.

55) and, for selecting the kindergarten, consider not only child needs but also their own needs.

Accordingly, parents' opinions during focus-group interviews were similar to the answers to the questionnaire:

“- I have chosen private kindergarten because it is a support for child and family; children have daily outdoor activities in comparison with state kindergarten where most of the activities are inside, the schedule is very strict, and teachers have very high demands on children even if they are very small.”;

“- We want that our little ones to be cared, loved and to enjoy going to kindergarten, and this could happen in private kindergarten, a place where there are only few kids in the group, teachers are kind, and courtyard is beautifully landscaped. It should be invested more in state kindergartens (so that conditions to be better and to be more places for children) in order to diminish such large differences between state and private kindergartens.”

Outdoor activities are an essential component of preschool children that train them and challenge the preschool children to overcome their own fears (climbing, jumping etc.). Playing activities outside, in kindergarten courtyard, are preferred by parents because it is an efficient modality that allow kids to develop emotional and social abilities, develop basic personality traits, discover qualities and limits etc.

Other relevant reasons to select a private kindergarten are connected to better conditions offered and to communication between educative actors: 31,8% of parents mentioned very good endowments inside and in kindergarten courtyard, 29,5% have indicated open communication with personnel, 29,5% indicated video cameras that allows children surveillance during activities, 27,3% mentioned personnel's constant feed-back about activities and children estate.

Better conditions are due to the fact that private preschool education have evolved in a superior rhythm to the state education, being a natural process, specific to the countries where the market economy makes the rules. Communication between educators and parents satisfy parents high expectations. If parents have special requests, in private kindergarten staff will more rapidly take them into consideration than in a state kindergarten.

More, inside private kindergartens there are video systems for surveillance, and that offer security to children and also the possibility to be seen by parents from their job or from home. Thompson and Barker (2015) consider that parents are spending more time and energy being quality evaluators, being attentive to the little imperfections and defections that they could solve hoping that their children will be happier, smarter, and more competitive.

The main information sources about the network of private educative institutions are Facebook pages and kindergartens' sites.

Another significant result of research is concerning about the main informative sources about private kindergarten: Facebook information (75%) and kindergarten sites (68,2%), and less Ministry of Education site, County School Inspectorates site and informative brochures that have been less nominalised in parents' choices. (see Figure 2)

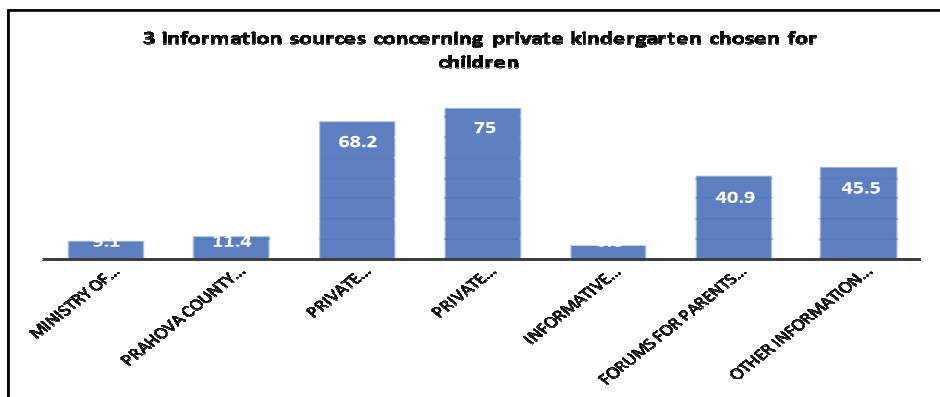


Figure 2. Parents' main information sources about kindergarten services

On Education Ministry site, in *Guide for parents for children registration to kindergarten*, parents are guided to search if private kindergarten is legally functioning, looking for a Ministry's Order for provisory authorisation or for accreditation or, as the case, Quality certification Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education. Provisory authorisation could be obtained before that kindergarten start functioning. Accreditation could be obtained after 3 or 4 years of functioning (after first promotion of graduated, but not later than 2 years after first promotion graduation). Accreditation certificate is available 5 years, and then is necessary a periodic evaluation. Also, the guide offers selection criteria for kindergarten: closeness to home, functioning program (normal or long), facilities and educative programs offered (playground, gym, computers, tablets or other informatic equipment, foreign language classes, musique classes etc.), costs (for meals or for educative programs or school tax for private kindergartens) (<https://www.edu.ro/invatamant-prescolar>).

An important information source that is more and more accessed are forums or Facebook groups for parents (40,9%). These online sources have become orientation resources for parents concerning educational route of their children because in this environment are shared various experiences, the

advantages and disadvantages of private / state kindergartens are analysed, and researches' / studies' results are also shared.

Emily Oster considers that is useless for a parent to look for the most appropriate choice for the child in a study (even a good one) that estimate the effect of a certain type of kindergarten on a typical child. Parents should be aware that the best type of kindergarten is different from a child another (2021, p.324).

The inflexible operating schedule and the fear that the child would not receive the necessary attention determine that parents to avoid state kindergarten.

Parents' answers to the third question ("Indicate the most important reason for not choosing state kindergarten.") demonstrate the need for a longer schedule and parents' worries about the lack of satisfaction for their children's psychological needs if they will choose a state kindergarten program. So, 50,1% from the answers indicated "the inflexible operation schedule" and 38% nominalised "the fear that the child does not receive the necessary attention in a state kindergarten".

During focus-group interview, parents have mentioned their justifications:

"- I am afraid to choose a state kindergarten for my child because I know that he will not receive the necessary attention because there are too many children and insufficient personnel.";

"- Even if private kindergarten costs more, we consider that this is a worthwhile financial effort because the child will be carefully overseen and stimulated more in various activities. The lady teachers are more attentive with children and more motivated than those from state kindergartens."

"The situation generated from pandemic period" is another reason indicated by 23% of respondents as justification for not choosing a state kindergarten. Covid-19 epidemic has emphasised big problems for online education especially for preschool children.

"Online education is less efficient at a young age (and here there are negative effects more pronounced because the exposure to the screen, especially concerning linguistic competences" (Șerban Iosifescu, apud Șoitu, coord., 2020, p. 252).

Key issues in the process of choosing a private kindergarten is children needs and high confidence for this educative environment

The results obtained to the fourth question of our questionnaire indicate parents' interest for their children needs (40,9%) and their confidence concerning private kindergarten capacity to fulfil these needs (29,5%).

As Image 3 indicates, kindergarten is for these parents "a family extension" where children needs are satisfied through a quality child – educator

– parent interaction. Parents' interaction for this educative environment is transferred to the child that will adapt easier the requests, to the rhythm and will intensify the interactions with the teacher and colleagues. To the opposite pole, the lack of parents' confidence for kindergarten services will create confusion and uncertainty feelings in relationship with kindergarten teacher.

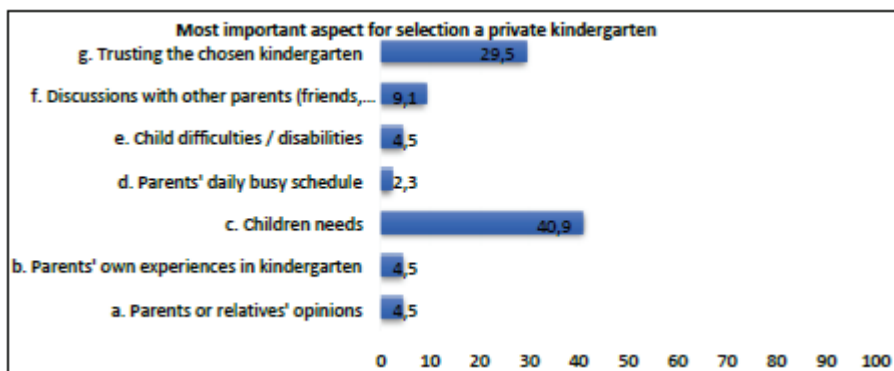


Figure 3. Parents' main reason for choosing a private kindergarten

If kindergarten environment is a healthy one, created for children needs, that the context is a proper one for learning and development, for self-discover and for learning human values (respect, cooperation, care, confidence, communication, solidarity, tolerance etc.).

“For a more attractive kindergarten for children, some people are saying that is needed more playing, other that is needed more interaction between children, more interest from kindergarten teachers for developing children creativity, for kipping their wondering sense, or more interest for activities meant to potentiate children interest and commitment to learn themselves. But how many of us are really watching children needs? And how much are we adapting our convictions, our methods and everything we know to their simplicity and naturalness?” (Loghin, 2019, p. 65)

Conclusions

Our present research has started from the beginning of Covid-19 pandemic period with an empirical observation, inciting and controversy about locking down state kindergartens, on one hand, and private kindergartens' functioning in Romania, on the other hand. Private kindergartens have continued their didactic activities transforming their administrative name as educational centres. We consider this measure not only an efficient “survival” strategy for private kindergartens but also a support for parents and children

especially for those parents that were working and experienced difficulties for finding a solution for their children education.

Basically, this initiative proved a better capacity for adapting to the vulnerable context generated by pandemic situation and a resetting / revalorization of private kindergarten institution. Maybe we do not have to deal only with a resetting / revalorization of Romanian private kindergarten in the pandemic context, but also, we have a lesson to be learned, a lesson with a hidden value for state preschool education.

An important result of our study is an argument for our hypothesis: choosing a private kindergarten and trusting its educative program is in correlation with parents' age and educational level. From our 44 parents, subjects of our study that have chosen private kindergarten, most have ages between 30 and 50 years old (84,1%), and the rest are parents aged between 20 and 30 years old (15,9%). This indicate that private preschool institutions are selected by mature parents, 97,7% of parents with high education (and, as a consequence, probably with higher incomes – a necessary condition due to the kindergarten monthly fees).

Another significant result is about reasons for choosing a private kindergarten instead of a state kindergarten, and this indicate parents' focus on psychological needs of children, and also on their own needs.

So, as a consequence, parents that have chosen a private kindergarten are interested for their children psychologic needs' satisfaction and their emotional health (psychologic security, care and valorisation, quality interactions, individualised learning), but also take into account parents' busy schedule, being more satisfied of private kindergarten's schedule than state kindergarten's. Also, we noticed a contradiction, a paradox: on the one hand, they are preoccupied for their children psychologic needs ("attention and individualised care form kindergarten staff"), and, on the other hand, they do not find time for spending with their child and choose prolonged program of private kindergarten.

In conclusion, private kindergarten offer a supportive educative environment, worm and friendly, and also the opportunity for children to play outdoor, in kindergarten courtyard, and also, satisfy parents' needs thanks to prolonged program, the possibility to check through video connection their child activity and the constant feedback from kindergarten's team that permanently inform them through social network about children performances and activities.

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Psychological Predictors of Shame

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Abstract: *In this study, we examined a predictive model of shame based on body image, type of attachment, and self-efficacy. Also, we wanted to see if these predictors explain differently the shame according to gender. 190 participants filled-out the Experience of Shame Scale – ESS and other self-report measures assessing their body image (Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – MBSRQ), attachment (Adult Attachment Scale - AAS), and self-efficacy (General Self-Efficacy Scale - GSE). The results showed a significant difference between the predictive model of shame for male participants and the predictive model of shame for female participants. In the case of male participants, we found only one significant predictor: self-efficacy that explained 27.1 % of shame variance. For female participants, predictors that contributed significantly to the efficiency of the model (54.9%) are self-efficacy (with the highest weight), avoidance attachment, anxiety-ambivalent attachment, and body image. Self-efficacy is the significant predictor, general available, for all participants, both male and female. Moreover, avoidance attachment, anxiety-ambivalent attachment, and body image are other significant predictive factors that favour the emergence of shame in women.*

Keywords: *shame, self-efficacy, attachment, body image, gender.*

Introduction

The shame, conceptualized as a painful, degrading emotion, against the background of the consciousness of having done something unworthy (Lynd, 1958) or understood as disgust with ourselves, as a negative view of ourselves (Morrison, 1998), is common in everyday life, has an impact on individuals' relations with others and "contributes to their development and adaptation to the social and cultural environment, helping them in the socialization process" (Boza, 2015, p.123). As a complex emotion, the shame results from perceived failure in relation to personal ideals, standards, rules, or goals.

The importance of studying shame is related to the consequences that it has on individuals and the quality of their life. The shame is the source of many complexes, it can lead to depression, self-doubt, isolation, loneliness,

perfectionism, feelings of inferiority and so on. Also, the shame includes a wide range of backgrounds, including rejection, disapproval, criticism from others, a negative body image, doubt about one's ability to cope with certain situations. It is associated with the perception of failure, with the person's fear of not being laughed at in front of others.

The shame aroused the interest of many researchers and was included in numerous studies, along with several variables, including guilt, embarrassment, pride, anger, empathy, depression, anxiety, body image, attachment, self-efficacy and so on. Based on the vast literature, our approach sought to detect relevant factors, which played an important role in previous research on shame, in order to decipher the psychological mechanism of shame. Thus, we focused on three psychological determinants that proved to be essential in explaining shame: self-efficacy, attachment, and body image.

Shame and self-efficacy

In a study conducted in The US, which involved 233 graduates, was found that the inclination towards shame was negatively correlated with the quality of the solutions generated to the common interpersonal problems, with the self-efficacy for the implementation of these solutions and with the expected effectiveness of these solutions (Covert, Tangney, Maddux and Heleno, 2003). It has also been hypothesized that high levels of shame correlate with low levels of self-efficacy. Baldwin & Ewald (2006) and Passanisi, Sapienza, Budello & Giaimo (2015) confirmed this assumption. Moreover, Baldwin and co.

(2006) have shown that shame correlates with self-efficacy, while guilt doesn't.

Shame and attachment

In a study conducted in Midwestern University, the authors found out that anxious attachment explained 51% of the shame variance (Wei, Shaffer, Young and Zakalik, 2005). In another study, Gross and Hansen (2000) examined the relationship between attachment and shame and they predicted that secure attachment will negatively correlate with the shame, in the sense that the low level of secure attachment is associated with the tendency of individuals to express the emotion of shame, while preoccupied attachment and anxious attachment will positively correlate with the shame. This means that individuals with high levels of preoccupied and anxious attachment will tend to experience the emotion of shame to a greater extent. The results confirmed their expectations. These findings were also tested by Tomas-Tolentino (2010) who showed that young people with anxious attachment had higher scores on shame. Furthermore, Akbag and Imamoglu (2010) investigated the predictive power of attachment types and gender on negative social emotions, such as shame, guilt,

and loneliness in a study conducted in Marmara University. Statistical data indicated that gender is a significant predictor of shame, along with secure and avoidant attachment. *Shame and body image*

Bessenoff and Snow (2006) established that the internalization of cultural norms regarding body image can predict shame in the case of female students. Pila and co. (2016) examined the differences between body shame, guilt, pride, and envy based on gender, age, and body weight in 527 Canadian adults. Compared to men, women reported significantly higher shame and guilt about body image. Middle-aged adults reported higher scores on shame and lower scores on pride compared to young adults, but no age differences were observed in terms of body guilt. Shame and guilt were the highest for overweight people. There were no significant effects of interaction between sex, age and weight in body-related emotions. In a meta-analysis of gender differences in self-conscious emotions, Else-Quest and co. (2012) concluded that women reported several negative emotions, such as shame and guilt, and these were mainly related to physical appearance and body image.

Methodology

Objective

Our study explored the dynamics of the underlying mechanisms of shame, seen as social emotion. Specifically, it sought to examine the effectiveness of an explanatory model in which body image, type of attachment (anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, secure) and self-efficacy predict youth shame and to identify which of these predictors affect this negative emotion to a greater extent. The study also investigated the role of body image, the type of attachment (anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, secure) and self-efficacy in determining shame based on gender differences.

Participants

Participants were 190 students, 122 females and 68 males, enrolled in different faculties of universities in Iasi (“G. Asachi” University, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University, “Grigore T. Popa” University, “George Enescu” University). The mean age was 22.

Instruments

- Shame

Shame was measured with **Experience of Shame Scale – ESS** developed by Bernice Andrews și co., 2002. It contains 25 items and scoring involves a 4-step Likert scale, where 1 means Not at all, 2-Little, 3-Moderate, 4-

Very much. High scores indicate a high level of shame, and low scores indicate a low level. The Alpha Cronbach coefficient was 0.93.

- Body image

Tom Cash and Pruzinsky's **Multidimensional Body-Self Relations Questionnaire – MBSRQ** - (1990) was used to measure self-perceived body image. The questionnaire contains 37 items, and participants had to choose the answers on a Likert-type scale from 1 to 6, in which 1 indicates strong disagreement and 6 strong agreements. High scores mean that subjects have a positive body image, and low scores mean that they have a negative body image. The Alpha Cronbach coefficient was 0.85.

- Attachment

Attachment type was measured with **Adult Attachment Scale – AAS** (Collins și Read, 1990). The questionnaire consists of 18 items, 6 for each type of attachment: secure attachment, avoidant attachment, anxious-ambivalent attachment. Each item is accompanied by a 5-step Likert scale (1-strongly disagree, 2-partially disagree, 3-don't know, 4-partially agree, 5-strongly agree). The Alpha Cronbach coefficient for each dimension was: secure attachment - 0.70, avoidant attachment - 0.71, anxiety-ambivalent attachment - 0.77.

- Self-efficacy

General Self-Efficacy Scale – GSE (Matthias Jerusalem, M., Schwarzer, R., 1996) was used to measure self-efficacy. The general self-efficacy scale comprises 10 items, each item being evaluated on a Likert type scale, from 1 to 4, in which 1 means “never”, 2 “sometimes”, 3 “often” and 4 “always”. Low scores represent low self-efficacy and high scores high self-efficacy. The Alpha Cronbach coefficient was 0.90.

Procedure

In the context of the Covid 19 pandemic and the state of alert, the questionnaires were edited in Google Forms and completed online, in a controlled way. The duration of completing the questionnaires was on average 15-20 minutes. At the beginning, the participants were informed about the purpose of the research, anonymity, data confidentiality and possibility of withdrawing from the research at any time.

Data analysis

Statistical data obtained from the hierarchical regression analysis showed the existence of a significant predictive model, consisting of body image, type of attachment (anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, secure) and self-efficacy, which explains 44.2% of the variance of shame. The predictor with the greatest explanatory power is self-efficacy ($\beta = -.400$), followed by avoidant

attachment ($\beta = -.202$), ambivalent anxious attachment ($\beta = .195$) and body image ($\beta = -.157$). (Table 1)

Table 1. The results of the hierarchical regression analysis SE B

	b	β	p	
SEB				
Body image	-.122	.050	-.157	.015*
Anxious ambivalent attachment	.695	.211	.195	.001
Avoidant attachment	.710	.224	.202	.002*
Secure attachment	.367	.260	.086	.160
Self-efficacy	-1.086	.182	-.400	.000*

$$R^2 = 0.442, *p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01$$

Differentiated analysis of predictive power of body image, type of attachment (anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, secure) and self-efficacy on shame, depending on gender, showed that in the case of young males, the regression model, consisting of the predictors mentioned above, has the adjusted coefficient of determination $R^2_{aj} = 0.271$, being able to explain, in adjusted form, 27% of the variance of shame.

Table 2. The results of hierarchical regression analysis for the male gender

	b		β	p
SEB				
Body image	-.005	.094	-.006	.957
Anxious ambivalent attachment	.651	.394	.190	.103
Avoidant attachment	.064	.497	.018	.897
Secure attachment	.194	.571	.043	.736
Self-efficacy	-1.576	.409	-.529	.000

$$R^2 = 0.271, *p < 0.01$$

As can be seen in table 2, the only statistically significant predictor is self-efficacy ($\beta = 0.529$, $p < 0.05$) which means that young males with a low level of self-efficacy will tend to experience a high level of shame.

As for young women, the five predictors included in the analysis, body image, type of attachment (anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, secure) and self-efficacy, lead to a statistically significant regression model, which is able to

explain, in adjusted form, a proportion of 54.9% of variance of forgiveness ($R^2_{aj} = 0.549$).

Table 3. The results of hierarchical regression analysis for the female gender

	b		β	p
SEB				
Body image	-.135	.066	-.172	.043*
Anxious ambivalent attachment	.808	.266	.222	.003*
Avoidant attachment	.867	.265	.247	.001*
Secure attachment	.330	.285	.079	.250
Self-efficacy	-.972	.215	-.375	.000*

As for young women, the five predictors included in the analysis, body image, type of attachment (anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, secure) and self-efficacy, lead to a statistically significant regression model, which is able to explain, in adjusted form, a proportion of 54.9% of variance of forgiveness ($R^2_{aj} = 0.549$). Among the statistically significant factors of the model, the highest explanatory weight has self-efficacy ($\beta = -.375$), followed by avoidant attachment ($\beta = .247$), anxious-ambivalent attachment ($\beta = .222$) and body image ($\beta = -.172$). (Table 3).

Results

Statistical data showed the existence of a significant predictive model of shame consisting of body image, avoidant attachment, anxious - ambivalent attachment and self-efficacy. Also, these results revealed a great predictive power of self-efficacy in expressing the emotion of shame, both in the case of male and female subjects. Based on these evidence, it can be stated that when an individual has a negative belief about his own ability to cope with the difficulties encountered during solving tasks, he may face the emotion of shame. Both women and men with low self-efficacy who have difficulty adjusting to everyday problems, difficulty in setting goals or investing effort will be prone to experiencing shame. This emotional state is explained by the fact that when they fail in a task, they attribute the failure to personal causes, which leads to a negative self-assessment. Shame is triggered when individuals fail to meet personal standards, beliefs, values and personal goals.

Our study highlighted the role that avoidant attachment and anxiety-ambivalent attachment play in explaining shame to young people. Thus, young people with anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment are more likely to feel negative emotions, have more doubts about themselves, feel misunderstood by

others and show less self-confidence, all these making them more sensitive to shame. Young people with avoidant attachment, being more defensive and hostile to others, avoiding closeness, may experience the emotion of shame associated with the idea of rejection by others. They have negative beliefs and expectations on others. Rejection by other significant people in their lives is usually perceived as a global and uncontrollable rejection of an unwanted self and could be considered a characteristic experience of shame.

Consistent with the literature, our research has shown that negative body image is a significant predictor of shame in young women. At the base of the dissatisfaction with the body image are certain negative thoughts about the physical appearance, but also the belief that certain people dislike the person's body. Against the background of dissatisfaction, appears shame about body image which can have negative consequences on health, well-being, but also on interactions with others. The person with a negative body image will try to mask the defect that causes the emotion of shame. Negative perceptions of body image are reinforced by comparisons with other people, such as family members, colleagues, and media images. The negative results of comparisons with others are the essence of women's dissatisfaction with their bodies. Thus, shame occurs whenever individuals fail to achieve internalized or cultural ideals and attributes the failure to stable and global aspects of the self.

Discussions

As we hypothesized, shame on young people can be predicted by a general model, consisting of body image, type of attachment and self-efficacy, that explains a proportion of 44.2% of its variance. More than that, these factors explain shame differently depending on gender. We could have noticed that in the case of male participants, self-efficacy is the only significant predictor of shame. This means that male participants who obtained low scores on self-efficacy will tend to express the emotion of shame to a greater extent. Regarding the explanation of shame in young females, four predictors played a significant role: self-efficacy, avoidant attachment, anxiety-ambivalent attachment and body image, the predictive model formed explaining 54.9% of the variance of shame. In other words, young women, who have achieved low values of self-efficacy and self-image, and high values of avoidant attachment and anxious-ambivalent attachment, will tend to experience the emotion of shame to a greater extent.

The results of this research have major implications in identifying the factors that favour the appearance of shame and, thus, in preventing its negative effects. Based on previous studies, our research clarified the set of relationships between body image, type of attachment (anxious-ambivalent, avoidant, secure), self-efficacy and shame, in which the first factors were predictors, and

the last was criteria, in a regression model. Regarding these relationships, the data obtained revealed a negative impact of body image and self-efficacy on shame, in the sense that low levels of these factors correlate with high levels of shame. Regarding the type of anxious-ambivalent and avoidant attachment, the results indicated a positive relationship with shame. The high scores of these types of attachment correlate with a high level of shame.

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Who is the Romanian educational system failing in mathematics – the low or the high performers?

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Abstract: *Results about mathematics student achievement lead, in general, to extensive public attention because they are used to show the effectiveness of schooling. The results obtained through the current investigation validate the considerable gap in performance that exists between Romanian students, a variation that was confirmed as well by large-scale assessments across several decades of application. A crucial issue is to provide sufficient evidence to document the future measures taken by policy makers in relation to the extreme segments of the beneficiaries of education: low and high achievers. Our interest in this study is to understand which students, the lower or the higher achievers, need more support and resources. We are interested to find out which students are achieving closest to what is expected from them to achieve and at which level the system is failing the most, considering mathematics achievement demonstrated in Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011.*

Keywords: *Romanian low and high achievers, TIMSS, mathematics achievement, profile analysis.*

Introduction

Romanian education has served some students well, as evidenced by successful performance in math and science Olympiads (OECD, 2000). Consequently, teachers are encouraged to focus on high- performing students with little incentives to address the needs to those who were less advantaged in this race. So, we are entitled to say that the success of teachers and schools is limited in Romanian education to the achievement of high performers. The focus on academic excellence in national examinations including Olympiads leads to the prevalence of private tutoring which accentuates the inequalities to

the benefit of those students who come from wealthier families. The system currently allows only a minority of its students to excel.

According to the results of Romania in TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) 2011 – one of the large-scale assessments that allow for comparison of student achievement among educational systems, the system currently enables 5% of its students enrolled in 8th grade to excel (Mullis et al., 2012). Those at the top demonstrates the same level of knowledge and skills as their international counterparts. However, too many of the eighth graders (29%) do not master the basics necessary for continuation of learning in such a way that these acquisitions will avoid failure at the end of compulsory school. These results are confirmed in PISA, as well. 40% of young Romanians do not master the basic competencies necessary for full participation in society (OECD, 2016).

Furthermore, “outcomes indicate that many Romanian children do not achieve their potential” (Kitchen et al., 2017, p.38) and this coincides with the lack of consistency in approaches related to rising educational outcomes of all students, although there are several initiatives to improve participation in education, especially with students at-risk.

To contribute to this discussion, this present study explores the eighth-grade students’ achievement in mathematics in TIMSS 2011, taking a comparative perspective within Romania. Large-scale assessment studies in education allow for comparison of student achievement among educational systems, with the aim of understanding how input and processes could be improved (Kamens and McNeely, 2010, Chung, 2015, Addey, et al., 2017). Furthermore, the data collected using large-scale assessments represent the sole data source that can be used reliably for this type of analysis in Romania.

In the search for explanations at the micro and macro levels, the mathematics achievement of students in different domains such as Algebra, Geometry, Data and Chance and Number are compared. Our interest in this study is to understand more which students, the lower or the higher achievers, need more support and resources according to their potential and which are the domains of mathematics where the discrepancies are made manifest.

The crucial questions are: Which students are achieving the closest to what is expected from them to achieve? And at which level of the TIMSS test scores is the system failing the most? Based on the empirical (Istrate, Noveanu and Smith, 2006) and educational system evidence (Mullis, et al., 2012, OECD, 2016) our expectation is that low achieving students might perform lower than they could be expected. In case of the high achieving students, the discussion is still open, being an important exploratory investigation.

Finding answers to our questions and test our expectation is extremely important for the country since this type of analysis is unique at the national level, pointing out the possible discrepancies between students and the possibility that a large portion of our students do not reach their potential.

Providing such results is likely to provide empirical support for a much-needed structural reform evidence-based.

Profile analysis approach

The approach taken in this paper is that of profile analysis. This approach has been proposed and detailed by Verhelst and applied on large-scale studies, such as PISA 2000 Reading data for all countries (Verhelst, 2012) and PISA 2003 cycle data, as well as on the TIMSS 2011 Sweden data.

Through profile analysis, we are investigating the balance of the performance on several parts of the test (Verhelst, 2012). For example, is the performance on the geometry questions as good as may be expected from the total score of the test, which comprises also items about algebra, number and data-and- chance, or is it better or weaker? Such an approach gives an insight into the relative strengths and weaknesses of the test takers, by providing a profile across item categories, not of the performance itself, but of the deviations of what can be expected given the total score on the test. These deviations will be obtained for the quartiles of the distribution, with a special attention on the lower and higher quartiles, as an indication of the low and high achievers.

Research question

Using profile analysis, in this study we aim to evaluate the scores within each quartile of the distribution, without ranking them, in order to understand if each group performs balanced (higher on easier parts and lower on more difficult parts of the test), as it can be expected from the students' total score. By statistically comparing the variations per content domain and especially for the lower and higher quartile, we aim to answer the following research question:

RQ: Do we find a significant imbalance in the students' performance in different mathematics domains, for the lowest and the highest achievers, as can be expected from the students' total scores? Such different imbalances in the lowest or highest groups of the test scores' distribution will provide evidence to support the adjustment in the attention given to one group or another in the teaching process. Moreover, a significant imbalance in the deviance profiles within quartiles in different content domains will guide our recommendations towards possible relevant curriculum adjustments.

Method

Data and sample

The study uses the Romanian eighth-graders' results in TIMSS 2011, mathematics. The sample included about 5704 students nested within classes of

sampled schools, the unit of analysis being the students. TIMSS mathematics items were organized around two dimensions: content dimension, specifying the subject matter to be assessed; and cognitive dimension, specifying the thinking processes to be assessed.

To measure the content dimension, 217 mathematics items were administered in TIMSS 2011, 8th grade, and all these items are used for this analysis. Their distribution on content domains was: Algebra, 70 items; Geometry, 43; Data and Chance, 43; and Number, 61. TIMSS 2011 includes multiple-choice items where the student chooses the correct answer from four response options, and constructed-response items where the student is required to provide a written response.

For this study, we used the quartiles (Q1, Q2, Q3 and Q4) of the performance distribution of the mathematics scores. The top 25% (Q1) of the student mathematics scores are identified as “high-performing” and the bottom 25% (Q4) as the “low-performing”. All students were classified as belonging to one of the quartile categories. *Profile analysis*

Based on the Verhelst (2018), profile analysis is used for to detect systematic deviations at group level, from the predictions of a measurement model, in this case for binary credit items of TIMSS 2011. The estimated deviations, being the difference between the expected and the observed scores in each content domain and for each respondent, are the focus of profile analysis. When considered jointly for all content domains, we are talking about deviation profiles, the final analysis being a comparison of these aggregated results across four groups. The expected score is expected given the total score on the test, being a function of the item parameters only (Verhelst, 2018).

The deviation profile of a respondent, of interest here, is defined as the difference between his/her observed profile and the conditional expected profile given the test score, under the measurement model used. The average deviation profile per content domain (Algebra, Geometry, Data and Chance, and Number) will be presented for four groups of achievement scores, from the lowest to the highest (Q1 to Q4), with a focused attention on the lowest and the highest groups.

For this single-country data analysis, the Romanian TIMSS 2011 data was recalibrated so that the estimated parameter values are not distorted by different functioning of items in other countries. The model we used for Romania, as single-country data is a restricted version of the 2PLM, called OPLM (Verhelst and Glas, 1995).

Results

To answer our research question, we do see significant differences between the expected and the observed scores, considering the total test score,

within different content domains, for the students with scores in the lowest and the highest quartiles.

Figures 1 to 4 shows a deviation profile in the lowest quartile in Algebra and Geometry, and a deviation profile in Algebra and Data and Chance in the highest quartile. All significant deviant profiles are indicated in Figures 1 to 4.

In terms of the lower (Q1) quartile or the low performing, the observed scores are lower than expected in Algebra but higher than expected in Geometry, considering the total test scores. In terms of the higher (Q4) quartile or the high performing, the observed scores are higher than expected in Algebra but lower than expected in Data and Chance, considering the total test scores.

We can see that there is no clear pattern for the lower or the higher percentile, but that the deviation profile direction differs per content domain. More specific, low performing students obtain lower scores than expected in Algebra but higher in Geometry. On the other side, high performing students obtain lower scores than expected in Data and Chance but higher in Algebra.

Figures 1 to 4. Differences between deviation profiles on the quartiles of performance, within content domains



Figure 1.

Figure 2.

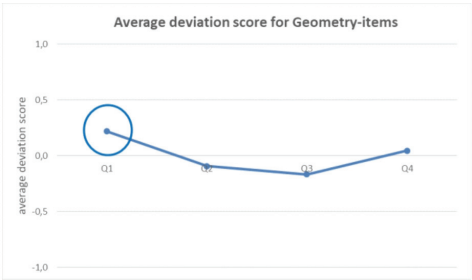


Figure 3.

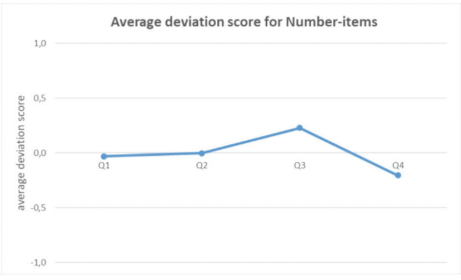


Figure 4.

Notes: The significant deviation profiles are marked with a circle.

The associated means and standard errors of the profiles per content domains presented in Table 1 show that the most impressive significant deviation is in Algebra in the highest quartile. The deviation of the score in Q4 is the larger, being .39 points higher than expected (given their total score), indicating that the higher performing students do it better in Algebra. The other significant deviations of the scores are at around .25 points, higher or lower.

Table 1. Means and SE of deviation profiles on content domains, for the quartiles of performance

Group	Algebra	Data and Chance	Geometry	Number
	Mean (SE)	Mean (SE)	Mean (SE)	Mean (SE)
Q1	-.27 (.10)**	.08 (.18)	.22 (.08)**	-.03 (.10)
Q2	-.09 (.14)	.19 (.09)*	-.09 (.11)	-.01 (.13)
Q3	-.03 (.15)	-.03 (.10)	-.17 (.11)	.23 (.14)
Q4	.39 (.12)***	-.24 (.08)**	.04 (.09)	-.20 (.11)

Notes: Estimations based on the recalibrated TIMSS 2011 data for Romania; * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Conclusion

Our expectation for this study was that the lowest achieving groups are achieving lower than expected, considering their total test score, with no precise expectation for the highest achieving. The results differ per content domain. For the lowest performing group, the deviation profile shows that, on average, they

perform significantly lower than expected in Algebra, but significantly higher than expected in Geometry, given their total test scores. At the other extreme, the highest performing group obtains scores significantly higher than expected in Algebra, but significantly lower than expected in Data and Chance, given their total test scores.

In general lines, we could say that the system is failing the low performing students in Algebra and the high performing students in Data and Chance. Moreover, the system is boosting, if we could say, the low performing in Geometry and the high performing in Algebra.

However, an imbalanced profile indicates that more or less students are able to solve easy or difficult tasks than expected, considering their performance on all items of the test. Independent if lower or higher, an imbalanced profile points towards the performance levels in each domain where imbalances happen. Such imbalances need to be regarded with attention in terms of major curriculum adjustments or at least reflections.

The Romanian National Curriculum does not provide broad suggestions nor detailed guidance about how to support all students to participate substantially in mathematical activity in the classroom, in other words to ensure that the instruction is equitable. It is assumed that all students will have sufficient opportunities to learn if the teaching is compatible with the vision presented in National Curriculum. An important step towards an equitable education would be to identify what contributes to the current gap presented in students' achievement. These and future results will guide policymakers in their evidencebased decisions.

Occupational and economic disadvantages are seen in relation to developmental trajectories (Bynner & Parsons 1997) and related to mathematics deficits (Kaufmann et al. 2013). Moreover, there is still a gender gap in Educational Attainment in Romania (99.7%), which is ranked 54 out of 156 countries, as shown in The Global Gender Gap Report (2021), empirical evidence on gender gap in mathematics achievement indicating that male outperform female students (Lubienski, Neumann, & Andrews, 2013, Reilly et al., 2015).

Despite growing body of research on the data provided by large scale-assessments, relatively little work has been done on extreme segments in population distribution. Refining the ability to surface structural inequities as evidence for what our students experience represents one way to prevent the reproduction of an inequitable system and, at the same time, a moral obligation for the upholders of quality education.

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Some methodological observations on useful tools for the emotional development of schoolage children

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Abstract: *The present study aims to highlight the impact of several tools, modern means used to achieve the emotional education of young schoolchildren. We are interested in the extent to which the strategy of innovative applicative exercises applied to young schoolchildren generates co-participation, stimulation, commitment to what we call emotional learning and affective learning. Thus, we highlight the role of metaphor as a didactic tool in the development of children's social and emotional skills and also the role of mass media - artistic films, cartoons, music, theatre, game-exercises, dramatization, in training emotional skills. Choosing interesting contents, appropriate and diverse contexts, suggestive images and actions with a high power of understanding, of co-optation, provoking positive emotions, children will be able to offer experiences, solutions, to train their verbal and non-verbal communication, to solve dissonant group problems, to transmit values, etc., thus actively contributing to their own education through transformation.*

Keywords: *emotional affective education, communication, socio-emotional skills, teaching tools.*

Introduction

Programme-projects for emotional and affective education as an important dimension of education

There is a determining relationship between what we consider quality of life and emotion and affectivity, a relationship that underlies the balanced, expressive and harmonious development of personality. Emotions accompany and determine meanings, emotions bring with them values pertaining to resilience, emotions generate resources and coordinate them to achieve set goals, emotions set the affective tone for cognitive processes, they contribute significantly to decision making, they contribute to the development of social relationships and help in maintaining mental health. Although we cannot talk about the development and evolution of children without taking into account their affectivity, the educational process is still, we believe, more interested and

concerned with the cognitive dominance and with training the ability to memorise and reproduce knowledge.

Thus, consideration and attention are needed for a few issues/teaching guidelines that schools and teachers should undertake. We present them as a few summary ideas, namely (Neacșu, Suditu, 2020, p.8, 22):

- “Promoting and maintaining a positive and constructive emotional climate in the school and classroom
- a good understanding of the cognitive-emotional relationship
- establishing a balance between cognitive and emotional dimensions in the education of children and young people
- observing pupils’ potential and meeting their needs by focusing on multiple intelligences
- promoting positive emotions that provide stability and harmony”.

The concern for emotional education finds in the USA, for example, a response in multiple educational programme-projects designed, implemented, and continuously adjusted, dedicated to primary and secondary education: social development projects, programmes to promote social competence, programmes for creative conflict resolution, projects to improve social awareness and solve social problems. The key elements of effective programmes, argues Professor D. Goleman (2001), involve:

- “Emotional skills: identifying and labelling emotions, feelings, expressing feelings, assessing their intensity, delaying gratification, impulse control, stress reduction, knowing the difference between feelings and actions”;
- cognitive skills: inner speech, reading and interpreting social cues, using steps to solve problems, understanding others’ perspectives, positivity, self-awareness;
- behavioural skills: nonverbal (we refer to eye contact, deciphering emotionally suggestive facial expressions, gesture, tone of voice, etc.) and verbal (intelligent responses to various vulnerable and critical situations)” (Goleman, 2001 pp. 359-360).

Children/youths’ emotional literacy and the development of their socio-emotional competences are the pillars on which emotional education is built, at different levels. “The emotional competence we are talking about in the case of children is defined as the ability to recognize and interpret one’s own and others’ emotions, as well as the ability to manage emotionally charged situations appropriately” (Stefan, Eva, 2010, p.18).

The aforementioned authors, taking a schematic approach, consider the following:

- “Experiencing and expressing emotions – which involves training in the awareness of emotional experiences, the appropriate transmission of emotions and the expression of empathy;

- understanding and recognising emotions – which involves identifying emotions based on non-verbal cues, naming emotions, understanding the causes and consequences of emotions;
- emotional regulation – which involves acquiring age-appropriate emotional regulation strategies” (2010, pp.18-26).

The second pillar that supports emotional development concerns social skills. It is about “children’s ability to form functional social relationships with other children and adults in their lives” (idem, p. 27). It is therefore about positive/good interactions that lead to goal achievement. Social skills in turn involve an interest in training two types of skills:

- “Intrapersonal skills (frustration tolerance, rule-following, etc.)
- interpersonal skills (interpersonal relations, exchange of objects, polite address, problem solving, etc.)” (Stefan, Eva, 2010, pp.27-35).

These programmes generally focus on the emotional structure of children’s/young people’s lives and refer to real life situations. The focus is on experiencing different emotions and emotional states, such as: anxieties, anguish, tensions, traumas, the pain of isolation, misunderstandings in a group of friends, envy, lying, cooperation, anger, etc. - all considered as part of a normal, ordinary life system and not difficult, special situations with problems requiring medical or other types of specialist intervention.

The planned activities usually follow the above-mentioned structure, i.e., the components of social and emotional intelligence while the topics covered are multifaceted: recognising feelings, building a vocabulary for them, establishing links between thoughts, feelings and reactions, the importance of emotions in decision-making, recognising strengths and weaknesses, looking at oneself positively but realistically, mastering emotions, taking responsibility for actions. Equally important is the concern to develop the ability to understand the feelings of others, their analytical and understanding perspectives, respecting differences in thinking and feeling. Programmes dedicated to the emotional and social development of children and young people, Professor D. Goleman points out, also include themes aimed at “building relationships, the art of collaboration, conflict resolution, negotiating compromises, etc.” (Goleman, 2001, p. 321-323).

The Emotional Affective Education: a brief presentation of the curriculum documents for primary education in Romania

The formal and officially recognized interest for this subject, seen as a form of education, appears in our country with the new Curriculum, in the spring of 2013, when the new school syllabus for Personal Development in the curriculum area Counselling and Guidance is approved, starting from the preparatory class for the whole primary cycle. In the aforementioned document, preparatory class, first and second grade, this discipline aims, through the proposed contents, to address issues such as: “the development of the pupil’s

ability to self-discover and express his/her interests, aptitudes, personal experiences, interpersonal and communication skills, reflections on learning in a positive manner”. We would like to analyse some of the key points of the school document that guides the work of teachers at national level. For example: What are the targets?

The focus this time is on skills training and attitude development. The aim is “to build self-confidence, to prepare children for life and for the future” (see the document mentioned in the text). It is easy to see that the interest of teachers will be directed towards:

- explaining and understanding the mechanisms that trigger one behaviour or another;
- developing the ability to express emotional states appropriately and in a context-appropriate way;
- emotional awareness;
- developing reflective attitudes towards learning;
- developing reflective attitudes towards the group to which they belong.

How are the activities carried out?

- focusing on the more application-oriented aspects of content
- the use of games, therapeutic stories, debates, expression of opinions, role play, - valuing personal experiences and sharing the experiences of others,
- boosting pupils’ self-confidence, etc.

Thus, at the end of an assignment, students will be encouraged to express their emotions about what they have learned, to reflect on their personal involvement in the activity, on the progress made. And because teachers are encouraged to adopt varied, flexible, dynamic teaching strategies, to accept children’s mistakes, to accept the expression and explanation of their opinions, emotions and reactions, then we are interested in focusing our attention on such strategies, which involve special working tools/means to provoke emotions, to create memories, to capture the attention and involvement of the students, and which are very suitable for children, young people and adults alike. Below we refer to metaphors in communication, and to media – film, dramatization.

Research methodology

Working concepts in the implementation process: a brief introduction

G. W Burns (2011) explains the role and importance of metaphor, as a form of communication, in storytelling as well as fairy tales, stories, etc. Thus, we find that, “metaphor is a form of communication in which an expression is displaced from one field of experience and used to communicate something about another field of experience” (Burns, 2011, pp. 22-23).

Metaphor appears to be a symbolic association that can provide, through the inspiration of this association, literary and, where appropriate, therapeutic force,

indirectly but relevantly communicating different kinds of experiences and, at the same time, providing the child with examples of solutions, choices, good/inspiring decisions in different situations. Psychological literature considers “metaphors as being stories, fairy tales, jokes, proverbs, analogies” (idem., p.23).

What is the specificity of this particular type of storytelling? It is the fact that in this story with therapeutic effect for the listener, everything is well thought out, well planned, all the content has meaning, well-defined objectives, a dedicated theme, a rational ethical and moral purpose. The story can evolve, it invites imagination, it invites participation, it offers the possibility of entering into a relationship with the storyteller, with the characters of the story, it offers the possibility of diverting their course, of changing their ending. It is a means by which we help the participant to experience well-being, positive emotions, confidence, etc. We understand, therefore, that “the therapeutic story is not an amusing, funny story, it is not a story without a clear subject, without meaning, it is not a casual conversation that occurs randomly between two friends” (idem, p. 23-24, 39).

In addition, they possess the characteristics of effective communication:

- “They are interactive;
- They educate thanks to their appeal;
- They break resistance;
- They stimulate the imagination;
- They develop problem solving skills;
- They contribute to goal achievement;
- They build the courage to make independent decisions” (Burns,

2011, p. 38). Expected results?

A story that is told and listened to can provide models, inspire behaviour and attitudes, influence values and have a lasting effect. That is why metaphor can be a particularly valuable and appropriate teaching tool to train and develop the social and emotional skills of children, young people and adults.

The stimulation of self-confidence, self-awareness, understanding and authentic empathic experience, the stimulation of emotions with a beneficial effect on human and group interactions, the awareness to emotional learning, to the regulation and suitability and control of emotions, to the acceptance of the diversity of emotional reactions can also be effectively and eloquently trained with the help of other teaching tools. We are now thinking of the intense and relevant power of role models provided by the media: art film scripts, cartoon films, legendary heroes, scenes from plays, dramatisations, role-playing.

The suggestive power of an artistically expressed message via mass media, of dramatization as a game - a role-play, has - in our opinion - multiple valences in terms of emotional education, which are more than beneficial. We quote from the literature (Neacșu, Suditu, 2020, p.147):

- “contributes to and at the same time fosters the psychological prerequisites for a deeper understanding of the essence of the combined cognitive and affective messages,
- facilitates the transfer of values on strategies for positive attitude development,
- fosters awareness and acceptance of one’s own emotions
- allows for healthy group relationships”.

Participants, objective, instrument of research

The target audience for the proposed implementation consists of first- and second-year master students in career counselling and guidance courses in the field of education sciences (N=60). The students are professionally involved in primary and pre-university education, i.e., people who, through their profession, contribute directly and formally to the emotional and social education of children and young people.

Proposed objectives:

- Use of metaphors as a teaching tool for effective teacher-student communication and for the development of social-emotional competences (therapeutic stories, theatre, books, toys, puppet theatre, etc.)
- Use of media (art film, cartoon film, plays, drama exercises) for the development of socialemotional competences and stimulation of emotional education.

We are interested to see if using this kind of tools/media helps to create interest, genuine involvement and participation in sharing useful and beneficial experiences that the target audience can internalize, and that constitute a real gain in terms of emotional enrichment. We consider all these as the premises/basis of new education and training through transformation (Neacșu, Suditu, 2020, p. 146).

Working methods

The meetings were conducted similarly to seminar activities and consisted of theoretical presentations coupled with the provision of context, demonstrations, examples, debates, role-playing, interpretations and structuring of interesting, useful and diverse teaching materials on the topic discussed.

Results analysis

We have already shown in the theoretical part and have established that there is a direct relationship between emotion, affectivity and a quality life. We have also established that such good determination underlies the balanced, expressive and harmonious development of personality. For emotional education to be successful, a broad and varied portfolio of tools and methods is

needed, aimed at emotional literacy at a first level and, later on, at the ability to describe emotions, to recognize one's own emotions but also those of others, to be aware of emotions and emotional states, to control reactions, to be able to help repair and heal possible imbalances, to train empathic capacities. The metaphor approach, used as a tool in this respect, is a topic of great interest for educator training, as stories with meaning, legends, books, histories, theatre, film, etc. have always been effective and preferred metaphors for children and young people to communicate information and values. Furthermore, approaching a theme from the above-mentioned area using the media, analysing edifying and memorable examples of characters, heroes, different contexts from the area of film, theatre, children's films, cartoon films, also contributes - we believe - to training through transformation with positive emotional imprints.

The Emotional Affective Education Programme is designed in three stages as follows:

1. Theoretical presentation of the working concepts and tools to be used for training.
2. Carrying out practical and explanatory applications in front of the group.
3. Preparation of individual portfolios with different topics and objectives agreed upon.

1. The theoretical approach to this topic consisted of introducing the target audience to interesting topics:

- Explanatory, critical theoretical approaches, points of view, theoretical analyses.

- Analysis of curriculum documents specific to school levels.

- Theory-practice connections. Contents and tools used in emotional-affective training. Methodical guidelines on elements of storytelling practice.

2. Carrying out practical and explanatory applications in front of the group.

a) Together we built a rich portfolio of therapeutic stories through direct group exposure and exercise, setting concrete themes and objectives, such as: self-awareness, self-image; matching behaviour to context; managing relationships, congruent expression of emotions; the importance of rules, decision making; managing success but also difficult moments; experiences as a source of learning, acceptance, friendship, family values, leadership, perseverance in achieving goals, etc. (Burns, 2011, 2012).

b) We then identified other tools that, along with meaningful stories, help to increase impact by involving children and young people in learning in an active, participatory and emotional way:

- Art film clips suggestive of the themes under discussion, animated films and cartoon films with inspirational message and illustrative power, stories, short stories, children's novels, etc. Literature as well as children's

literature are extraordinary and self-serving sources. Also, video games, strategy games, etc. Classic themes such as kindness, respect, friendship, honesty, courage, perseverance, forgiveness, determination, love, devotion, mistakes and their consequences, the courage to make decisions, to go through different emotions, etc. are masterfully addressed and can be exploited either as readings, adapted readings or screenings with emotional anchoring value and learning contexts with strong emotional echoes for children.

As methodological suggestions, I have insisted that the teacher should be familiar with the film he/she recommends, give students directions for watching the film, then conduct discussions, create debates, listen to reasoned points of view, possible action paths, decisions, etc., prompt explanations, draw out clear messages, make recommendations to emphasize issues related to the topic and the power of the message (Burns, 2011, pp.95-100).

c) Together with the target group, we built an inventory list of books, films and video games that we were familiar with and that were appropriate/relevant to the topics in our area of interest.

“Let’s not forget, school is the place where one learns but also where one educates oneself. It is the place where people learn from mistakes as well, where they learn and move on based on experiences lived and shared afterwards in multiple ways” (Senge, 2016). And metaphor, in its multiple forms, is in our view an interesting, suggestive and relevant tool.

Conclusions

The concept of emotional and affective learning always comes up when teachers, counsellors etc. talk about choice, values, communication, motivation, learning, performance etc. – associated concepts. Hence, there is a need to change attitudes towards the nature of the school curriculum, towards the nature of the curriculum of subjects in different curriculum areas. There is a need for courage and creativity in experimenting through various means, through interesting exercises and exciting games, through appealing to the power of models with a strong inspirational impact, dramatizations, films with a relevant emotional impact aimed at supporting the formation of emotional skills. We focused on therapeutic stories, metaphors in communication, film and dramatization, because stories, characters, narrators always fascinate through their power of illustration, understanding, their measurable emotional impact on children and beyond. The techniques and tools that the teacher chooses to use can be rich and relevant teaching sources for the child’s personal development, they can be ways of gaining the child’s confidence and making communication with him more effective. And thus, they can make the difference in achieving the proposed objectives, in reaching the set goal.

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Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Transactional Analysis in Counseling

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Abstract: *Psychological counseling for restoring internal balance has gained new directions in recent years, by integrative and eclectic visions. Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), developed by Aaron T. Beck, has demonstrated its efficiency (it is an evidence based therapeutic approach, following numerous studies over the years) along with other branches developed from it (e.g. Schema Therapy). Transactional Analysis (TA), founded by Eric Berne, has acquired new directions, by mixing, for instance, with Play Therapy or by analyzing the cycles of development (Pamela Levin). The role of integration of different techniques in counseling sessions has been increasing in recent years and in the following analysis, we will discuss the characteristics of the two directions already mentioned. CBT as well as TA have a common idea as a core: there is a very strong relation between emotional responses and thoughts and beliefs (cognitive area).*

Keywords: *counseling; CBT; TA; integration..*

Introduction

Psychological counseling is a form of therapy for dysfunctional thoughts and emotions, behavioral issues or relationship problems. A certified counselor provides advice and guidance to help the client find the most appropriate way to manage various issues. The counselor is a professional who offers help in the therapeutic approach, by using specific techniques and methods. The approach is carried out in a confidential environment without judgments.

In counseling sessions, the client can receive assistance for achieving goals and directions in life, for making difficult decisions or for personal development. In addition, psychological counseling and psychotherapy are accessed when people feel stressed, overwhelmed, depressed, anxious or struggling to cope with a significant event in life (Akbari et al., 2012).

Counseling has been introduced in the 1950s in the United States by Carl Rogers as a form of help for various psychological problems. Although many of the methods and techniques used in psychological counseling are similar to psychotherapy, psychological counseling has remained in a limited

area, where the techniques are used for clients without pathological problems (e.g., clients without personality disorders). Thus, we can discuss a wide range of methods and techniques common to counseling and psychotherapy, in this context being analyzed CBT and TA.

Dr. Aaron Beck originally developed Cognitive-behavioral therapy in the early 1960s. His theory is that during cognitive development one learns the incorrect processing and interpretation of information. Influences on CBT practices include Carl Rogers, Albert Ellis, and behavioral therapists. The cognitive approach assumes that we have cognitions that can cause us problems, these cognitions are analyzed during therapy and are the main target for change to work on the client's cognitive, emotional and behavioral difficulties. CBT suggest that the memories of our experience are stored and configured in structures called "schemas/schemata". Schemas are formed early in life from personal experiences and identification with significant others and contain the personal significance of an event from which fundamental beliefs and assumptions are made. These schemas serve as filters for ongoing experiences. Schemas can be adaptive or maladaptive. Cognitive distortions occur when inappropriate patterns are learned because of negative childhood experiences and are built on subsequent negative experiences that occur throughout our lives. When these inappropriate schemes are activated or when more adapted schemes are inhibited, this will cause problems for the individual.

Dr. Eric Berne published his first paper on Transactional Analysis in 1949. The TA starts from the assumption that a person could change the ego state between three levels: parent, adult and child. In addition, Berne underlined the role of the social environment using the term "stroke" as a social response or reinforcement. TA changed the attention from internal psychological dynamics to the inter-relational dynamics in human interactions.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Transactional Analysis (TA)

There are different techniques from CBT and/or TA used in psychological counseling. Eric Berne, the founder of TA, first studied psychoanalysis, and then he developed TA based on Freudian ground. On the other hand, CBT has been developed as a reaction to psychoanalysis. Yet both approaches contain psychodynamic concepts, but under different names and rationale. For instance, some of defense mechanisms from Freud's theory could be more or less similar to cognitive distortions from CBT. One could also observe similarities between CBT and TA concepts (see Table 1).

Table 1. Comparison between CBT and TA

CBT	TA
Emotional responses are related to thoughts and beliefs. Our thoughts and beliefs support our feelings and behaviours, and are not caused only by external stimuli (people, situations, and events). One can change what one believe and the way he/she think to feel / act better even if the situation does not change.	AT studies how people behave in a certain way, either by chance or influenced by the first caregivers or authority figures, and then continues to play some roles them in their adult life. Our thoughts and beliefs support our feelings and behaviours, and are not caused only by external stimuli (people, situations, and events). One can change what one believe and the way he/she think to feel / act better even if the situation does not change. Eric Berne related this to existentialism.
Goal oriented and enables rapid change. Considered among the most rapid in terms of results obtained (Beck et al., 2021). The average number of sessions clients receive (we discuss here a broad types of problems and approaches to CBT) is only 16.	TA is effective, it helps the client to understand immediate the behavior, and often helps for a quick implementation, assisting the client to achieve stable changes through the fostering of selfawareness and personal responsibility. Eric Berne took into consideration the length of time to effect cure in psychoanalysis, and emphasized rapid change in TA. TA is considered and has proved itself effective as a brief psychotherapy.
It is limited in time in that it let the clients know at the beginning of the therapy process that there will be a point when the formal therapy will end.	TA work towards the achievement of an agreed therapeutic goal. The ending of the formal therapy is a decision made according both to the therapist and client.
Trusting relationship between client and therapist. In addition, clients change because they develop new ways of thinking, new or different beliefs, and they act in accordance to the new learned things.	TA stress on the importance of a good, trusting relationship with the therapist. TA therapists believe that in addition to having a good relationship the change take place because of the development of new beliefs, learning how to think and feel differently and acting on that learning.
Implies a collaborative effort between the therapist and the client. Cognitive-behavioural therapists seek to learn what their clients want out of life (their goals) and then help their clients	TA involves a collaborative effort between therapist and client. Eric Berne emphasized that the therapy is a team work of the client and the therapist, towards an agreed goal (Clarkson, 1992).

CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS IN THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY

achieve those goals. The therapist's role is to listen, teach, and encourage, while the client's role is to express concerns, learn, and implement that learning.	
CBT emphasizes that the clients are responsible for how they respond to what is happening to them and that they have a choice in this matter. Cognitivebehavioral therapy does not tell people how they should feel. However, most people who seek therapy do not want to feel the way they did. We have unwanted situations, whether we are upset or not. If we are still upset because of our problems, we have two problems: the problem and our inadequate reaction to it. Most people want to have as few problems as possible. So one needs to learn how to take responsibility for how one responds (for example, if he responds more calmly, not only do he feel better, but he usually put himself in a better position to use his intelligence, knowledge, energy, and resources to solve the problem). (Spitzer et al., 2006).	TA emphasizes that the clients are responsible for how they respond to what is happening to them and that they have a choice in this matter. Cognitivebehavioral therapy does not tell people how they should feel. However, most people who seek therapy do not want to feel the way they did. We have unwanted situations, whether we are upset or not. If we are still upset because of our problems, we have two problems: the problem and our inadequate reaction to it. Most people want to have as few problems as possible. So one needs to learn how to take responsibility for how one responds (for example, if he responds more calmly, not only do he feel better, but he usually put himself in a better position to use his intelligence, knowledge, energy, and resources to solve the problem).
CBT is structured and goal orientated. Cognitive-behavioural therapists and Transactional Analysts have a specific agenda for each session, which they agree at the start. Specific techniques / concepts are taught during each session. CBT focuses on the client's goals. We do not tell our clients what their goals "should" be, or what they "should" tolerate. We are directive in the sense that we show our clients how to think and behave in ways to obtain what they want. Therefore, CBT therapists do not tell their clients what to do - rather, they teach their clients how to do.	TA is objective, it addresses observable behaviors and is structured and goal orientated. The Transactional Analysts have a specific agenda for each session, which they agree at the start. Specific techniques / concepts are taught during each session. It is simple and logical, because it uses a common vocabulary, which does not require previous knowledge. It is predictive, its techniques allow, with great probability, to predict the behavior of groups and individuals.

CBT emphasizes that we can get a different perspective on situations, which allows us to solve various problems. A central aspect of CBT is the inductive method, ie rational thinking based on facts. We often get upset about various situations when, in fact, the situation is not as we think it is. If we knew that, we wouldn't waste our time getting upset. The inductive method encourages us to look at our thoughts as hypotheses or assumptions that can be questioned and tested. If we find that our assumptions are incorrect (because we have new information), then we can change our thinking to be consistent with how the situation really is.	TA emphasise that we can get a different perspective on situations, which allows us to solve various problems. TA traditionally encourages early decontamination of the Adult Ego state, meaning it allows the client to function here and now, in partnership with the therapist, to gain the ability to solve problems now, relatively uninfluenced by how others have been involved in the person's past. Transactional analysis can be used as a frame of reference to translate complex concepts from other disciplines and can be combined with other behavioral sciences.
CBT is based on a developmental model. CBT is based on the scientifically supported assumption that most beliefs, emotional and behavioural reactions are responses to past events. Therefore, the goal of therapy is to help clients unlearn their unwanted reactions and to learn a new way of reacting. The developmental emphasis of TA and CBT has an additional benefit - it leads to long term results. When people understand how and why they are doing well, they know what to do to continue doing well.	TA is based on a developmental model. TA uses the concept of Life Script. The developmental emphasis of TA has an additional TA key concepts 1) States of the Ego and transactions benefit - it leads to long term results. It stimulates the experience and commitment with the present, as it focuses in the here-and-now, so rational goals for the future can be established (Kroenke at al., 2001).

TA suggests that communication, both internally and externally, comes from different states of the ego and that we move rapidly between these states of the ego depending on the context and environment. There are 3 states of the ego: parent, adult and child. The state of the parental Ego contains the behaviors, thoughts and feelings copied or interposed from the parental figures encountered first of all in the first 5 years of life. The state of the parent's ego can be subdivided into the caring parent and the critical parent, both of which can have positive or negative characteristics. The state of the adult ego occurs when the child acts as a data processor that tests the information at the input of the parent's and the child's stages and creates its own internal truth. The state of the adult ego is devoid of values and feelings, the subject being calm, thoughtful

and accepting himself and others. We enter this state by choice, choosing to turn to an adult if we are in another wrong state.

1) Strokes

TA states that people need strokes to survive, a stroke being a unit of recognition and that every verbal or nonverbal transaction, positive or negative, is an inevitable exchange of strokes. Stroke hunger occurs when positive strokes are not freely changed, leading to stroke-seeking behavior. Negative strokes are sought when a stroke is missing, as any type of stroke is better than no stroke (Stewart, 2007).

One of the purposes of TA is to allow customers to relate to others in a conscious, spontaneous, loving, playless manner and to allow a free exchange of strokes without further transactions.

2) Scripts of life

These are described as unconscious life plans that we make in childhood as we interpret our early experiences. Most of our script is done until the age of 7 and we continue to live our scenarios without being aware, preparing our lives for the decisions we made when we were children (Erskine, 2010). In TA, it is said that “redefinition” occurs when we distort our perception of reality to fit the scenario, and “reduction” occurs when we ignore any aspect of a situation that would contradict our scenario. This is because in the state of the child ego we see anything contrary to our scenario as a threat to meet our needs or survive. The “dramatic triangle” in TA describes how our scenario is constructed by the roles we play in relationships. The 3 basic roles of the game are described: persecutor, victim or savior; people who are in any of these 3 unhealthy living positions are unconsciously looking for others to take on a complementary role so that psychological games can be played. The special way in which these roles are interpreted is described as the basic elements of the scenario.

CBT key concepts

1) Cognitive distortions

These are irrational thoughts, based on incomplete or irrelevant assumptions. Aaron Beck’s work suggests that correcting these distortions a client creates a more accurate experience of events. Through this work, a client becomes able to develop the skills to properly process exposure to life events.

2) Automatic thoughts

Images, beliefs, thoughts or mental activity that occur as a response to a trigger.

3) Cognitive restructuring - a CBT technique that helps clients examine their distorted thinking. It helps them to redevelop ways to react in situations that have been interpreted as problematic.

Another correspondence between CBT and TA could be observed in the cognition-emotion-behavior model in CBT and parent-adult-child model in TA. The cognition (logical thinking) could be associated with the Adult ego state from TA, the emotion could be associated with the child ego state, and the behavior (normative) could be associated with the Parent ego state (Fig. 1 and 2).

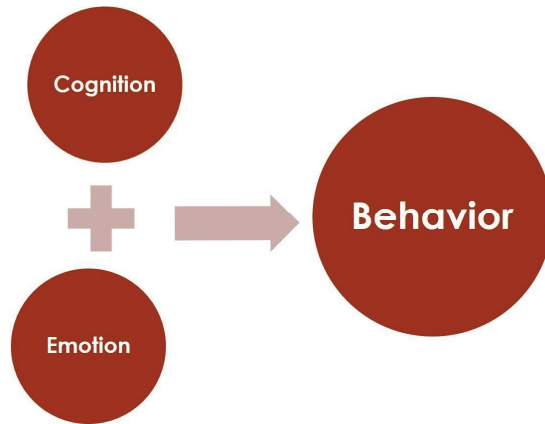


Figure 1. The CBT scheme

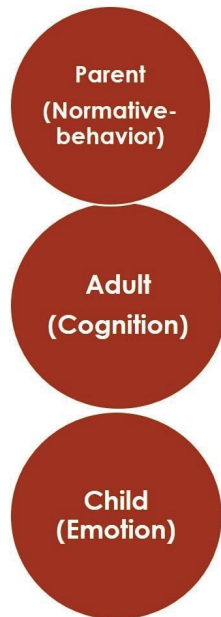


Figure 2. The TA scheme

Conclusions

Although they are different approaches, both CBT and TA have many things in common, or at least similarities. Using both schools in the same counselling session could be of a real help and increase the efficacy of the intervention.

While most of us have effective ways to cope with these challenges of everyday life, the negative feelings can sometimes last a long time or become difficult to manage and can begin to interfere with health, relationships, work, or social life. If this happens, counseling is an easily accessible method of professional support that, when based on the scientific method, is a known way to help (Barrow and Newton, 2004).

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Teacher-centeredness versus student-centeredness. A case study on the effectiveness of the instructional process at academic level

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Abstract: *The Romanian higher education system has undergone numerous changes in terms of curriculum content, teaching strategies and administrative organization. These changes began with implementation of the Bologna process in the academic system and have developed in recent years. Many of the new transformations have led to the modernization of education at all levels. Nevertheless, there are still some weaknesses of the instructional process due to the persistence of the traditional teaching tendencies in the educational system. This is demonstrated by the fact that some instructors prefer teacher-centered classes where lecturing is the prevailing strategy, while others have engaged in a genuine transformation of the teaching process, concentrating their efforts on student-centered classes and active learning strategies. These tendencies have been obvious especially during the COVID-19 pandemic period, during which modern and traditional styles have coexisted more or less. Despite the persistence of traditionalism in teaching, the present educational policies adopted by each university have paved the way for the improvement of the system*

Keywords: *teacher-centeredness, student-centeredness, tradition, modernity, pandemic.*

Introduction

The recent COVID-19 pandemic has disturbed the educational process all over the world, forcing both teachers and students to quickly adapt to new teaching and learning conditions. Thus, distant and online education have proved to be the best solution under these circumstances. Beginning with March 2020, the instructional process in the University of Ploiesti has had to adapt to the new reality by interrupting face-to-face teaching and replace it with either hybrid or only online teaching. The adopted solutions have led to the necessity of assessing and analyzing the effectiveness of the instructional process during this period of time. The criteria lying at the basis of this analysis were the

teaching strategies that were used during courses and seminars, being discussed from a traditional and modern perspective.

The purpose of the paper was to assess students' perceptions of the instructional process before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings were based on a focus group with students enrolled in Language and Literature Studies within the University of Ploiesti. The aim of the focus group was to identify the following aspects: differences between the teaching process before and during the pandemic regarding the degree of interactivity during classes, involvement of the students in the learning process, teaching style, the effectiveness of students' evaluation and student autonomy in learning.

Background

Some of the reports published by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education have underlined the presence of the traditional teaching practices in higher education, reflecting a quantitative teaching principle according to which, if the students are exposed to more information, they are better prepared for their future career. The result is that this kind of teaching and learning process exploits mostly the traditional approach that changes the student into a passive receiver of a growing quantity of information.

Thus, courses and seminars are teacher-centered, students having to listen to the teacher most of the time, take notes and memorize the content, very rarely being actively involved during classes. That is why the instructor is seen as the center of the whole educational process, providing information, controlling learning and assessing theoretical acquisition. In this way the instructor demonstrates that he/she is an excellent theoretician, rather than a practitioner interested in using his/her pedagogical skills to help students' training.

The instructors' preference for the traditional teaching style in higher education is also shown by Martin (2003), who states that the traditional lecturing style leads to "an awkward relationship of an active teacher and a passive, consuming student", having "the liability of being implicitly monological" and constructing "alienating models of knowledge" (2003, p. 315).

It should be mentioned that traditional teaching characterizes not only courses but also seminars, which, due to their nature, are expected to be more engaging and interactive than lectures.

As a result, even students' evaluation is based on the same old model, measuring the quantity of information, and not the quality of knowledge, that is, students' ability to make connections with real-life situations and use what they have learned effectively.

In addition, as students' needs seem not to be a priority for universities, the focus is "on teaching, research, obtaining higher grants to enable them to have access to highly qualitative equipment, a large number of publications, and

a better position of the teachers when being evaluated by the students” (‘Quality Barometer’, 2010, p. 103). This leads to a lack of synchronization between their educational strategic objectives and the requirements of present society.

Nevertheless, most Romanian universities have adopted motivating strategies referring to teaching style, curriculum design and assessment. If these three components work harmoniously, they succeed in “helping the learner to actively construct knowledge” (Heather Fry et. al, 2003, p. 22), meaning that students become “able to think, act, create and innovate at a relatively high level” (Heather Fry et. all, 2003, p. 22).

Regarding the teaching style, it is obvious that the teacher has completely changed his/her role, becoming a guide and a facilitator of knowledge, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning. The effects of such an instructional process are the following: firstly, the goals of the teaching process take into consideration students’ real needs and interests; secondly, teaching combines theory and practice, with the purpose of making students easily adapt to the requirements of an ever-changing society; thirdly, besides frontal teaching, lectures and seminars make use of active learning strategies, laying emphasis both on students’ interaction and on autonomous learning. Finally, it can be said that higher education has tried to move towards student-centered education combining individual and cooperative learning in order to encourage students to put into practice the knowledge and the skills they have acquired.

As far as curriculum design is concerned, universities have taken into consideration the requirements of the labor market when conceiving their educational plans. As a result, bachelor’s and master’s degree programs have assumed the role of developing the knowledge and professional skills that are necessary for a variety of career paths. If the bachelor’s degree constitutes the prerequisites of career development, the master’s degree offers specialized knowledge focusing on a particular field of study, which allows students to become competitive and gain expertise in the domains they want to work. Therefore, curriculum design pays great attention to the partnership between teachers and students, as well as to students’ interaction in order to make learning more effective and stimulating at all levels. The educational objectives of such a curriculum are: “encouraging reflection; active and real use of knowledge (...), projecting high level expectations regarding professional competences, in order to value the experience that students gained” (Neacșu, 2006, p. 3). In other words, as Neacșu states, the curriculum should enhance students’ motivation by combining the four fundamental educational objectives: “learning to know, learning to do, learning to live in a community and learning to be.” (Neacșu, 2006, p. 11).

As to the assessment of students’ knowledge and skills, the focus has changed from quantitative checking based on the accumulation of information

to qualitative evaluation that measures students' abilities to use practically and creatively what they have learned. The most important role of assessment in higher education is to indicate the quality of students' learning, to maintain the educational standards and to motivate students (Cox, Imrie, Miller, 1998).

Other researchers (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021) argue that, in order to be effective, assessment should follow five principles. According to the first principle, assessment should serve learning, being an ongoing process whose main purpose is "to inform teaching and improve learning" (2021, p. 7). To reach this purpose, teachers should base their instructional process on preassessments to find out students' initial level of knowledge, followed by regular assessments to "provide feedback for improving and learning" (2021, p.7).

The second principle states that "multiple measures provide more evidence"(2021, p. 8), which means instructors should use various types of assessments to measure students' progress correctly. The same idea is emphasized by Martin (2003, p. 318), who argues that

"assessments now take a wide variety of forms, ranging from creative or practical work, through illustrative and design work, discursive essays and theses, social science style surveys and interpretation of data, performance and oral presentations done in groups or individually, online assessments, and so on. Such forms of assessment also transform in their various modes, such as examinations, course work, and formative or summative assessments."

The third principle requires that assessments should measure the targeted learning goals of the instructional process, whereas the fourth principle emphasizes that "assessments should measure what matters" (McTighe & Ferrara, 2021, p. 9), that is, measuring the most important skills built during the learning process.

The last principle refers to the fact that assessment should be fair, giving all students the opportunity to demonstrate in an appropriate manner what they have acquired and what they can do with their knowledge.

All these principles show that accurate assessment can provide the evidence teachers need in order to stimulate and encourage student learning.

Methodology

Participants

The students taking part in the research are enrolled in Language and Literature Studies within the University of Ploiesti. At present they are in their third year of study, but the academic process had to undergo changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as follows: during their first academic year, 2019-2020, the first semester took place normally, whereas during the second one, the

whole instructional process was performed by means of the university platforms because the pandemic started. In their second year of study, 2020-2021, during both semesters, lectures were taught online, while seminars and laboratories took place face-to-face.

Methods and instruments

The students' perceptions of the educational process were assessed on the basis of the focus group, whose aim was to identify the following aspects: differences between the teaching process before and during the pandemic, the degree of interactivity during classes, involvement of the students in the learning process, teaching style, the effectiveness of students' evaluation and student autonomy in learning. The questions of the focus group were discussed with the participants at the end of the academic year 2020-2021 and they had in view the period before and during the pandemic. The issues talked about were the following:

1. Do you think that the teaching style in your classes is traditional or modern? Have you noticed any differences between the period of time before the pandemic and the period of time during the pandemic?
2. What kind of teaching strategies did your instructors usually use in your courses and seminars in both periods?
3. What kind of classes motivated you most? Give some examples of activities that you enjoyed taking part in physically or online.
4. Do you consider that your instructors were interested in developing independent learning?

Explain how.

5. How did the evaluation process take place before and during the pandemic?
6. Were you satisfied with the assessment of your skills and knowledge? Give arguments.
7. What was the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on your studies?
8. Make some suggestions to improve teaching and learning.

The participants took part in a 60 minute session which was moderated by the authors of the present paper.

Data Analysis

The questions discussed with the students who participated in the focus group revealed balanced opinions about the instructional process within our university during the above mentioned periods.

As regards the answers to the first and second items, students considered that some of their courses and seminars were traditional whereas others were more engaging, which points out that there was no constant characteristic of the teaching style during the two periods of time. Nevertheless, most of their

seminars were perceived as more stimulating than the courses they attended, irrespective of the period of time, before and during the pandemic. They explained their perception based on the interaction and cooperative learning they had to perform during these seminars. For instance, their teachers organized these classes, either face-to-face or online, using group and pair work, asking them to find solutions to problems, to solve tasks individually and then checking the solutions with their mates, engaging them in debates, etc. As far as the courses were concerned, students mentioned that they were more interesting before than during the pandemic, when they did not feel involved as they used to. In their opinions, most of the online courses were lecture-based, the teaching consisting mainly in sharing presentations and information explained by the teacher with minimal conversations with the students.

The answers to question three complete students' opinions discussed above. Thus, as regards the face-to-face instruction, they mentioned seminars as being most motivating of all classes they attended because they were involved in the learning process due to the debates they had to take part in and the projects they had to do working in groups. They enjoyed cooperative learning as they had the opportunity to increase retention of information, develop positive relationships with their teachers and group mates, enhance their self-esteem and become more responsible in terms of meeting deadlines. When being asked about the online period, students considered that the most interesting activities took place during seminars, when they were required to make short dialogues on given topics, to ask their mates questions based on the presentations they were delivering and to find solutions to problems working together with some of their mates who were attending the classes on Google Meet. They also liked extracurricular activities developed online by their instructors because they had the opportunity to consolidate their knowledge and skills. The most appreciated was a translation contest dedicated to the writers they had studied as they could share experience and interact with high school students.

Regarding the teachers' interest in developing independent learning skills, students stated that most instructors laid emphasis on autonomous study, helping them to become aware of their own weaknesses and allowing them to take charge of their own learning. They appreciated their independence in choosing the sets of exercises, texts and books that they considered necessary for overcoming difficulties in learning and for improving their knowledge and skills. However, there were some teachers who preferred to control the learning process by indicating them what to study and what tasks to solve. In such cases, students mentioned that they did not have the chance to choose the study materials and they had to do the tasks imposed by the teachers.

The answers to the question about student assessment showed that there were no significant differences between the evaluation methods and techniques before and during the pandemic. Teachers used the same methods such as

observation during classes, written and oral tests during the semesters and at the end of the semesters, as well as written and oral examinations during the exam sessions. Students were not dissatisfied with the fact that they had to attend online tests and exams or with the fact that they had to submit their written tests and projects by email to their teachers, justifying that they were accustomed to using electronic devices in communication on a regular basis.

The sixth question emphasized the opinions expressed above, students stating that teachers were objective when assessing their knowledge and skills, even if this process took place online for a long period of time. Students valued the fact that during the assessment process teachers paid equal attention to measure both theoretical and practical skills. They appreciated the quality of the assignments which were interesting by challenging them to do research and find information they needed in order to complete them. Moreover, they were pleased by the fact that not only individual work but also group work was used in the evaluation process. Thus, all projects that were the product of cooperative learning were appreciated according to the degree of the students' involvement helping them to obtain good marks in most cases. They mentioned that very few learners were less successful in doing their tasks based on projects and portfolios.

The answers to the seventh question revealed students' opinions about the impact that the pandemic had on their studies. As regards the beginning of the pandemic, when students were forced to continue their studies by means of the university e-learning platform, they felt disoriented and confused, not having direct interaction with their teachers and lacking their guidance. However, they appreciated the feedback received from their instructors in the case of the assignments they had to do. In their second year of study, the teaching process underwent changes moving partially or wholly online, depending on the degree of the severity of the pandemic. In this period, they got more accustomed with e-learning and applications such as Google Meet, Zoom, etc. and as a result, they perceived the classes as more effective than the former ones due to the possibility of interacting with their teachers and mates virtually.

Based on their learning experience, the participants in the focus group were also asked to make some suggestions meant to improve the instructional process. Some of their opinions referred to a more frequent use of motivating strategies, especially during the courses, aimed to facilitate their understanding and retention of the course content. They found the following actions very useful: explanations followed by questions and discussions among students, as well as the use of technology and online resources. They also suggested that instructors should lay stress on practice and achieve a better relationship between theoretical studies and the application of students' knowledge. They also thought that real-life application of the content could help them be better prepared for their future jobs. They appreciated that many of their teachers knew how to make their classes enjoyable, but they also attended traditional

classes that they perceived as less effective. That is why they believed that traditional teachers should pay attention to promoting more vivid classes in order to facilitate their learning and their success in passing the exams. Another difficulty they frequently experienced was related to note taking during the courses, irrespective of their form, face-to-face or online. In both cases they could not take coherent notes because of the rapid pace of teachers' speech, or a quick pass from one topic to another, without allowing them to reflect on the information they received. For this reason, they suggested that the instructors should interrupt their lectures from time to time in order to allow students to complete their notes and clarify what they had not understood.

Conclusion

The findings lead to the conclusion that both traditional and modern teaching approaches coexisted in our university before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. In students' views, the tendency towards teacher-centeredness characterized the courses, especially the lectures held online, more than the seminars. The persistence of traditionalism in teaching courses may be related to conservative mentality, that is, the belief in the prestige of the teacher and in his/her superiority. As known, the professor can be seen as a model of knowledge, a scholar, a researcher, an example worthy to be followed. At the same time, if too much praise is given to traditional paradigms, the progress of learning can be slowed down in the absence of any adaptation to the challenges of an ever-changing society.

As regards seminars, they had a greater impact on learners due to the student-centered orientation of the instructional process which was obvious in both periods. The factors that led to positive changes in the instructional process, infusing it with new energy, may be demonstrated by the instructional strategies adopted in our university: establishing clear objectives of courses and seminars, connecting the curriculum with the requirements of the society, accessibility of the scientific discourse, facilitating understanding by using adequate examples and demonstrations, promoting student-centeredness, using active-participative methods, involving the student in the learningteaching process, making use of heuristic dialogue, problem-solving activities, pair and group work, projects, and realia.

Another significant finding was related to students' opinions about the evaluation of their knowledge and skills, which was not perceived as different from the assessment style they were used to. This was due to a sense of continuity resulting from the fact that instructors used the same methods and techniques (oral examinations, written papers, portfolios, etc.) during both periods, the only difference consisting in the environment, the classroom or online.

It is noteworthy that students did not perceive online teaching and learning as leading to learning loss as long as classes provided them with interaction and motivating activities. Even though they perceived the beginning of the online teaching as difficult, they could overcome the difficulties resulted from the lack of real communication by discovering the benefits of virtual communication.

In conclusion, the modern teaching style, based on interesting, attractive courses and seminars that motivate students by stimulating their thirst for knowledge and critical thinking should become regular instructional activities no matter the environment, in the classroom or online.

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Ethical implications of youth participation in educational action research in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic¹

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Abstract: *Hereby, we reflect on the implications for educational research ethics of a youth led participatory action research project developed in response to the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic in education. The action research project proposes the participatory action of young people in a socio-economically disadvantaged area together with educationalists and psychologists from a Romanian university in developing and deploying customized, context-sensitive interventions promoting equitable action and well-being in education. It is argued that a youth led action research approach challenges the conventional approaches to psychological and educational research, primarily in respect to issues of consent, participation and authorship. Here we address the specific ethical questions our proposed research design presented in these three aspects.*

Keywords: *Inequity; Wellbeing; Education; Youth-led participatory action research (YPAR); COVID-19.*

Introduction

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the youth-led action research approach holds a special status among the various possible courses of action, whereby schools are at the forefront of significant remedial interventions. It stems from the need to close the gap between knowledge production in educational sciences and educational practices (Rowell, 2019). Frequently addressed by its acronym YPAR (*Youth-led Participatory-Action Research* - Ozer, 2017), this specific approach has been defined as a form of community based participatory research in which young people are capacitated

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to identify and analyze problems that are relevant for their lives (Ozer, 2017, pg. 174). Hence, YPAR has a significant impact on strengthening agency and self-responsibility of participants (Ozer, 2017).

Problem

In recent months, youth-led active learning methods and techniques such as photo-voice have successfully been used even in the distancing circumstances of the pandemic (Liegghio & Caragat, 2021). To our best knowledge, despite the increasingly numerous accounts of their methodological relevance for exploring interventionist approaches in education, there is a lack of evidence in using it specifically for piloting interventions directed at reducing educational inequities and increasing students' wellbeing in the pandemic context. A six-months youth-led action research based intervention is proposed with the explicit goal of promoting wellbeing and educational equity in a socio-economically disadvantaged urban community in the West region of Romania.

In line with some of the most frequently referenced codes of ethics on educational research, the abiding respect for the integrity of persons and organizations participating in the project, for responsible action, for knowledge and for democratic values is the core principle of ethics in the proposed research project. However, a youth-led action research design such as the one we propose raises specific, sensitive questions, regarding young peoples' consent and participation throughout the various stages of the research process, and issues of recognition and authorship in respect to the intellectual products the project will generate. We address these issues in the following sections of the paper, whilst maintaining a reflective focus on existing literature and on possible implications for our research.

Ethical implications of YPAR in the context of the COVID_19 pandemic

a) Conceptualizing research ethics in relation to vulnerability

One significant aspect when addressing issues of educational inequity (and wellbeing) remains that of correctly and comprehensively understanding the complexities in the notions of inequality, inequity and vulnerability. It is thus fair to ask who is being recognized in/by the discourses about vulnerability related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on education?

It has been observed that albeit the COVID-19 research literature and interventionist efforts have correctly focused on the demographically poor and on improving their access to education, there is an inherent blind spot in the construction of remedial educational actions and policies on the principle of universal education (Soudein, 2020, p.63). This blind spot emanates from the

homogenization of the learning subject and their identity, whereby addressing educational inequality is being done on the premises of ‘a normativizing middle-class sensibility – what *poor* learners ought to have access to’ (Soudein, 2020, p.63). These framings are constructing learners’ identities in deficit terms (in relation to middle-class norms and standards) and are stereotyping and homogenizing in effect, rendering ‘the individual learning subject in his/her/their intersectional complexities not visible in the developments that are in play in the new context of the pandemic’ (idem). Soudein’s (2020) viewpoint prompts an important question in our research project: how could the individual(s) situated in a very complex intersectionality (of gender, race, socio-economic status, ability etc.) become more visible in the process of constructing knowledge about educational equity and well-being? Exploring intersectional complexities pertaining to the learning experiences in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic affords university researchers and young participants to: (1) Co-construct the knowledge of educational equity and well-being in the context(s) and experience(s) of learning, whilst rendering visibility and recognition to individual voices; (2) Inquire over, recognize and critically reflect on the existing collective perspectives on educational equity and well-being; (3) Acknowledge and deconstruct what *we* bring into the conversations in the construction of knowledge on educational equity and wellbeing in the context of the proposed research project.

Overall, this means stepping away from deploying knowledge from an *outside* perspective, and immersing in the negotiation and development of relationships within the specific context of action-research. From an ethical perspective, previous studies indicate that researchers have to deal with issues of power and vulnerability, both those of other people as well as their own (Dodson et al, 2007), to pay a significant attention to building trusting relationships, to relieving group tensions, to planning outcomes, and to navigating moments of inclusion and exclusion (Love, 2011; Springgate et al, 2009; Ponc and Frisby, 2010).

In order to ensure a positive emotional climate as well as to augment the breadth and depth of mutual understanding and recognition between participants, in our project we propose: (1) making all *participants aware of the possibility of experiencing anxiety and/or emotional stress*, helping them recognize these emotions, and providing specific linguistic and behavioral tools and procedures to control them including *communicating with adult participants* in the project; (2) *Constituting interdisciplinary work teams*, inclusive of both specialists in education and in psychological counseling, to ensure constant observation and support to project participants; (3) Using *debriefing* moments/sessions to ensure clarifying experiences, meanings and emotions associated with it, throughout the project.

b) Consent, participation and authorship in an YPAR approach

Participatory research is seen as creative and flexible, and instrumental to the meaningful inclusion of young people with complex or additional social and communication needs (Bailey et al., 2015). It also creates “powerful experiences for the youth of feeling valued and valuable, of being connected to a bigger cause, and of belonging to a collective experience” (Lieggio and Caragata, 2021). Participatory spaces can recalibrate attention given to marginalized and silenced groups, providing vulnerable young people a space where they can exercise agency through participatory activity (Bradbury-Jones, Isham and Taylor, 2018).

However, having young people lead community based action-research approaches is far from an easy ethical pursuit. Challenging aspects to tackle in an YPAR approach include how to conceptualize and practice informed consent, balance the protection of young people and encourage their participation, consider intergenerational relationships of power between adult researchers and young participants (Bradbury-Jones and Taylor, 2015; Kellet, 2010; McCarry, 2011; Collins et al, 2020). Briefly put, any YPAR approach will have to give consideration to:

1) *The discontinuities between the language of the academic research ethical frame and the language and thinking practices of young people.* Rephrasing and safeguarding the length and linguistic complexity of the consent forms addressing young people are the bare minimum requirements to ensure that consent is given with full awareness of what is being consented to (Collins et al, 2020);

2) *Consent as an ongoing process* (Alderson and Morrow, 2011; Graham et al, 2013), in which provision of information and formal indication of consent are accompanied by participants’ understanding based on ongoing negotiation and freedom to express choice and disagreement (Moore, MacArthur and Noble-Carr, 2018). With YPAR approaches, there is emphasis that culturally appropriate, accessible and respectful framings of individual and collective identities are paramount to ensuring the realization of youth’s right to participation (Lundy, 2018). Creating opportunities for young people to genuinely and meaningfully engage with the contents of the consent by adapting methodologies of informing young people over it (Landsdown and O’Kane, 2014);

3) *Implications of pausing projects engaging youth from vulnerable backgrounds due to a change in the circumstances of the adult researchers,* such as those provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic. Lieggio and Caragata (2021) tie the responsibility adult researchers carry in empowering young people and ensuring their voices are heard, irrespective of the changes in circumstances, to a dimension of relational ethics all YPAR approaches should

be aware of. It is in this line of thinking that in our project we planned for participation to be uninterrupted by any potential change in the context of communication, for COVID-19 related reasons or otherwise;

4) *Recognition of authorship for young participants in our research project.* Gardner (2018) highlights that issues of participants' unease regarding the concept of authorship as well as the expectations and linguistic practices of academic publishing are generally frequent initial blockers in co-authoring experiences involving young people. However, the benefits at the levels of deepening the collective intergenerational research experience of equality, co-construction and shared ownership of a team (Gardner, 2018, p. 2) surmount the costs of having to navigate through the initial potential blockers. We found Gardner's methodological suggestions to be instrumental to our context of research: navigating through initial resistance and blockers by incorporating authorship to all stages of data collection, decision making and reflective action in the research process, negotiating edits and highlighting the formative benefits of authorship through reflective action and self-awareness.

Concluding remarks

We departed in our reflective endeavor on the ethical implications of YPAR from discussing the significance of conceptualizing vulnerability associated with the much needed remedial actions towards educational equity and well-being in Romanian schools. It led us to highlight the importance of recognizing diverse intersectional identities. We emphasized the meaningfulness of revisiting a number of considerations in conventional educational and psychological research ethics, paying particular attention to the issues of consent, participation and authorship.

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